

The University of Texas at El Paso

**Department of Sociology and Anthropology
&
Center for Inter-American and Border Studies**

College of Liberal Arts

**Ciudad Juárez and El Paso: Violence and Crime in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso
Spring 2023**

A cross-listed class taught online

Special Undergraduate Topic
SOCI 3341 (CRN 23040)

Studies in Anthropology
ANTH 4370 (CRN 22945)

Topics in Latin American and Border Studies
LABS 4301 (CRN 27023)

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Office Hours

Virtually, by appointment, see Blackboard course homepage.

Catalog Description

Sociology

Special topics of current interest in sociology. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

Anthropology

Subject matter will be announced each semester. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

Center for Inter-American and Border Studies

Selected topics in Latin American, Inter-American, or Border Studies. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

Course Overview and Goals

Mention Ciudad Juárez and El Paso in conversation, or ask people what they know about the two cities separated by a river in the Chihuahuan desert, and clichés and stereotypes tumble from their mouths.

It doesn't really matter if one talks to people from Juárez/El Paso or outsiders who have never been to either city: violence and crime are central motifs in what people think they know about one of the world's largest transfrontier metropolitan communities.

On the one hand, Juárez has been infamous for years because of its violence and crime, encapsulated in the epidemic of murders of women in Juárez known as femicides, or, the dispute between the cartels of Juárez, Sinaloa, and the US and Mexican governments, with this region as ground zero in the hemispheric war on drugs.

On the other hand, El Paso has been widely celebrated as a "safe" U.S. city, a place with year-round sunshine, and where the proximity to Mexico makes for a vibrant, hybrid culture.

In this dynamic, some people from within and without the region also claim El Paso's so-called safety comes from rigorous border control keeping violence from Juárez out, epitomized either by a wall of Border Patrol agents or an actual physical barrier.

But Juárez is not dangerous for everybody, and El Paso is not safe for everybody. These are myths, or slogans, and the reality we can discern using scholarly, intellectual, research-based methods is, frankly, far more troubling.

In all the competing claims about Juárez and El Paso, and always featuring crime, violence and stereotypes, what is myth and what is reality become important questions for social scientists, and in particular for sociologists and anthropologists.

How can Juárez be so violent, and El Paso so safe, if the two cities share a transfrontier metropolitan population? Thousands of people from Juárez cross the bridges legally into El Paso every day to lead law-abiding lives. Similarly, thousands of people cross from El Paso into Juárez every day, and do not treat the city like a time-out from law zone. Instead, Pasoans visit family, meet friends, work, worship, eat out, and raise a family, and the last institution they want to encounter are officers in Juárez's municipal police force.

Even so, in all of this interaction and lived familiarity, stereotypes and clichés abound. It's difficult to know how to make sense of the competing claims and contradictions, and even more difficult if one just relies on what one thinks is common sense and the things one thinks one knows about the place where one grows up, studies, lives, and works.

This class has not been designed to uncover what are the realities and myths of violence and crime in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso.

Instead, it has been designed to create new understandings of the transfrontier metropolis in the Chihuahuan desert by examining the stereotypes, clichés, myths and realities of

violence and crime on the border. As such, by interrogating stereotypes, myths and facts, we seek to generate new interpretations about one of the world's most fascinating, beguiling and troubling regions.

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this course, students should have the following skills or knowledge:

UTEP EDGE ADVANTAGE

You can learn about UTEP Edge, here: <https://www.utep.edu/edge/about/index.html>

This class fulfills the following targeted UTEP Edge Advantage skills:

- **Communication:** Discussion boards, book reviews, and film review.
- **Confidence:** Tests to give you a deeper command of the materials presented in the class.
- **Critical thinking:** scrutinizing materials about violence and crime in Juárez and El Paso to build your own understanding of the region.
- **Entrepreneurship:** going beyond facile stereotypes about a complex transfrontier metropolis of more than 2.5 million people.
- **Global awareness:** Examining how people relate to each other across an international boundary.
- **Problem solving:** Tests, book reviews, film review, midterm and final.
- **Social responsibility:** examining in depth the way violence and crime construct understandings of social interactions across an international border.

Required readings

The required texts for this course are – full publication details may be found on the Blackboard page for this class.

- Gary Cartwright, *Dirty Dealing*.
- Scott Comar, *Border Junkies: Addiction and Survival on the Streets of Juárez and El Paso*.
- Lydia A. Fillingham, *Foucault for Beginners*.
- Debbie Nathan, *Women and Other Aliens*.
(This title is out of print but I have made a PDF available on Blackboard.)
- Sandra Rodríguez Nieto, *The Story of Vicente*.

Required films

The films we will watch in this class are available through UTEP's Library Subscription to Kanopy or Swank or Films on Demand, or other providers, and will be available to you at no charge but you will have to log into the library through your UTEP account.

Grading Scheme

Note well: If you miss any graded assignments for this class, you will fail this course. Discussion board submissions and tests are also required. Due dates are established in the calendar at the end of this syllabus and also in Blackboard.

You are not allowed to pick and choose assignments.

Tests (280 points)

x7 at 40 points each, due weekly, based on materials for that week; does not include syllabus test in week 1.

Discussion board (280 points)

x7, at 40 points each, due weekly, based on materials for that week; does not include student introductions in week 1.

Midterm

120 points

Final

120 points

Book Reviews

120 points

x2 at 60 points each: based on two of the required books.

Film Review,

80 points

x1: based on *The Border*, 1982, dir. by Tony Richardson and starring Jack Nicholson.

Total:

1,000 points

The total point score is then divided by 10 to provide a percentage. The letter grades break down in the following way:

%	Letter
≥ 89.50	A
79.50-89.49	B
69.50-79.49	C
59.50-69.49	D
≤ 59.49.	F

Descriptions of graded work

Late work is unacceptable. You are advised to contact the instructor before the due date if, for any reason, you are going to submit late work.

TESTS

Every two weeks or so you will have a test on the readings. You should submit your answers to the tests by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) each week.

EXAMS

There are two exams for the course. Questions are based on the readings and/or viewings.

The exams will be “open book” so that you will be able to have all support materials you think are necessary to answer the exam questions.

The exams will be administered via Blackboard. You will have from Monday through Friday of two specific weeks to complete the exam upon activation. The exams are to be taken individually—**it is not allowed to discuss the exam questions with the classmates or anyone else.** Please refer to the section on “Academic Integrity” below to review the university and instructor policies on cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

Make-up exams

Make-up exams will be given *only* in the case of a *documented* emergency (see “excused absences” below). Note that make-up exams may be in a different format than the original exam and may require more intensive preparation. If you miss a test and your absence is not considered excused, you will receive a zero on the test. This policy will be strictly enforced.

TWO BOOK REVIEWS

You will write two, two-page book reviews of most of the books for this class.

You must focus on how the book reveals violence and crime to you in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso.

The book review is **not** a summary. The book review will be two pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 points.

FILM REVIEW

You will write one two-page film review of *The Border* (1982) starring Jack Nicholson and directed by Tony Richardson.

You must focus on how the film reveals violence and crime to you in Ciudad Juárez and El Paso.

The film review is **not** a summary. The film review will be two pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 points.

DISCUSSION POSTS/CLASS PARTICIPATION

This is the central activity of the class and you will need to log into Blackboard several times during the week to participate effectively in the discussion board for each week.

Every two weeks you will submit:

(1) a discussion post in response to a guided question (minimum of 250 words and maximum of 500 words); and,

(2) respond to at least one of your classmates' post (minimum of 100 words and maximum of 500 words).

Be sure to submit your discussion post and response to your peers for a given week by Sunday, 11:00pm (MT) of that week to receive credit for your participation.

Class participation via discussion posts makes up a significant portion of your grade in this class.

Check Blackboard for the instruction about the three-paragraph format. **The instructor will not read your discussion post** if you do not use a three-paragraph format and the post will be returned to you with **a grade of zero** and **an instruction to resubmit your post**.

It is a requirement that you comment on other students' submissions on the discussion board. **The instructor will not read your discussion post** if you do not include at least one comment on another student's post, **you will receive a grade of zero**, and an **instruction to resubmit with a comment on another student's post**.

Some suggestions for successful posts:

Write with the **curiosity** of university students.

The instructor is more interested in doubts and the questions you raise rather than providing concrete answers. The expression of doubt and uncertainty is a skill and something to be practiced and developed.

You are strongly encouraged to use the UTEP Writing Center for assistance in drafting all written work, including discussion boards, essay, and reviews.

I expect everyone to actively participate in class and do so in a positive and appropriate way (see the "Online Etiquette and Effective Communication" section below). Keep in

mind that class participation is more than just completing the scheduled assignments and taking exams—you should be willing to ask and answer questions and contribute intellectually to class debates via online discussion posts.

Before posting a discussion, you should complete the assigned readings and go over your notes of those readings. Exams will cover material from the readings, and our online discussions, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage.

Full credit for a discussion post is reserved only for those that follow the online etiquette and effective communication rules below.

COURSE/INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

E-Mail Protocol

UTEP e-mail is the **only** way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt during weekdays. I will respond to weekend messages by Monday at the latest.

Follow this format when you write me an email. Unfortunately, due to the large number of students I serve every semester, I will not be able to respond to any email that does not follow these crucial instructions.

When e-mailing me, please put the course number in the subject line.

Address me, please, as Dr. Timmons. (Beware: I do not respond to the title, Mr.) Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your **question**. Unless you ask me a specific question, it is unlikely I will respond.

At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication

It is essential that the utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views.

No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated.

Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the University and it is at the professor's full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication Policy

Language: Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

Respect: A web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

Be Forgiving: If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor in an email. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

This is Permanent: Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent, there is no taking it back. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

Edit Your Work: The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good

practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly and if you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point: Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Don't waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

Read First, Write Later: Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to. Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude. Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

Excused Absences and Excuse for Late Work

I will excuse absences and late work *only* when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class session or due date for an assignment, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts a medical emergency.

To be excused, you must notify me *in writing* prior to the date of absence.

That said, in cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. a medical emergency), you must provide notification as soon as possible following your absence. Such notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent in advance.

You must also provide satisfactory documentation verifying the reason for the absence. In case of an illness, a doctor's note is the proper documentation required.

For my records, you should e-mail me a scanned copy of the documentation that verifies the reason for your absence (if you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a photo of the documentation). Documentation that is not provided in a timely manner will not be accepted.

Please do not ask me to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices, play rehearsals, meetings, conferences, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, having your cable installed, having a bad headache, etc.). I am aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course that better fits your schedule.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/>. According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline."

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, collusion, and plagiarism.

Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test.

Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. One example of collusion is preparing a discussion entry for another person or having someone prepare a discussion entry for you. I encourage students to study together and

work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is collusion.

Plagiarism is commonly defined as passing off the ideas, works, writing, etc., of another person as your own. Accordingly, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own work, even if you have the permission of that person. Be aware, just as the Internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is **unacceptable** and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. Refer to the Office for Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/index.html>.

Copyright Statement for Course Materials

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

☐ **Adobe Acrobat Reader.** To get this program, go to <https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html> and follow the instructions.

☐ **Adobe Flash Player.** To get this program, go to <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/> and follow the instructions.

☐ **QuickTime Player.** To get this program, go to <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/> and follow the instructions.

☐ **Microsoft Office.** If you do not have a word-processing software, go to <https://my.apps.utep.edu>. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740> and follow the instructions.

UTEP TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The University of Texas at El Paso offers complete technical information and Help Desk support at: <http://issweb.utep.edu/techsupport/>.

ALTERNATE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

I strongly suggest that you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a back-up in case there is a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, you can always email me (ptimmons2@utep.edu) your back-up document.

COVID-19 ACCOMMODATIONS

For those of us (I include myself in this comment) who might confront difficulties because of COVID-19, I want to reassure you that I will be flexible and understanding.

There are policies and procedures in place for the possibility that you might go to campus.

You are required to follow these policies and procedures for the safety of our UTEP community, and residents of Ciudad Juárez/El Paso.

Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms.

Even though this class is 100 percent online, you may decide to go to campus to use the library or other facilities.

If you visit campus, you **must** comply with campus safety procedures.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND TASKS – WEEKS AT A GLANCE*

This course is taught in a modular format, and in five sections.

The first section offers guiding questions and theoretical perspectives and serves as the foundation for the rest of the class.

Sections 2 through 5 provide case studies to test the guiding questions and theoretical perspectives.

It is very important to understand that we are using creative, intellectual published works about violence and crime to help us understand the processes of construction, destruction, production and reproduction of power and identity in a discrete regional space: the U.S-Mexico Borderlands: Ciudad Juárez/El Paso.

Week One: 01/17 to 01/23: Introduction to the class

- Review the posted materials in the “Welcome and Course Introduction” folder
- Familiarize yourself with the course Blackboard page – click on things!
- Carefully read the syllabus
- Take the syllabus test, due on Sunday 08/30 at 11pm MT.
- Introduce yourself to the class, and submit a comment on another student's introduction, due on Sunday 08/30 at 11pm MT.
- Start to read the books

SECTION ONE: GUIDING QUESTIONS & THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Book: Lydia A. Fillingham, *Foucault for Beginners*

Week 2: 01/24 to 01/30: Introduction: El Paso’s “Safety” and the Border Wall?

In Week 2 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

Week 3: 01/31 to 02/06: Concepts: What is violence?

In Week 3 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student’s post.

Week 4: 02/07 to 02/13: Concepts: What is crime?

In Week 4 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

Week 5: 02/14 to 02/20: Concepts: What is power? And: One region or two cities?

In Week 5 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student’s post.

SECTION TWO: GENDER & VULNERABILITY IN THE TRANSFRONTIER METROPOLIS

Book: Debbie Nathan, *Women and Other Aliens*.

Week 6: 02/21 to 02/27: Violence against women

In Week 6 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

Week 7: 02/28 to 03/06: Journalists and stories of gender-based violence

In Week 7 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student's post.

Week 8: 03/07 to 03/13: The Border Patrol and violence against migrant women

In Week 8 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test
- Book review possibly due

*** Mid-term will be activated on 03/07 and will be due on 03/10 by 11pm**

Week 9: Spring Break: 03/13 to 03/17

SECTION THREE: DOES PUNISHING CRIME STOP VIOLENCE?

Book: Sandra Rodriguez Nieto, *The Story of Vicente...*

Week 10: 03/20 to 03/27: Criminal impunity as a cause of violence in Juárez

In Week 9 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student's post.

Week 11: 03/28 to 04/03 Killing journalists in Juárez

In Week 10 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

Week 12: 04/04 to 04/10: If El Paso is "safe" who is it "safe" for?

In Week 11 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student's post.
- Book review possibly due

SECTION FOUR: EL PASO'S CRIMINAL TENDENCIES

Book: Gary Cartwright, *Dirty Dealing*.

Week 13: 04/11 to 04/17: Do people from El Paso profit from the war on drugs?

In Week 12 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

- Film review of *The Border*, 1982, dir. by Tony Richardson and starring Jack Nicholson, due on 04/17.

Week 14: 04/18 to 04/24: What does local control mean for policing El Paso?

In Week 13 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student's post.

Week 15: 04/25 to 05/01: Is El Paso a city or a national security installation?

In Week 14 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Take the test

- Book review possibly due

SECTION FIVE: AN ADDICT'S VIEW OF CIUDAD JUÁREZ/EL PASO

Book: Scott Comar, *Border Junkies: Addiction and Survival on the Streets of Juárez and El Paso*.

Week 16: 05/02 to 05/04: What do addicts make of Ciudad Juárez/El Paso ?

In Week 15 module on Blackboard: do the readings and/or view the content, and:

- Submit a post to the discussion board and comment on another student's post.

- Book review possibly due.

Finals week: 05/08 to 05/12: Virtually, via Blackboard

*** Final exam will be activated on 05/08 and will be due on 05/12 at 11pm**