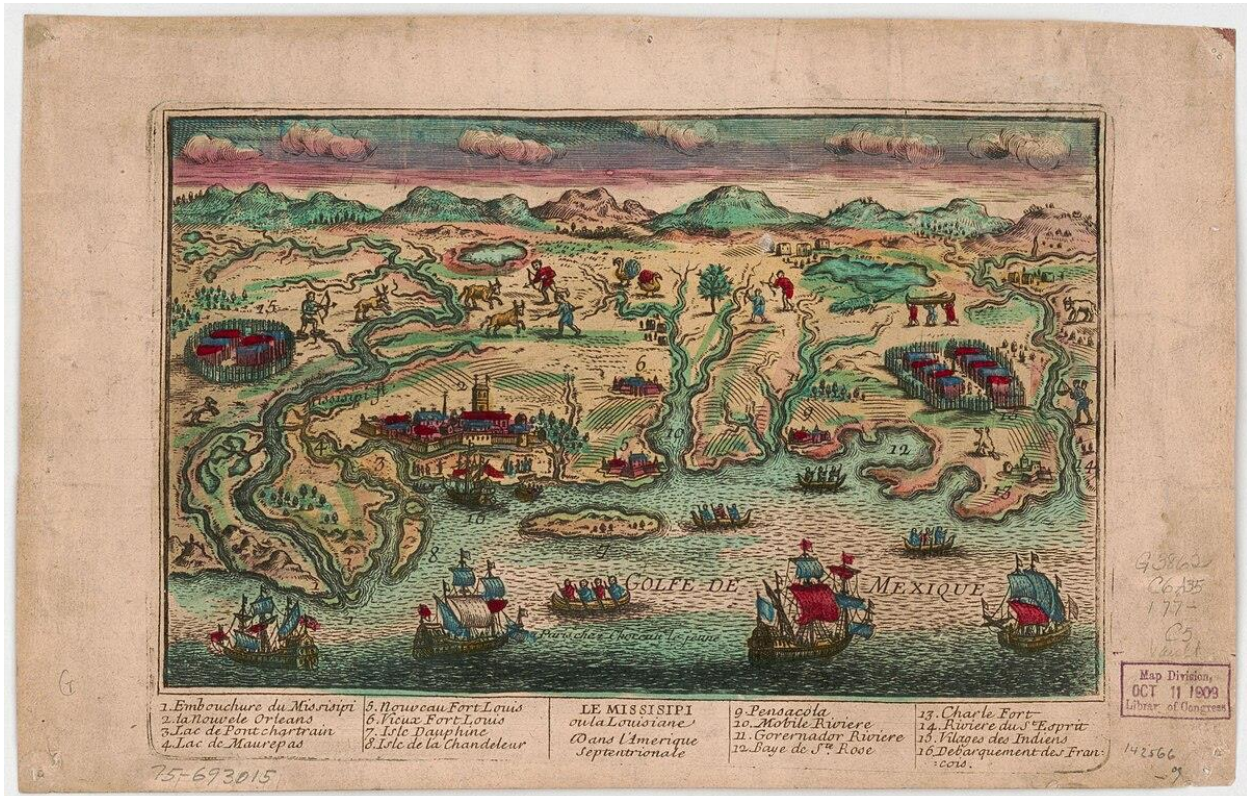


HTS 2052: North American Borderlands | Fall 2026
Instructor: Dr. Elena Telles Ryan



Course Description

Introduction to the history of early Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California in the Spanish Colonial period. This course also introduces the history of the Northern Great Lakes borderlands during the French and British colonial period. The course proceeds chronologically, beginning prior to European arrival and proceeding to the early nineteenth century. Each week will highlight a different theme, giving the class an opportunity to dive more deeply into the ritual, religion, violence, ecology, culture, exchange, justice on the borderlands.

Learning Objectives

Over the course of the semester, successful students will:

- Build historical knowledge of the history of the colonial era borderlands. Students will be able to recall key events and define relevant terms.
- Students will be able to describe changes over time, summarize historical movements, and discuss source material.
- Students will be able to analyze, compare, and contrast historical sources and moments in borderlands history.
- Students will be able to formulate historical arguments and present their findings.

Students will demonstrate these learning objectives through their class participation, discussion posts, the midterm, reading quizzes, a writing assignment, and one final presentation.

Required Readings

All required readings will be available on Perusall via Canvas or the GT library.

Grading and Assignments

1000 total points possible

300 points: Participation

The participation grade includes attendance/in-class participation, notes on the reading, and engagement with fellow students' discussion leading.

1. First, students will be graded on their level of participation in discussion. Because not all students are equally comfortable with sharing their insights, visits to office hours and participation in small group discussions in class will also factor into the spoken half of the grade. Good participation is not simply talking a lot but rather adding to the discussion productively which always requires strong preparation. This will amount to half the participation grade.
2. Secondly, students are expected to do each class meeting's assigned readings *before* that class meets. They will access the readings through Perusall, adding 5 comments per week throughout the text. Students may respond to one another's comments toward their total of 5 comments. The comments may not all be on one page but should cover the breadth of the reading and must be substantive points about specific parts of the reading.

150 points: Two In-Class Midterms

These tests will ask students to remember and define terms highlighted through the semester, identify events and explain their significance in short answer questions, and analyze events and sources in context in one long answer questions and will be administered at intervals during the term.

150 points: Discussion Leading

Students will lead discussion in groups once per semester, walking the class through sources and leading the source analysis and discussion through questions that invite exploration.

200 points: Reading Quizzes

Five brief readings quizzes throughout the semester will assess students' completion of the assigned reading. Each quiz will ask students to identify the author and date of a primary source and answer questions about sources assigned for the homework. The lowest grade will be dropped

200 points: Location Project & Presentation

Students will choose a single place and period and make a case for that place being a borderland. Over the course of the semester, students will draft a 6-8pp paper with the following components:

- I. Introduction

- II. Statement of argument
- III. Context
- IV. Argumentation based on sources
- V. Conclusion

Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on their findings during the last two weeks of class. Students are required to meet with the instructor at least once over the course of the semester in office hours to discuss the topic and argument. Places must be approved by the instructor by the mid-point of the semester.

For any assignments, grade disputes must be made known in writing within one week of receiving the grade in question. I reserve the right to adjust assignments and assessments to better suit the learning needs of the class. Any adjustments or extra credit opportunities will be communicated clearly with the class.

Final Grades Rubric out of 1000 points possible:

900 and above = A

800-899 = B

700-799 = C

600-699 = D

Less than 600 = F

Academic Integrity & AI

Intellectual exchange is a critical element of a vibrant scholarly community. To protect the integrity of that community, students are required to cite every instance in which they borrow from or refer to another's idea, language, or other element of another's work. Students are welcome to study with one another, share study guides, visit the Writing Center, and seek additional feedback from the instructor. Students are also encouraged to draw from the whole body of readings, lectures, discussion posts, and sources assigned as part of this class *so long as* all references, quotations, allusions, summaries, or paraphrases are properly cited giving credit to the original author or speaker. Students found to be using AI in graded assignments will be considered in violation of the academic integrity policy. Students suspected of AI use who are unable to provide prior drafts or proper references may be subject to failing the assignment in question. All cases of academic dishonesty will be immediately referred to Student Judicial Affairs. Students with questions are welcome to contact me or to consult the Georgia Tech Honor Code, found here: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>.

Technology Policy

Except as a reasonable accommodation, laptops and other electronics are not to be used in class. At best, they function similarly to pen/pencil and paper for notetaking and, at worst, get in the way of individual and class learning. Students will be expected to come prepared with notetaking materials and keep electronics stowed during class time.

Attendance

Each unexcused absence will result in a loss of 10 participation points. Arriving late will result in a loss of participation points proportionate to the amount of class time missed. Excused absences are any absences cleared with the instructor at least 24 hours in advance and with the appropriate documentation.

Late Work & Missed Quizzes or Exams

Late work will not affect assignment grades if accompanied by documentation. All other late work will drop a partial grade following the deadline and another for each additional 24 hours without submission. For example, if an assignment is due at 5pm on a Wednesday and a student turns in a paper on Friday at 6pm, the maximum grade that student can achieve is a B (3 partial grades deducted). Missed exams will be addressed on a case by case basis. It is the student's responsibility to reach out to the instructor within one (1) week of a missed exam/quiz.

Communication & Office Hours

I am very happy to meet or to correspond over email. I will reply within 24 hours to all emails sent between 9am Monday and 5pm Friday unless I've notified the class otherwise or unless the Institute is on break. I ask that students treat email as formal communication.

Office hours will be established by a Canvas poll during Week 1.

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Student Faculty Expectations Agreement

The Student-Faculty Expectations enumerate the instructor and the students' responsibilities towards one another. Most essentially, I strive to create a classroom characterized by mutual respect and generous scholarly exchange.

Week 1

Syllabus overview, assignments, expectations.

What is a borderland? When and where is it? Who are the peoples of borderlands?

- Adelman and Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* (1999)
- Hämäläinen and Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* (2011)

Week 2 | Indigenous Borderlands before European arrival

- Weber, "Spanish Borderlands, Historiography Redux"
- Rivaya-Martinez, "Indigenous Borderlands"
- Papal Bull (discussion on primary vs. secondary sources, thinking critically about borderlands methods)

Empires of the Atlantic World, The French in North America (Eccles)

Reading Quiz 1

Week 3 | Early Encounters and Contests

- Excerpts from the Narrative of Alvar Nuñez Cabeça de Vaca
- Testimony of Ginés de Herrera Horta on Spanish Treatment of Pueblo Indians, (1601)

Week4 | Religion and Empire

- Account of Bishop Crespo's visit to New Mexico (1730)
- Great Lakes Vital Records Mackinac (1695-1740s)
- Selections from the Jesuit Papers (1637-1653)

Reading Quiz 2

Thursday: Discussion

Week 5 | Borderlands Slavery, Freedom, and Captivity

- Brooks, James F. "'This evil extends especially ... to the feminine sex': negotiating captivity in the New Mexico borderlands." *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996)
- Governor Etienne de Périer considers using enslaved Black troops (1730)
- San Antonio Slave Sales (1788)

Thursday: In-class writing workshop: what is in a successful introduction?

 Week 6 | Conflict and Violence in Spanish and French Colonial borderlands

- Robert Morrissey, “Bison Algonquians: Cycles of Violence and Exploitation in the Mississippi Valley Borderlands” *Early American Studies* (2015)
- French Sources on the “Fox Wars” *Wisconsin Historical Collections* vol. XVI

 Week 7 | Cultural and Economic exchange

- Maheo, all-creator father, warns the Cheyenne about life with horses
- Selections from Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* (1767)
- McKenzie on the horse and gun trade (1805)
- Susan Sleeper-Smith, Introduction in *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (2001).

Tuesday: Midterm 1

 Week 8 | The borderlands family, gender, and social relations

- Tracy Brown, “Intimate Ties: Marriage, Families, and Kinship in Eighteenth-Century Pueblo Communities” in Adams, David Wallace, and DeLuzio, Crista, eds. *On the Borders of Love and Power: Families and Kinship in the Intercultural American Southwest*. (2012)
- Barbara Aguirre’s Petition for a Divorce, (1831).
- Elizabeth Baird, “Reminisces” (1824).

Reading Quiz 3

 Week 9 | Order and justice on the borderlands

- Bianca Premo and Yanna Yannakakis, “A Court of Sticks and Branches: Indian Jurisdiction in Colonial Mexico and Beyond,” *The American Historical Review* (2019)
- Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara’s Constitution of Texas (1813)

In-class writing workshop, thinking about place in groups, workshopping paper outlines

 Week 10 | Fracture and change on the borderlands – waning empires

- Pontiac urges Odawa, Potawatomi, and Huron to rise against the British (1763)
- Fernando de la Concha on New Mexico Borderlands (1794)
- José María Sanchez on Tejanos and Anglo-American Immigrants (1828)
- Andrés Reséndez “National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821-1848” (1999)

 Thursday: Discussion, *Reading Quiz 4*

 Week 11 | The Age of Revolutions and their Borderlands (American Rev, then Mex)

TUESDAY: Rough Drafts Due to Peer Review Groups

- Kathleen DuVal, Chapter 5, “New Alliances, 1765-1800,” in *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (2007).

- Juana de Dios Machado de Ridington's Interview. (~1840-78)

Thursday: *Reading Quiz 5*, Peer Review session in-class

Week 12 | Native nations, politics, and diplomacy

- Michael Witgen, "Seeing Red: Race, Citizenship, and Indigeneity in the Old Northwest." *Journal of the Early Republic* 38 (2018).
- Omar Valerio-Jimenez, Chapter 4 in *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands*. (2013).

Week 13 | The Legacies of Borderlands

- Kelly Lytle Hernandez, "Borderlands and the Future History of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, (2011).
- Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, "California Dreams or Colonial Nightmares?: St. Serra, the Missions, and the Borderlands of Memory," (2016).
- Photographs of Brownsville and Matamoros, 1864-1867

Tuesday: Midterm 2

Week 14: April 21, 23 | Presentations

No readings

Week 15 | Conclusions

Selections from *La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldua, Discussion