



INSTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN  
EN ESTUDIOS NORTEAMERICANOS  
"BENJAMIN FRANKLIN"

<b>Course</b>	A Border is a Story
<b>Program, semester, year</b>	International Studies Program, Spring 2025
<b>Credits ECTS</b>	3 USA
<b>Instructor's full name and email</b>	Daniel Runnels, runnels@ucmo.edu
<b>Block dates (days and time)</b>	Monday-Thursday, 9am-12pm
<b>Classroom</b>	TBA
<b>Class hours</b>	45
<b>Office Hours</b>	TBD
<b>Requirements</b>	
<b>Language of instruction</b>	English
<b>Type of teaching</b>	In person

## INTRODUCTION

In this course, our goal will be to consider borders, taking up lines of inquiry that come from political thought, philosophy, literature, and film. This course does not purport to solve complex issues or definitively answer longstanding and complicated questions about borders; our task is, rather, to *think* about borders. We will therefore engage in a serious and sustained reflection on a number of problems that have preoccupied scholars, artists, and policymakers who think about borders and related questions of sovereignty, movement, place, citizenship, identities, and more. As with any complex social and political issue, there are a wide range of views regarding what borders are and what they do. For some, national borders are natural and necessary demarcations between sovereign nations. For others, borders are cultural and political constructs that exacerbate false divisions. Framing the border as a story, we will examine how its characters, events, and themes vary depending on the teller and their interests.

Course objectives:

- Students will explore how borders function both as barriers and gateways, filtering people, goods, and nature differently.
- Students will consider various aesthetic representations of borders through fiction, memoir, film, art, and music.
- Students will investigate the ways government policies contribute to both solutions and problems surrounding border regions.
- Students will learn about how marginalized populations contest imperialism and militarization of border zones.
- Taking the US/Mexico border as a primary case study, students will engage in comparative analysis of border regions in other parts of the world.

### **Note on course content**

Some of our texts deal with sensitive topics, including violence, trauma, racism, etc. Each student should be prepared to talk about these topics in a mature and respectful manner. If you think it would be beneficial to have a conversation about your engagement with texts that include these themes, please feel free to email me before the relevant class periods and we can set up a time to discuss.

## COMPETENCES

### **General Competences (GC):**

GC1: Understand some of the theoretical and conceptual tools for studying borders and transborder communities

GC2: Research and present original analysis of borders in both written work and oral presentations

### Specific Competences (CE):

SC1: Analyze competing discourses about the US/Mexico border

SC2: Engage in comparative analysis about border regions in Spain and around the world

### METHODOLOGY

This course takes a theoretical and conceptual approach to the border as its main mode of inquiry, so students interested in a range of geographic contexts are welcome in this course. At the same time, one of our recurring case studies will be the US/Mexico border as theorized in policy, political philosophy, film, and literature. Taking this particular border as a main case study will 1) allow students to build on previous knowledge of competing discourses about the US southern border, and 2) provide the course with a common example that can be used to push students to engage in comparative thought about borders in other parts of the world including, but not limited to, borders in the Spanish national context (for example, movement across European Union national borders, the Strait of Gibraltar that separates southern Spain from northern Morocco, and more). This kind of comparative analysis may include a visit to the local organization "Refugiados de Alcalá" (<https://www.refugiadosalcala.es/>), an organization that works in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers in Spain.

### PREPARATION FOR CLASS

- Students will need to read all the articles and book chapters related to the topic before coming to class. While in class, students should show preparation of the readings by asking relevant questions and making comments related to the topic.
- Students should think about questions and relations of the texts with other previous knowledge. At every point throughout the class, students should push themselves to engage in comparative analysis between different border contexts around the world.
- Students should take notes during class presentations and discussions.

### EVALUATION

Students in this course will be evaluated on the basis of participation in class discussions, written work (both in class and as homework), occasional short reading quizzes, two exams, one oral presentation, and participation in any class trips. See below for grading distribution.

PARTICIPATION	20 %
ACTIVITIES AND FIELD TRIPS	10 %
TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS	20 %

EXAMS	25 %
QUIZZES	10 %
ORAL PRESENTATION	15 %

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a violation of academic norms and as such it can result in a failed course. In extreme cases it can include the expulsion from the program.

**ATTENDANCE (Instituto Franklin-UAH Policy)**

Attendance is mandatory. Students are not permitted to miss any classes of the program without proper justification (i.e. emergencies, health problems, in this case students have to show a medical note). The following types of excuses are not justified: family visits, illnesses without a medical note, personal trips, etc. Each unjustified absence will result in a grade deduction of 10 points in the final grade of the class (example: from A to B). Students will not be allowed, in the classroom or field trips, to arrive 10 minutes late or more. If a student has continual delays, he/she will be penalized with an absence and the instructor may not allow them into class or the visit.

**STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (Instituto Franklin-UAH Policy)**

Students with special needs should contact Antonio Fernández: [antonio.fernandezm@uah.es](mailto:antonio.fernandezm@uah.es)  
Instituto Franklin-UAH can accommodate these students who show through a medical note or a note from their academic advisor that require help in order to fulfill the program.

**USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS**

The use of technology is essential today in education, but if it is used inappropriately it can be harmful for students. It is necessary that students ask for permission from the teacher in order to use any technological devices. Faculty should make clear to students in what instances technology can be used.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

All course readings and other texts will be available online or through our course Blackboard page.

## INSTRUCTOR



Dr. Daniel Runnels

[runnels@ucmo.edu](mailto:runnels@ucmo.edu)

Dr. Runnels is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Central Missouri. His research and teaching interests include literature, culture, political thought, and critical theory.