History 410/510

“Come Here, Don’t Come Here”:
The Immigrant Experience in America

Spring 2010
Tues/Th. 2:00-3:20 pm
185 Lillis
Office Hours: Mon, 3:45-5:15 pm
or by appointment

Bob Bussel
LERC-1675 Agate Street
346-2784
bussel@uoregon.edu

Americans frequently describe themselves as a “nation of immigrants” and take pride in this characterization. Whether portrayed as a “melting pot” whose homogenizing processes encourage immigrants to shed their previous identities and fully embrace American values or a “beautiful mosaic” that permits newcomers to retain elements of their old culture in the process of becoming Americanized, America’s ability to absorb successive waves of immigrants has distinguished it from other nations and is often cited as an example of national strength, generosity, and uniqueness.

Nonetheless, Americans have displayed ambivalence toward immigration, repeatedly debating its costs, benefits, and impact on social, political, and economic affairs. Throughout our history we have worried about the effect of immigrants on our standard of living, questioned their willingness to accept American ideals and standards, suspected their loyalty, and doubted the nation’s capacity to integrate successfully people from unfamiliar cultures and backgrounds. At the same time, immigration has also had numerous supporters. Advocates of generous admittance policies have argued that a democratic nation has the obligation to serve as a beacon of hope and a place of refuge for those seeking economic, religious, and political freedom. Others claim that the spirit, energy, and vitality of immigrants have been integral elements in fueling America’s economic success and sustaining its cultural vitality. As a result of these competing views, Americans’ attitudes toward immigration have fluctuated across a “come here, don’t come here” pendulum that has often erupted in sharp social and political conflict.

In History 410/510 we will review this complex history from a variety of perspectives that encompass the many social forces and social actors affected by the movement of people across distances both great and small. The following questions will guide our inquiry: who are the immigrants that have come to America, and what factors prompted them to immigrate? How have Americans responded to the presence of newcomers in their midst? How have immigrants adapted to their new environment, and what strategies have they employed in their quest for social acceptance? What are the implications of this history for the current social and political debate surrounding immigration? Addressing these questions will help place the current social debate over
immigration in a broader context and provide a historical perspective that is often lacking in contemporary discussion of this challenging subject.

Class Requirements

I. 3-5 page essay due April 15
II. 5-7 page essay due May 13
III. Take-home final exam

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is essential to one’s personal integrity and the integrity of the class. Plagiarism or other forms of cheating are serious offenses and are unacceptable.

Format

Tuesday’s class will be largely done in a lecture style. A segment of Thursday’s class will be reserved for discussion. Film clips will be used extensively throughout the term. I strongly encourage your participation in discussions and welcome you to offer comments and questions during lectures.

Grading

I. 3-5 page essay 20%
II. 5-7 page essay 30%
III. Take home final exam 40%
IV. Attendance and participation 10%

Late work will be penalized by one half-letter grade for each day it is overdue.

Graduate Students

Graduate students taking this course for credit as History 510 will write a 15-20 page paper due at the end of the term as their major class assignment. A prospectus outlining your topic will due by April 13. Graduate students will also meet separately with the instructor on several occasions during the term to discuss the weekly readings.

Readings

Course readings are available in a class packet that can be purchased at the UO Bookstore.
Books for the course are also available at the UO Bookstore. They are:

Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace*


Readings for the course will also be on reserve at the Knight Library.

**Syllabus**

**Week I: March 30, April 1: “A Nation of Immigrants”**

Readings:

David M. Kennedy: “Can We Still Afford to Be a Nation of Immigrants?"

Charles Hirshman, “The Impact of Immigration on American Society: Looking Backward to the Future”

Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge”

**Week II: April 6, April 8: The Irish and German Experience**

Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, Parts One and Two, 3-208

• Film: from PBS series on NYC

**Week III: April 13, April 15: Southern and Eastern European Immigration**

Thomas Bell, *Out of This Furnace*, Parts Three and Four, 209-413.

First Paper Due
Week IV: April 20, April 22: The Indispensable Enemy: The Chinese and Japanese Experience on the West Coast

Readings:


Week V: April 27, 29: Women, Children, and the Immigrant Family

Reading: Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, xii-106

Week VI: May 4, 6: Internal Migrants and Race Relations: The Great Migration


Film: “The Killing Floor”

Week VII, May 11, 13: The Doors Close

Paper II due

Readings:

- Henry Cabot Lodge: “The Restriction of Immigration”
- Randolph Bourne, “Transnational America”
Week VIII, May 18, 20: Immigration and Wars, Both “Hot” and “Cold”

Reading: Ernesto Gamboa, *Mexican Labor and World War II*

Week IX, May 25, 27: The Doors Re-Open

Readings

From Al Santoli, *The New Americans*

“Tradition,” 85-102
“House of Donuts,” 208-233
“Little Haiti,” 352-365
“The Blue-Eyed Cuban,” 368-392”

From June Namias, *First Generation*

“Oscar Chacon: That War Has Been So Ruthless,” 212-228

Nancy Foner, “Immigrant Women and Work: Then and Now,” 89-105

Week X: June 1, 3: Immigration in the Twenty-First Century

Guest Speaker: Gosia Wozniacka, immigration reporter for *The Oregonian*

Film: “Immigration on Main Street”

Readings:

*Oregonian* interviews on immigration