



L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective (1981), Barbara Carrasco and Community Artists

Latinx Literatures of Los Angeles

January 17-February 21, 2024

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, UC Berkeley

No U.S. city has been a hotspot of Latinx creativity quite like Los Angeles, California. Focusing on Latinx literature from the so-called City of Angels, this course will explore poetry, fiction, plays, and non-fiction pieces by a variety of 20th-century and contemporary Latinx writers invested in using the written word to negotiate forms of urban place-making and belonging in the city of L.A. We will trace the treatment of themes like place-making in U.S. urban centers, *xicanismo*, and decolonial histories of Los Angeles. Writers to be discussed include Luis Valdéz, Verónica Reyes, Helena María Viramontes, Rubén Martínez, Héctor Tobar, and more.

Instructor Information

Karina Palau, PhD

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Please email me anytime if you have questions or would like to meet and discuss our course readings. If you reach out to me by email, kindly allow me 24 hours to reply.

Books for Purchase

Please purchase physical or electronic copies of the two novels that will be central to our course:

- *Their Dogs Came with Them*, Helena María Viramontes
- *The Barbarian Nurseries*, Héctor Tobar

Short Readings (to be provided in PDF form)

Readings listed below include plays, poems, essays, and excerpts from longer texts. All these will be made accessible to our learning community in PDF form.

- *Zoot Suit*, Luis Valdez
- Excerpts from *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City, and Beyond*, Rubén Martínez
- Poems by Verónica Reyes, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Marisela Norte
- "The Folklore of the Freeway," Eric Ávila
- "Spiritual Plan of Aztlán/*Plan espiritual de Aztlán*," a founding manifesto of the Chicanx movement (1969)
- Selections from *Latino U.S.A.: A Cartoon History*, Ilan Stavans & Lalo Alcaraz
- "*Americanismo*: City of Peasants, Los Angeles, California," Héctor Tobar

Recommended Visual Resources

These materials are not required, but they may serve as helpful reference points throughout our course, especially as they speak to Latinx (hi)stories of L.A.

The Great Wall of L.A., murals by Judy Baca and community artists

L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective (1981), Barbara Carrasco and community artists

Art and maps by contemporary L.A. artist Sandy Rodriguez

Chicano! History of the Mexican-American Civil Rights Movement (1996), four-part PBS documentary series available through Kanopy and many library systems

Zoot Suit Riots, PBS American Experience episode

Zoot Suit, film adaptation directed by Luis Valdez

Course Schedule

Week 1: January 17, 2024

"The border moved": Founding Mythologies of L.A. and the Displacement of Latinx (Hi)Stories

No assigned readings

Week 2: January 24, 2024

"Your war is on the homefront": Chicane Retellings of the Los Angeles War Years

Readings to be discussed

- *Zoot Suit*, Luis Valdez
 - "Blood on the Pavements," Carey McWilliams
 - Excerpted panels from *Latino U.S.A*
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Week 3: January 31, 2024

Reclaiming Aztlán: Chicane Activism in 1960 and 70s L.A.

Readings to be discussed

- "Yo soy Joaquín," Rodolpho 'Corky' Gonzales
 - "Spiritual Plan of Aztlán/*Plan espiritual de Aztlán*"
 - Selected chapters from first half of *Their Dogs Came with Them*, Helena María Viramontes
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Week 4: February 7, 2024

"Under the Shadow of the Freeway": Roads to Latinx Belonging in the City of Freeways

Readings to be discussed

- Selected chapters from second half of *Their Dogs Came with Them*, Helena María Viramontes
- Poems by Lorna Dee Cervantes, Verónica Reyes

Week 5: February 14, 2024

L.A. as Transnational Borderlands, Part I

Readings to be discussed

- “*Americanismo*: City of Peasants, Los Angeles, California,” Héctor Tobar
- First half of *The Barbarian Nurseries*, Héctor Tobar

Week 6: February 21, 2024

L.A. as Transnational Borderlands, Part II

Readings to be discussed

- Finish *The Barbarian Nurseries*, Héctor Tobar

¡Mil gracias! Thanks so much for taking this journey with us!