

Professor: Dr. Mariana Alessandri

Office: ARHU 302 (across from elevator)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 and Thursdays, 3-4pm (these hours are set aside for you, to talk to you about class or life or philosophy or graduate school or anything. You do not need to make an appointment to come by during these hours. If you have scheduling conflicts and can't come during these hours, please email me to make an appointment.)

Email: mariana.alessandri@utrgv.edu

Required Books

- 1) Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Orbis Books 1996) ISBN# 978-1570750816
- 2) Virgilio P Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Orbis Books, 2005) ISBN# 978-1570753107

All other readings are on Blackboard

Course Description

This class counts for the Philosophy degree, the Religious Studies minor, Mexican-American Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies. In addition, this class will be taught bilingually. This means you can turn in any assignment in Spanish, English, Spanglish, or in Spanish and English. You are also welcome to speak Spanish in class. For those of you who do not know Spanish, don't worry. Since many of us know both languages, we will always translate all comments into English. For those who do not feel strong in English, come see me after class or in office hours.

In this course I want to look at the relationship between religion and the real life of Latinx people, what I will be calling "Kitchen Theologies" after the 17th C. Mexican nun and poet Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. In the first half of the course, we will be studying more "popular" forms of religion, including the worship of la Virgen de Guadalupe, altars, shamanic healing practices, and Mujerista theology. During this time I will ask you to conduct a genealogy of your family's religious history, in an effort to situate yourself religiously (or non-religiously) in the context of your family. This genealogy will be presented orally to the whole class and also in written form. You will also write an essay on your choice of popular religious ritual, perhaps one that you practice or one that you have been curious about.

The second half of the semester will be dedicated to talking about Latinx theology as it relates to social justice, specifically immigration into the U.S. Since UTRGV is situated 15 miles north of the Mexico-U.S. Border, and since approximately 50 immigrants are detained and released every day to the McAllen bus station, we have a unique opportunity to think about what Latinx theology has to do with immigration. During this second half of the semester, you will dedicate approximately 9 hours to the Humanitarian Respite Center, which is located near both Sacred Heart Church and the bus station in McAllen. Here, they offer newly detained and released immigrants a shower, new clothes, food, and hygiene products for their journey to the rest of the country to await their immigration trials. Three visits to the HRC will give you a first-hand experience of immigration in the Valley.

Course Objectives

- 1) **What I want you to know:** I want you to know that there are many religious practices and theologies specific to the Latinx community, and that there are many different and helpful ways to think about God and religion. By the end of the class I want you to know your religious beliefs better than when you started. I want you to know that most civil rights and social justice movements are religiously motivated. I also want you to know what is going on 15 miles south of where you go to school.
- 2) **What I want you to do:** I want you to talk to your family and to think about your own relationship to religion in light of your history. I want you to work with undocumented immigrants to have a first-hand experience of the local issues that are part of the RGV. Finally, I want you to write about your experiences in the light of the readings to make some sense out of what you see.
- 3) **Who I want you to be:** I want you to see yourself as the kind of person who has a lot to offer to yourself, your family and your local community. I want you be the kind of person who has a positive influence on the world, beginning in your own backyard. I want you to feel more clear about your relationship to religion and religious practices.

Summary of Grading

Attendance	10 points
Reading Responses (9 in total, 2 point each)	18 points
Religious Genealogy Oral Presentation	5 points
Religious Genealogy Written Project	10 points
Essay on Popular Latinx Theological Practice	20 points
3 Humanitarian Respite Center Visits (4 points each)	12 points
Oral Presentation on Immigration and Local Learning	10 points
<u>Final Essay/project on Immigration and Local Learning</u>	<u>15 points</u>
Total	100 points

ATTENDANCE: You are permitted to miss **four** class periods throughout the semester with no penalty. Here is the breakdown for your attendance grading:

A+ = no missed classes (extra credit)

A = 1-4 missed classes (full 10 attendance points)

A- = 5 missed classes (9 attendance points)

B+ = 6 missed classes (8 attendance points)

B = 7 missed classes (7 attendance points)

B- = 8 missed classes (6 attendance points)

C = 9 missed classes (5 attendance points)

D/F = 10 missed classes or more (0 attendance points)

Reading Response papers (9 in total = 18 points)

To ensure that we have good discussions in class, you are going to respond, in writing, to the weekly readings. I will give you a detailed handout on what will be expected in these responses, but in general they are short, personal responses intended to get you thinking about what you are reading and to have something in mind to talk about in the next class. They will be due on most Thursdays.

Religious Genealogy Oral Presentation and Project (5 points for the oral; 10 points for the written)

During the first few weeks of the semester, you are to figure out where you stand in terms of your family's relationship to religious practices. You are to write or draw a genealogy, which will involve talking to as many members of your family as you can. Interview them and create a genealogy of theology and religious practices. You will be presenting these to the class, so we have an idea of who we all are and where we are coming from. For example a lot of people mistakenly think that all Latinx are Catholic, which is not true. I want you all to feel comfortable in your own skin, whether you are religious or not.

Essay on Popular Latinx Theology (20 points)

At some point in the first few weeks of the semester, some ritual or practice should pique your curiosity. You are to do some research on this practice and write about it in a traditional 4-5 page essay. Your sources will include books, experiences and conversations with others.

3 Humanitarian Respite Center Visits (4 points each = 12 points)

You will visit the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen three times throughout the second half of the semester. The HRC's mission is to "restore human dignity" to those who are entering our country. While you are there, you will guide the immigrants through the process of getting a hot meal, new clothes, a shower, and a phone call to family members. Each visit will take about 3 hours. You will learn what to do the first time you visit. Plan to arrive around 3pm any given day, and to leave around 6pm. The HRC is open 7 days a week and there are immigrants going through there every day (433 people in one day was the highest number in 2014; now it's about 50 each day). Each time you go will count for 4 points toward your final grade. With three visits, you will have a good sense of what they do there, why, and what impact they are having in the world on the issue of immigration. We can set up carpools for those who have no car, and you can also go with someone from Dr. de la Trinidad's Civil Rights class, because they have the same service learning requirement.

Final Project on Immigration and Religion (25 points total: 10 points for oral and 15 for written)

While you are doing your local community and service learning, you should be thinking about the theologians and philosophers we are reading to connect the classroom to the real world and to your own life. Your final project will be an oral presentation and an essay or project on the topic of immigration and religion. This project will be due the week before the last week of classes. More details to follow.

Late Work and Email: Late work will be accepted within a reasonable time frame, for a reduced grade, upon approval from professor. If you have consistent trouble turning work in on time, please come and talk to me during office hours. If you email me (mariana.alessandri@utrgv.com) and I don't email back, then assume I haven't received it.

Calendar of Activities

Some important dates for Fall 2017 include:

August 31 Last day to add a course or register for fall 2017

November 15 Last day to drop a course; will count toward the 6-drop rule

November 23 – 26 Thanksgiving Holiday – NO classes

December 6 Last day of classes

December 7 Study Day – NO class

December 8 -14 Fall 2017 Final Exams

December 15-16 Commencement Ceremonies

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to initiate services. Accommodations can be arranged through SAS at any time, but are not retroactive. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. **Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. **Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD: Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (<http://my.utrgv.edu>); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available: Nov. 15 – Dec. 6

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY: As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE: In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

COURSE DROPS: According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

Learning Objectives for Philosophy Degree: This course may be taken to fulfill a requirement for a B.A. in Philosophy. Students who graduate with a degree in philosophy from UTRGV are expected to have attained a certain level of intellectual development which is characteristic of the intense study of philosophy. The goals for all philosophy classes that count towards the major in philosophy include, in combination with the particular goals for the course, the following objectives:

1. **CRITICAL THINKING AND READING:** Students will demonstrate well-developed critical thinking and reading skills orally and in writing.
2. **HISTORY:** Students will describe the history of Philosophy, by identifying and distinguishing between the major historical and conceptual divisions of philosophy, the positions within those divisions, and major thinkers who contributed to those periods and specializations.
3. **COMMUNICATION:** Students will exhibit well-developed oral and written communication skills; will respond effectively to questions and criticisms of presented material.
4. **ALTERNATIVE POINTS OF VIEW:** Students will demonstrate the capacity to accurately present, analyze and evaluate historically underrepresented philosophical concerns, positions and traditions.
5. **PERSONAL, CIVIC, AND/OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Students will articulate and evaluate their various activities, identities, values, and goals in order to develop a flexible strategy for ongoing personal growth, community engagement, and/or professional achievement.