

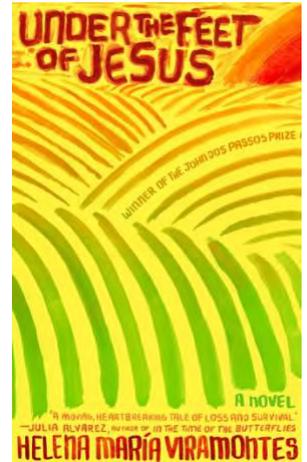


Helena María Viramontes' *Under the Feet of Jesus*: A Teaching Guide

The UO Common Reading Program, led by the Division of Undergraduate Education & Student Success, builds community, enriches curriculum, and engages research through the shared reading of an important book.

About the 2019-2010 Book

A story of loss and survival, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1996) is a lyrical, powerful novel about the lives of the children, women, and men who endure a difficult existence and labor under dangerous conditions as migrant workers in California's fields. Through central characters like the teenagers, Estrella and Alejo, and Estrella's mother, Petra, the book explores interrelated topics of farm labor, health care, material resources, and environmental justice. The title of the book refers to birth certificates and other important documents kept in a portable statue of Jesus that moves with the family to each new location along the agricultural production cycle. *Under the Feet of Jesus* won the John Dos Passos Award for Literature.



About the Author

In addition to *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Helena María Viramontes is the author of numerous short stories and the novel, *Their Dogs Came With Them*. Viramontes has co-edited two collections: *Chicana (W) Rites: On Word and Film* and *Chicana Creativity and Criticism*. The Goldwin Smith Professor of English at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, she is also recipient of a United States Artist Fellowship among other awards and fellowships. Her writings have been widely anthologized and adopted for academic study such as the critical reader, *Rebozos De Palabras*. A community organizer and former coordinator of the Los Angeles Latino Writers Association, Viramontes is a frequent lecturer in the U.S. and internationally. *Their Dogs Came With Them* has recently been adapted into a play. She is finalizing a draft of her third novel.

About this Guide

This guide offers the UO community peer-reviewed curricular resources and activities to support students' engagement with *Under the Feet of Jesus*. The guide raises the meaningful teaching challenges and opportunities that *Under the Feet of Jesus* presents by bringing forward the book's major themes and contexts – along with suggested source materials, concrete activities, and discussion questions. Do you want to know more about how to use the book in your class, program? Are you undecided if you are ready to use the book? Contact the UO Teaching Engagement Program (tep@uoregon.edu) or Common Reading Faculty Fellow, Julie Voelker-Morris, (jvoelker@uoregon.edu). Are you using the book in your class, program, or student group? [Let us know via this link!](#) Or email, commonreading@uoregon.edu

About Teaching Difficult Topics

In conjunction with this Teaching Guide, the UO Teaching Engagement Program (TEP) provides [Strategies for Engaging with Difficult Topics, Strong Emotions, and Challenging Moments in the Classroom](#). TEP offers proactive advice for approaching discussion questions and activities in relation to the key themes of this novel.

Teaching Guide Authors

The teaching guide for *Under the Feet of Jesus* was developed during the Fall 2018 graduate seminar, Topics in Environmental Justice. Students researched the book and its related themes, developed curricular practices and discussion questions, and had their work reviewed by UO faculty. This graduate level course, under the direction of Dr. Sarah Wald, included:



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Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Define **environmental justice** and **environmental racism** and identify these in real world examples and examples from the text. Students should be able understand that these concepts intersect with other forms of oppression (e.g. gender, class, sexuality) and do not exist in a vacuum.
2. Identify and describe their own positionality within a global/national/local and unevenly distributed risks (including exposure to toxins, degradation of environment, limiting of access to resources, and corresponding social/physical ramifications).
3. Analyze different types of environmental justice stories and consider how different representational forms (e.g. novel, digital atlas, news article, etc.) change the way we think about the stories.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is concerned with the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens within and across communities and the meaningful involvement of all peoples when making these decisions. The “environment” of environmental justice refers to the places where we live, work, play, and pray—in other words, our everyday environments. Environmental Justice began as a grassroots social movement in the 1970s when the disparate placement of toxic waste facilities in poor communities of color was made widely visible through activism and protest by community members.

This everyday burden placed on communities of color is called **environmental racism**, a concept evident today through nationally visible stories such as the continuing struggle over clean water in the primarily black community of Flint, Michigan. Because of EJ’s origins in grassroots community social movements, these issues are often perceived as being geographically bounded—affecting only specific communities or nations, but environmental justice is also transnational, transborder, and present in most communities. A deeper look reveals how global and transnational systems of power interact to create or escalate environmental injustices, thus attentiveness to these larger systems is a key facet of EJ scholarship.

Discussion Questions

- Have the students consider where and how they see environmental justice stories appearing in the media. What role does/should the media play with regard to Environmental Justice? How does one sustain attention? Do certain voices tend to be

privileged in the media? If so, whose voices? What are some potential remedies that might ensure more voices are heard?

- How do we connect the concepts of **structural violence** to those of EJ and Environmental Racism? Can you think of any institutions or systems that impact how exposed Estrella and her family are to risk?
- Environmental Justice struggles are often framed as a matter of place, or struggles for particular concrete communities, but these issues and their influence often span borders and nations. Have your students consider how EJ issues are transnational and transborder. How might environmental racism in other nations combine with economic inequality, lack of jobs, and hierarchies of power to drive people to migrate to the United State for work? How does this displacement of the immigrant and migrant worker change the way we must consider resistance?
- In an interview with Joni Adamson, Teresa Leal said: “Back then, we didn’t call what we were doing ‘environmental activism.’ We just called it ‘survival.’” Compare and contrast EJ activism and the everyday lived actions of the characters in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. Things to consider include: the characters’ experience of toxicity, the attitude of farm owners and foremen toward potential exposure and the different forms resistance can take.

Class Activities

Activity A: Representing Environmental Justice

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1 & 3
- Approximately 80 minutes

First, using either (or both) of these short EJ videos provided in the resources below (“Environmental Justice, Explained”; “A Brief History of Environmental Justice”), introduce your students to the concept of environmental justice. As a class, briefly outline on the board the different issues the students identify as essential to the concept. If needed, offer them the EJ definition listed in the glossary of this guide to help facilitate their thinking (10–20 minutes).

Second, split the students into groups of 4–5 where they will first spend 10–20 minutes discussing where and how they see environmental justice issues represented in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. If needed, direct students to the moment when Alejo is sprayed by pesticides (pp. 76-78) or Estrella’s memory of a toxic irrigation ditch she didn’t dare swim in (pp. 32-33). Ask the students in a group to reflect on their emotional responses to these environmental justice (EJ) moments and consider what you find to be effective (or ineffective) about using fiction to represent these EJ struggles.

Next, have each of the student groups select one of these three digital archives of environmental justice issues: *Just Stories*, *Voices from the Valley*, or the “Environmental Justice Atlas.” Spend 20–30 minutes having students explore their chosen digital archive. As a group, describe how these EJ stories are represented (statistics, personal narratives, images, etc.), making sure to consider the visual and interactive features of the archives, their geographic scope (do they consider the global and transnational effects of EJ issues?), or any other aspects relevant to your course’s area of study (e.g. this activity could be expanded for journalism courses to consider ethical representation). After the groups have been given sufficient time to explore and describe what they found in their archives, take approximately 5 minutes for individual written reflections. How did the students respond differently to the digital archive versus the novel? Did they find one medium more productive than the other for instigating care

and engagement in the topic? Are there aspects of EJ issues that lend themselves to one of these representational approaches more than the other? Debrief as a class (20– 30 minutes), making sure to elicit insights from groups working with each of the three digital archives.

Activity B: EJ At Home

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3
- Approximately 80 minutes

If you undertook Activity A in a previous class, take a minute and have students collectively jog their memories about what concepts are involved in EJ (15 minutes).

As a class, read Newkirk's Atlantic article and begin to connect the dots between EJ and environmental racism. (You may want to prepare yourself for discussion by reading Laura Pulido's interview with David Pellow.) Prior to opening up the class for discussion, talk to your students about the types of evidence that are useful in your discipline. How might scholars or community members use individual and collective storytelling and activism alongside quantitative data? Stress the agency that people of color exercise in fighting for their communities. During class discussion, guide students to consider the way that this article addresses environmental racism, in comparison with how EJ issues may be covered in the daily news cycle. (You may want to have some examples on hand, in case your students cannot recall any EJ or environmental racism newspaper articles or news clips). This should take 40 minutes.

Give your students the following free-write prompt: Consider EJ and/or environmental racism issues in a place you identify with (your community, a place you once lived, a place that matters to you). Did this issue impact you personally? How did you learn about it? Was it covered in the media, if yes: how so? Who controlled the narrative? Allow the students to free-write/brainstorm for the rest of the class. Allow students to use their devices to look up events/media coverage and encourage them to ask you questions (25 minutes).

Have the students hand in a 1–2 page reflection at the next class period. You may use these responses as a platform for further discussion. Can they see connections between the community/place they chose to write about and the broader national and global EJ context?

Resources

“Principles of Environmental Justice.” First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>

“Environmental Justice, explained” *Grist*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dREtXUij6_c

Newkirk, Vann R II. “Trump’s EPA Concludes Environmental Racism is Real.” *The Atlantic*, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/the-trump-administration-finds-that-environmental-racism-is-real/554315/>

“A Brief History of Environmental Justice.” *Propublica*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30xLg2HHg8Q>

Pulido, Laura. “Conversations in Environmental Justice: An Interview with David Pellow.” *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 43–53. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10455752.2016.1273963>

Farm Labor



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Summarize the multifaceted history of farm labor in the United States and position the experiences described in *Under the Feet of Jesus* within this history.
2. Describe the everyday experiences of **farmworkers** in the United States in relation to work, housing, **belonging**, access to healthcare and education, and environmental hazards.
3. Explain how farm labor is gendered, classed, and raced.
4. Identify ways in which farmworkers have implemented empowerment strategies, such as farm labor organizing.

In the United States, the farmer is often depicted as the embodiment of American independence, hard work, and grit. However, Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* does not focus on the figure of the oft-idealized, land-owning farmer. Instead, it focuses on the overlooked lives of **farmworkers** in California—those who are employed in order to cultivate, till, grow, harvest, and otherwise work to produce agricultural goods. Unlike some portrayals of farmworkers such as *The Fight in the Fields* and *Dolores*, Viramontes's novel does not offer a story of organized collective action around labor. Rather, the story narrates the day-to-day lives of farmworkers in ways that challenge popular narratives about farm labor and farmworkers, including dispelling the myths that 1) all farmworkers are **undocumented** immigrants and 2) all farmworkers are immigrants from Mexico and Central America. In the process, the novel highlights connections between farm labor and everyday experiences of toxicity, chronic stress, and health issues, underscoring the ways in which farmworkers in the U.S. experience greater risk of exposure to toxins while, at the same time, lack access to healthcare. Further, *Under the Feet of Jesus* offers a glimpse of the gendered experience of farm labor, including the phenomenon known as “the second shift” that describes the workload of people, usually women, who not only work to earn money, but also spend more time on “care work,” e.g. household chores and caring for children and sick family members.

Discussion Questions

- How does the focus on Estrella, Alejo, and the farmworker community portrayed in *Under the Feet of Jesus* challenge popular conceptions of farmworkers and their experiences in the United States? For example, how does the novel contest myths that all farmworkers

are immigrants, men, or adults? How does it challenge our understanding of farmworker labor, housing, and/or healthcare?

- Does *Under the Feet of Jesus* expand our ideas of what constitutes valuable work? If so, how? In the novel, what work is paid, and what work is unpaid? Who does which kind of work in the novel? Identify places in the novel that present instances of “care work,” e.g. work done to care for members of a household, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and caring for children, the elderly, or those who are ill. Where and when do these activities of care work occur? How does such work function in the novel?
- In the novel, Estrella is given a flyer with a black eagle on it. This is the symbol of the United Farm Workers. She stuffs the flyer in her back pocket because she is too tired to read it. Why does the novel include this moment? What is the effect of not making farm labor organizing more explicit? The novel is dedicated to the memory of César Chávez. How does this change how we understand the novel?
- In what ways does Viramontes acknowledge the multifaceted history of farm labor in the United States? How does she position her characters within this larger narrative?

Class Activities

Activity A: How It's Maid

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1 & 2
- Approximately 50–80 minutes

Project the images of the Sun Maid raisin box (1970) as well as Ester Hernandez's "Sun Mad" (1982) and "Sun Raid" (2008) on a screen. Discuss how the original box of raisins depicts the farm labor of picking grapes. What stands out to you about the image? To what is the eye drawn? What does this depiction communicate about the labor that provides this food item to certain communities within the greater public? How does the Sun Maid attire compare with that of actual farmworkers? Does it matter that the person depicted is a woman? Why or why not? (20–30 minutes)

Next, discuss the ways in which the novel critiques the image of the woman on the box of raisins. Direct students in a close reading of pages 49–50, the scene in which Estrella problematizes the image of the Sun-Maid Girl. What other parts of the novel contest Sun Maid's representation of farm labor? How does the Sun Maid image contrast with the everyday experience of farmworkers in the novel? (15–25 minutes) Finally, project Hernandez's "Sun Mad" (1982) and "Sun Raid" (2008) on a screen.

Questions to consider: What does Hernandez add to Viramontes's critique? Compare and contrast the two pieces, which are separated by 26 years. To what historical events might these pieces be responding? Discuss the novel, published in 1995, in relation to this timeline of historical events and cultural productions (15–25 minutes).

Suggested alternative: Look at "Sun Raid" (2008) on a screen but bring in boxes of Sun Maid raisins and visit the JSMA's exhibition featured their purchased copy of "Sun Mad" (1982) to experience the artwork in person for the discussion and critique suggested above. JSMA staff could lead students in a Visual Thinking Strategies approach to understanding these images individually and in relationship to one another.

Activity B: What's the Story?

- Addresses Learning Objective 2
- Approximately 50–80 minutes

First, ask students to construct a timeline of events from the novel (20–35 minutes). On a chalkboard/whiteboard/docucam, draw a long timeline beginning with Perfecto's birth, around 73 years before the novel's present (potentially in 1917), and ending with the publication of the novel in 1995. Ask students to come up with and write in events from the novel in chronological order. Give them ample time—depending on the size of the class—to insert events and to amend entries by other students. Encourage small-group discussion between students at the board in deciding where events should fall on the timeline and about why the book might shift and blur time. What becomes evident when the boundaries of time and space blur? Once complete, in a large group, discuss the effect of having most of the action of the novel set in the late 1980s/early 1990s—in contrast to other representations of farmworkers that focus on the 1930s.

Next, ask students to identify the characters in the novel using the timeline (10 minutes). Who are the main characters? Mention to your students that all of the characters in the novel are either U.S. citizens (Estrella and her siblings, Alejo, Gumecindo) or documented residents (Perfecto). It's true that Petra's status is unknown, but it is likely that she is also either a U.S. citizen or documented. What kind of activities are these characters doing?

Then, ask students to investigate which type of events they put on the timeline (20–35 minutes). Were the moments chosen inclusive of the routine activities discussed in the novel? What kinds of work performed in the novel appear on the timeline? Which kinds of work are likely paid, and which are likely unpaid? Introduce students to the concepts of “care work” and “second shift” using the following videos:

- “Who Cares: Unpaid Care Work, Poverty and Women's/Girls' Human Rights.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Institute of Development Studies, 7 October 2013, <https://youtu.be/VVW858gQHoE>.
- “The Second Shift: Arlie Hochschild.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, 5 December 2016. <https://youtu.be/mvzE6zYkEQY>.

How does the novel assign value to different kinds of work?

Activity C: History of Farm Labor

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1 & 4
- Approximately 50–80 minutes

This activity is designed to encourage students to learn more about farm labor and the history of agricultural work in the United States through research and in-class discussion. This can either be an entirely in-class activity, or an assignment that asks students to research the history of farm labor outside of class and to come prepared to discuss their findings with their peers. Depending on the size of your classroom, divide students into groups and assign them a topic to research. Topics could include: settler colonialism; plantation slavery; sharecropping; Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino workers; Mexican workers prior to World War II; The Bracero Program; Post-Bracero Program migration; and contemporary farmworkers (especially Indigenous workers). Ask students to come prepared to provide their classmates with a historical overview of their topic, as well as a timeline of major events related to their topic, ideally in the form of a brief presentation (5–10 minutes each). Students should also attend to forms of farmworker resistance during the research process. If your classroom is equipped with a blackboard, whiteboard, or document camera, this is an opportunity to create a class-wide timeline based on their group's

findings. Once the timeline is complete, open the class up for discussion. Possible questions for a class-wide discussion include: What observations do students have about the individual and collective timelines? Where are the moments of distinction and overlap? How do these histories of farm labor inform one's reading of *Under the Feet of Jesus*?

Activity D: ¡Si, Se Puede!

- Addresses Learning Objective 3
- Approximately 50–80 minutes

In preparation for this activity, assign students to read Inga Kim's blog post "[The Rise of the UFW.](#)"

Next, ask students to identify their prior knowledge of labor organizing and unions (5–10 minutes).

Then remind students that *Under the Feet of Jesus* is dedicated to the memory of César Chávez and introduce them to the work of César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, Philip Vera Cruz, and Larry Itliong who led the fight against the exploitation of farmworkers (20–25 minutes).

Next, ask students to investigate the ways we see both farmworker exploitation and activism historically and in the present moment. What does it mean to *organize* labor? To unionize? To go on *strike (huelga)*? What is so powerful about striking or boycotting agricultural products like grapes or lettuce? (20–25 minutes)

Finally, where do we see the UFW showing up in *Under the Feet of Jesus*? In what ways beyond farm labor organizing can we see examples of farmworkers empowering themselves in the novel? (15–20 minutes). Use [UFW's](#) extensive website as a resource.

Resources

"Forgotten Voices: The Story of the Bracero Program." YouTube, 6 December 2010,

<https://youtu.be/AL5d9CWV0Xg>.

Bowers, Devon Douglas. "Debt Slavery: The Forgotten History of Sharecropping. The Hampton Institute." November 7th, 2013 <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/sharecropping.html>.

Gamboa, Erasmo. "Braceros in the Pacific Northwest: Laborers on the Domestic Front, 1942–1947." *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 56, no. 93, August 1986, pp. 378–98.

Greene, Ronmie. "Poisoning Workers at the Bottom of the Food Chain." *Mother Jones*, 25 June 2012, <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2012/06/pesticides-farm-workers-pois-on-epa/>.

Holmes, Seth. "Our Food System Hurts: Living with Migrant Farmworkers." *YouTube*, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 4 Mar 2015, <https://youtu.be/MTS9FdddXDY>.

Horton, Sarah Bronwen. "Presión Alta: The Physiological Toll of Farm Work." *They Leave Their Kidneys in the Fields: Illness, Injury, and Illegality among U.S. Farmworkers*. University of California Press, 2016, pp. 96–123.

Menchaca, Martha. "Political Relations and Land Tenure Cycles in Santa Paula: Chumash Indians, Mexicans and Anglo Americans." *The Mexican Outsiders: A Community History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California*. University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 1–30.

Raibmon, Paige. "Picking, Posing and Performing: Puget Sound Hop Fields and Income for Aboriginal Workers." *Authentic Indians: Episodes on Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth Century Northwest Coast*. Duke University Press, 2005, pp. 74–97

Sarathy, Brinda. "The Marginality of Forest Workers." *Pineros: Latino Labour and the*

Changing Face of Forestry in the Pacific Northwest. UBC Press, 2012, pp. 76– 101.
Stephen, Lynn. “Transborder Labor Lives: Harvesting, Housecleaning, Gardening, and
Childcare.” *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*.
Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 95–172.

Wald, Sarah. “Visible Farmers/Invisible Workers: Locating Immigrant Labor in Food Studies.”
Food, Culture & Society, vol. 14, no. 4, 2011, pp. 567–86.

Food Justice



Learning Objectives:

Students should be able to:

1. Define **food justice** and analyze the systems that result in some communities being underserved/unable to access healthy food.
2. Critically analyze their own positions within food systems and relationships with these systems.
3. Identify the significance of food systems, the influences as to why these systems can be easily overlooked, and the consequences of overlooking these systems.
4. Provide examples of the ways communities promote **food sovereignty** and empowerment in food systems.

In *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Estrella and her family labor in the fields to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to the American public but themselves struggle to get access to those same foods. **Food justice** seeks to address these types of inequality in food systems, which are made up of production (Who is doing the harvesting? Under what conditions?), distribution (Which areas have access to healthful foods? What are the costs?), and consumption (Are culturally relevant foods available? How does access to nutritious food connect to health? What factors combine to create **food deserts**?).

Possible preconceptions that you will want to ward off with students include 1) an under-valuation of the importance of culturally appropriate food options and 2) an assignment of blame on individuals for health concerns related to an unhealthy diet. If these assumptions come up, try

to reframe the conversation with regard to accessibility or **food sovereignty** (i.e. the community's own agency in defining its food system).

For a more in-depth analysis of the production element of food (in)justice, see the **Farm Labor** section.

Discussion Questions

- Where and how are culturally relevant foods important in the text?
- Estrella's mother says to her: "Don't let them make you feel you did a crime for picking the vegetables they'll be eating for dinner" (63). To what extent do most people in the United States currently bifurcate (i.e. distance/obfuscate) the food they purchase/eat from the conditions under which that food is harvested/slaughtered? Do you feel like you know how food comes to arrive on your plate?
- As Estrella and her family interact with foods throughout the text, they are often framed through the branding of food items: e.g. "Carnation Milk," "El Pato Tomato sauce," or "Clabber Girl baking powder" (pp. 109, 119). How do you see the corporatization and commercialization of the food industry intersecting with food justice and/or food sovereignty?

Class Activities

Activity A: Introducing and Understanding Food Ways

- Addresses Learning Objectives 2 & 3
- Approximately 30–50 minutes

Split the class into groups and have them select one person's most recent meal (breaking down the ingredients) to answer the following questions on: what activities are involved in getting each of these ingredients to our plates? For example, how are the raw ingredients transformed into something we could eat? Who are the people involved at each step? What are the possible impacts that these ingredients have on the environment through their collection, distribution, and preservation? After enough time has passed to discuss, reconvene and hold a class-wide discussion of these questions. Follow this up with a free-write in which students individually consider their relationship to foodways/food justice.

Variations on this activity might involve working with UO Dining Services to create a project where students trace the origins of a meal in the Dining Halls back to the fields (be sure to clear this with Dining Services first). It might involve asking students to visit their local grocery store and/or take a food challenge. Common food challenges include the SNAP Challenge and an Eat Local Challenge. Students journal or blog about their experiences. If implementing a food challenge, be aware about how students' different histories of food access may shape their experiences both in the challenge and hearing their classmates' discussions of the challenge. The SNAP Challenge is experienced quite differently by students who have experience on SNAP than by students experiencing the difficulty of the SNAP budget for the first time.

Activity B: Considering Food Insecurity

- Addresses Learning Objective 1
- Approximately 50–80 minutes

First, as a class, develop a definition of what you believe "food insecurity" means (approximately 5 minutes). Next, break students into groups of 4–5 and have them brainstorm as a group different factors that might contribute to food insecurity (15–20 minutes). (Circulate to make

sure students consider what types of food are available [culturally relevant, healthy?], the cost of foods, access to cooking facilities, geographic location, and factors influencing a specific individual or population.) Encourage them to find examples from *Under the Feet of Jesus* or their own life experience to help identify different factors. Return discussion to whole class to write some of the factors the groups came up with on the board (15–20 minutes). Compare these factors to the definition of food insecurity you came up with at the beginning of class—does the definition still capture the issue or does it need to be edited? If needs editing, do this now.

Based on the different factors the group has identified, have the small groups consider (10–15 minutes): What types of communities or populations might be most food insecure? What geographic locations do they think might be the most insecure? Debrief as a class (20 minutes). Did any group come up with something surprising (e.g. about traits of food insecurity or which populations might be affected)? If there is time (and depending on your class length) you can have students consider what kinds of solutions there might be to solving food insecurity for these communities (20–30 minutes)—are there particular obstacles for certain groups? Why might a “one size fits all” approach not work for dealing with food insecurity?

Activity C: Community Empowerment & Food Sovereignty

- Addresses Learning Objective 4
- Approximately 65-90 minutes

If using this activity prior to other lessons on food justice and food insecurity, it is recommended that you use strategies from Activity B to introduce the concept of food insecurity and different factors that contribute to it to your students.

Begin by brainstorming as a class what the term “empowerment” means (15-20 minutes). Write these ideas on the board and have students consider what it takes to feel “empowered” as an individual (if necessary, prompt them to think about personal agency and control over their own lives, or how the concept of empowerment comes up in social activism). Explain to students that, while many organizations aimed at alleviating food insecurity do considerable positive work in their communities, sometimes these same organizations fail to support these communities beyond regular food boxes or transportation support for reaching grocery stores. In other words, they fail to sufficiently support the community’s food sovereignty, or their own control and agency concerning their food systems.

Next, have your students prepare to watch videos from three different organizations whose missions are all concerned with food justice issues (30-40 minutes). The students should take notes while watching the videos to identify: Who/What is the organization? What community (or communities) do they serve? What do they identify as the problem they aim to solve? What are the solutions they propose to do this? After each video, give the students approximately 5 minutes to write a paragraph reflecting on how they see each organization empowering, or not empowering, its community. If you’d like to extend these organization explorations beyond the videos, links to the organization websites are included.

- Organization 1: [Food for Lane County, “FFLC About Us”](#) (3:05 minutes)
- Organization 2: Ron Finley from [LA Green Grounds, “A Guerilla Gardener in South Central LA”](#) (10:39 minutes)
- Organization 3: [Huerto de la Familia, “Harvest of Pride: The Family Garden”](#) (13:27 minutes)

After watching the videos, reflect as a class about the different organizations, using the students’ notes as prompts if needed (20-30 minutes). How do each of the organizations address the issue

of empowerment? Are the communities served by each organization empowered in similar or different ways? Does the “problem” identified by the organizations inform the way they do or do not empower their communities? If needed, make sure it is clear to the students that all of these organizations are doing productive and positive work for their communities, they are just tackling these issues in different ways which result in different relationships with empowerment.

For a take-home extension activity, have your students research an organization that addresses food justice issues in an area that is meaningful to them (can be where they grew up or elsewhere). Have them write a 2-3 page report and reflection about the organization that addresses the following questions: What is the problem this organization aims to solve? Who does this organization serve? How do they serve this community? Does the student see this organization as empowering this community or supporting the community’s food sovereignty? Why or why not? What could be some ways this organization could better serve its community through empowerment?

Resources

- Bradley, Katharine. “Decolonizing Food Justice: Naming, Resisting, and Researching Colonizing Forces in the Movement.” *Antipode*, vol 48, no. 1, 2015, pp. 97-114.
- Food Empowerment Project. “Food Deserts.” *Food Empowerment Project*, 2018.
<http://www.foodispower.org/food-deserts/>
- Holt-Giménez, Eric and Breeze Harper. “Food—Systems—Racism: From Mistreatment to Transformation.” *Dismantling Racism in the Food System*, no. 1, 2016.
<https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DR1Final.pdf>
- Redmond, LaDonna. “Food + Justice = Democracy.” TEDxManhattan, 2013.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydZfSuz-Hu8>
- Saldivar-Tanaka, Laura, and Marianne Krasny. “Culturing Community Development, Neighborhood Open Space, and Civic Agriculture: The Case of Latino Community Gardens in New York City.” *Agriculture and Human Values*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2004, pp. 399–412.
- Silverbush, Lori and Kristi Jacobson. *A Place at the Table*. 2012.
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1736049/>
- United States Department of Agriculture. “Food Environment Atlas.” USDA, 2017.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/>
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Latinxs in the Pacific Northwest



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Describe how **Latinxs** have created and influenced places in the Pacific Northwest.
2. Broaden personal understanding of community, place, and identity in the Pacific Northwest by comparing the histories and cultures of Latinxs in this region to Viramontes's novel.
3. Understand the varied histories of Latinx migration to the Pacific Northwest, including contemporary transborder communities and the increased representation of Indigenous migrants.

Helena María Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* follows Estrella and her family as they work under hazardous conditions in the fields of California. Although the perspectives offered in the novel are specific to the characters and are by no means universal, they can function as a pivot to discussing local Latinx experiences and communities in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest more broadly. It is important to note that there is no singular **Latinx** experience in the Pacific Northwest or elsewhere.

Oregon and the surrounding areas are agricultural centers, and there is a rich labor history in this region. Latinx **farm laborers** have played central roles in transforming the region into a global wine, berry, and vegetable producing leader. In addition, Latinx workers have been employed in the timber industry for some time (referred to as **pineros**), and presence in this field has increased in the last decades. Latinx individuals have also shaped and reshaped small towns throughout the region. By creating small businesses and supporting local economies, Latinx groups have revitalized towns such as Woodburn, Umatilla, and Cornelius. There are also growing Latinx neighborhoods in Portland, Salem, and Eugene. In terms of **immigration**, most recent Latinx immigrants who live in Oregon are from Oaxaca and Michoacán in southern Mexico. Growing numbers migrants from Guatemala are also present in the Pacific Northwest.

Discussion Questions

- How might Estrella and Alejo's experiences in *Under the Feet of Jesus* as seasonal agricultural laborers be similar to the experiences of Latinx agricultural workers in the Pacific Northwest? How might they differ?
- What do you know about your personal family history? How might this history relate to Estrella's family history in *Under the Feet of Jesus*?

Class Activities

Activity A: Latinx Stories from Lane County

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1, 2 & 3
- 35–45 minutes (or assign as external work)

Either in class or for a homework assignment, ask students to watch Gabriela Martínez's "Latino Roots in Lane County: Contemporary Stories of Settlement in Lane County, Oregon." If shown in class, ask students to take notes and to pay attention to the documentary participants' personal stories and their relation to, and interaction with, space.

Questions to ask in class or for written prompts include: What insight does the documentary provide to lived experiences in Lane County? How does this inform or reshape your perspectives on Eugene and the surrounding area? How do the six stories from the documentary relate to and differ from the perspectives in *Under the Feet of Jesus*?

Activity B: Latinx Experiences in Oregon & California

- Addresses Learning Objective 1, 2 & 3
- Approximately 30 minutes

While California and Oregon share a border, an ocean, and a host of cultural similarities, there are many differences that distinguish these two states. In small groups, take ten minutes to discuss Jerry Garcia's "Latinos in Oregon" encyclopedia entry for *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Which sets of experiences, according to Garcia, are unique to Latinx individuals living in Oregon?

Once your group has finished discussing Garcia's encyclopedia entry, take 15 minutes to brainstorm three or four ways that the narrative of *Under of the Feet of Jesus* would differ if the story was set someplace in Oregon. What might remain the same?

Draw from the knowledge about Oregon Latinx cultures gained from Garcia's article while answering this question.

Your group might also consider if Viramontes's novel chronicles experiences unique to farm laborers in California, or if these experiences are shared by workers in Oregon. In addition, you might discuss if it would be possible for this novel to be set in an urban area such as Portland or Eugene.

Resources

- Garcia, Jerry. "Latinos in Oregon." *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hispanics_in_oregon/#.W-hQwXpKjq1.
- Latino Roots in Oregon*. University of Oregon, <https://latinoroots.uoregon.edu/about/>.
- Martinez, Gabriela. "Latino Roots in Lane County: Contemporary Stories of Settlement in Lane County, Oregon." *The UO Channel*, <https://media.uoregon.edu/channel/archives/1956>.
- Nelson, Lise. "Racialized Landscapes: Whiteness and The Struggle over Farmworker Housing in Woodburn, Oregon." *cultural geographies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2008, pp. 41–62.
- PDX Latinx Pride*. PDX Latinx Pride, <http://www.pdxlatinxpride.org/>.
- PCUN Collection. Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon, <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/pcun/introduction/>.
- Sifuentes, Mario Jimenez. *Of Forests and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest*. Rutgers University Press, 2016.
- Stephen, Lynn. "Guatemalan Immigration to Oregon: Indigenous Transborder Communities." *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, vol. 118, no. 4, 2017, pp. 554–83.
- . "Mexicans in California and Oregon." *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Duke University Press, 2007, pp. 63–94.

Belonging



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Explain how *Under the Feet of Jesus* critiques citizenship and posits **belonging** as a separate form of identity.
2. Respectfully discuss contemporary and historical issues concerning **Latinx** immigration, **citizenship**, and belonging.
3. Recognize harmful representations of Latinx individuals and cultures, and critique these negative portrayals.

People often think about national belonging in terms of citizenship and immigration. However, *Under the Feet of Jesus* complicates this understanding of belonging. The novel foregrounds the complex identity positions of Latinx individuals in the United States. These subject positions emerged from significant historical events that produced and continue to inform contemporary ideas of belonging. Alejo, for example, belongs to a **Tejano** family with roots in Texas that predate the 1848 **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**, which moved the U.S.–Mexico border south and west to the Rio Grande and imposed American citizenship on Mexicans living in the territory usurped by the United States. During the ensuing century, U.S. legislators increased restrictions against Mexican immigration through legislation, **border enforcement**, and **deportation**.

Around the mid-nineteenth century, farm labor shortages prompted policies that increased the numbers of **migrant laborers** immigrating to the U.S., bringing workers like Perfecto who yearns to return to his home in Mexico. At the end of the twentieth century, in 1994, the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** eliminated tariffs between Mexico, the U.S., and Canada, worsening living conditions for many in Mexico and precipitating increased immigration. In the same year, the State of California passed **Proposition 187**, a measure that banned unauthorized immigrants from accessing public education, health care, and welfare, and required officials to report individuals who were suspected of living in the state without proper documentation, resulting in racial profiling. Published a year after the Proposition 187 controversy, Viramontes’s novel emphasizes how racial profiling limits the benefits of citizenship. Estrella, for example, is a U.S. citizen whose birth certificate is kept safe under the feet of her mother’s Jesus statue yet she fears deportation and is unable to access healthcare and education. Further complicating citizenship as a necessary benefit bestowed by the state, Estrella’s mother, Petra, tells her that she belongs on earth, not to the United States.

Discussion Questions

- How does *Under the Feet of Jesus* represent the experiences of farmworkers who are U.S. citizens? Consider, for example, the scenes that describe Estrella's fear of La Migra and her mother's response. You may also consider the characters' treatment when they seek medical care for Alejo.
- How are connections to places, cultures, and identities discussed in the text? Consider, for example, Perfecto's yearning to return home, the role of the Spanish language and certain foods, and the corporations that employ Estrella's family. How do the issues of U.S. immigration and citizenship create, disrupt, or impact these connections?
- The characters in the novel claim multiple forms of belonging that often escape the legal framework of the nation-state. To what places do characters claim connections and relationships, and how are these forms of belonging discussed?

Class Activities

Activity A: Immigration & Contemporary Advertising

- Addresses Learning Objectives 2 & 3
- Approximately 25 minutes

Take five minutes to watch this [television advertisement for 84 Lumber](#) which aired during the 2017 Super Bowl. Before watching the ad, give students the following contextual information. Broadcasting company Fox refused to show scenes depicting parts of the border wall, so 84 Lumber originally aired a much shorter video without the wall and referred viewers to their website to see the full advertisement. The company's owner and president, Maggie Hardy Magerko, voted for Donald Trump during the 2016 election. Following backlash against the ad from both the political left and the right, 84 Lumber released the following statement: "We do not condone illegal immigration. The journey of the mother and daughter symbolizes grit, dedication and sacrifice.

Characteristics that we look for in our people at 84 Lumber [*sic*]. President Trump has previously said there should be a 'big beautiful door in the wall so that people can come into this country legally.' We couldn't agree more." Explain to students that 84 Lumber's use of the term "illegal" is inappropriate because humans can never be illegal and because citizenship is not a fixed category.

Have students consider the following question for 10-15 minutes in small groups or as a whole class: What does the advertisement and associated statement mask and reveal about the violence of contemporary immigration? Images to consider include the American flag scene, the footage of a continuous border wall complete with a large door, and the "journey" of a mother and her daughter. You might also consider why a lumber company, in particular, would produce such an advertisement and the final wording which reads: "The will to succeed is always welcome here."

Once you have finished discussing the advertisement, consider how *Under the Feet of Jesus* critiques the dominant narratives present in the ad. Some topics to consider when answering this question include citizenship, American identity, bodily labor, and belonging. Take 10 minutes to work on this.

In addition to the following activities, consider having the class identify the connections between this advertisement and the rise of anti-immigrant rhetoric in Oregon. Consider, for example, the hate group Oregonians for Immigration Reform or the recent Proposition 105 that was defeated in the 2018 midterm election. Have students read about OFIR and Prop. 105 [here](#).

A note on this activity: Students in your class may have different personal experiences with immigration. Students may be undocumented and/or have family members who are undocumented. It is important as you teach this commercial to attend to the diverse experiences of students. You may wish to point out to students that 84 Lumber's use of the term "illegal" is inappropriate and offensive and discourage students from referring to humans as "illegal."

Activity B: Race & Citizenship

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1 & 2
- 80–110-minute class, or can be divided into sections for shorter classes

This exercise asks the class to do a close reading of the scene in which Petra reveals the location of her children's birth certificates alongside a discussion of contested U.S. citizenship of Latinx and **Chicanx** peoples. Key concepts include citizenship, belonging, and **race**. Have students be prepared to discuss the following readings: Natalie Molina's chapter "'What Is a White Man?': The Quest to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship" in *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (2013) and/or William V. Flores's article "New Citizens, New Rights: Undocumented Immigrants and Latino Cultural Citizenship" in *Latin American Perspectives* (2003). (Alternatively, consider reading Ruth Gomberg- Muñoz's "Grounds for Exclusion: The U.S. Immigration System" in *Becoming Legal: Immigration Law and Mixed-Status Families* (2016) or a chapter from Leo R. Chavez's *The Latino Threat*.)

Begin the discussion by identifying key terms in relation to citizenship. Take 10 minutes to answer the following questions: How do the supplementary readings define citizenship, full citizenship, birthright citizenship, and cultural citizenship? (You might refer to Lynn Stephen's *Transborder Lives* (2007) to distinguish between legal citizenship and cultural citizenship during the class discussion.)

Then, in small groups, have students consider the case study of *In re Rodríguez* from Natalie Molina's chapter "'What Is a White Man?': The Quest to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship." Take 20–25 minutes to answer the following questions: What are the reasons the state gives to deny Ricardo Rodríguez's right to naturalization? Where/how do we see something similar taking place in *Under the Feet of Jesus*? Consider asking students whether or not they have assumed that certain farmworkers in the novel, such as Estrella and Alejo, are immigrants rather than citizens. Then, ask the following questions about citizenship: 1) How do categories of citizenship shape the experiences of humans in the United States? 2) What contributions do people without citizenship make to the nation-state? 3) In what ways is the designation of citizenship itself exclusionary? 4) What happens to Native peoples within the framework of citizenship? Consider how this designation defines human lives in relation to their contribution to the nation-state. 5) In what ways does the novel construct other forms of citizenship that exceed the framework of nation-state citizenship? Depending on the size of your class, you might assign one question to each small group and then put large pieces of paper up around the room for students to write their answers on in order to get students moving and standing. Once the small groups have finished answering these questions, take another 20–25 minutes to debrief and discuss small-group responses with the class, or to have students circulate around the room reading their responses and adding additional thoughts.

As a whole class, read the scene about **La Migra** (pp. 59–60) and "Under the Feet of Jesus" (p. 63). While reading, have students underline words and phrases that stand out to them, seem important, or are confusing. This should take 5–10 minutes. Then, ask everyone: How does

Estrella react when she believes La Migra is after her? Why might Estrella react in this manner? What is Petra’s response to Estrella’s fear? In what ways does the novel comment on the experience of citizenship for Latinx and Chicanx individuals? Class discussion should take about 15 minutes. Consider incorporating the Latino Roots documentary video “Carmen Urbina: My Journey to Activism,” which has dramatic commentary about La Migra.

Activity C: Citizenship & Environmental Justice

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3
- Approximately 50–80

The following exercise is adapted from the *Voices of the Valley* activity “Environmental Justice Stories.” To prepare, print out copies of the following stories from the *Voices from the Valley* website: Teresa DeAnda’s story, Ruth Martinez’s story, excerpts from Raji Brar’s interview, and excerpts from Mary Lou Mares’s interview.

If environmental justice is a term not previously discussed in class, provide a brief description or watch the video “A Brief History of Environmental Justice.” (Also, for additional definitions and discussions of this term, see the section of the reading guide on environmental justice and the glossary.) Have students read and discuss the stories in small groups of four to five, answering the following questions in 20 minutes: In what ways might a person’s citizenship status affect his/her/their ability to confront an issue of environmental justice in his/her/their community? How do issues of race and ethnicity figure into this story? How does this story compare/contrast to the story in *Under the Feet of Jesus*?

Bring everyone back together and ask one person from each group to briefly describe the story and then share their answers to the discussion questions. Help to identify any recurring themes for the entire group. The whole group response should take 15 minutes.

Resources

- Chavez, Leo R. The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation. Stanford University Press, 2013.
- Flores-Gonzalez, Nilda. “Latino Millennials: Citizens, But Not Americans.” *The Morning Show*, Wisconsin Public Radio, 12 October 2017, <https://www.wpr.org/listen/1173831>.
- Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth. “Grounds for Exclusion: The U.S. Immigration System.” *Becoming Legal: Immigration Law and Mixed-Status Families*. Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 16–45.
- Martinez-HoSang, Daniel. “They Keep Coming!”: The Tangled Roots of Proposition 187.” *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California*, University of California Press, 2010.
- Ponce, Fernanda. “What Being Hispanic and Latinx Means in the United States.” *YouTube*, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 10 April 2017, <https://youtu.be/Q1A4Vsh5Qas>.
- Saenz, Rogelio and Maria Cristina Morales. “The Diverse Histories of Latinos.” *Latinos in the United States: Diversity and Change*. Polity Press, 2015, pp. 7–23.
- Wald, Sarah. “Epilogue. ‘Tienes Una Madre Aquí’: Environmentalism and Migration the Twenty-First Century.” *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming Since the Dust Bowl*. University of Washington Press, 2016.

Education & Knowledge



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Use the novel as an entry point for critically examining and discussing the types of knowledge construction inherent in the “traditional” college classroom.
2. Explain how **institutional bias** functions in the education system’s privileging of certain languages, cultural backgrounds, and types of knowledge over others.
3. Orient students in a consideration of **situational knowledge** instead of book knowledge as a non-traditional, but significant and influential, form of knowledge.

While reading *Under the Feet of Jesus*, it is important to consider how the characters in the novel reflect on the structures of knowledge and education. Viramontes draws readers’ attention to the significance of education and knowledge in the characters’ lives both directly and indirectly. She points to Estrella’s early educational experience in a traditional school as one fraught with discrimination and disregard. Estrella finds more value in the literacy she gains from Perfecto, drawing an astute connection between mechanical tools and the alphabet/language. Another direct reference the author makes to education is when Alejo recalls his grandmother’s encouragement that he attends high school. He fantasizes about buying school supplies, returning to school, and studying geology in college, all while life circumstances seem to be propelling him down an entirely different course. This consideration confronts readers with whether this could ever be his reality. Viramontes also alludes to the influence of education and knowledge in subtler ways; in instances where characters draw from previous experiences to solve a current problem or address something new, readers are asked to modify their current understanding of education to incorporate **situational knowledge**. One example of this is when, on the way to the medical clinic, the car gets stuck and Estrella knows exactly what to do because “[i]t had happened before. The tire getting stuck in mud or sand was not new” (Viramontes 128). *Under the Feet of Jesus* interrogates the disproportionate attainability of education *and* the narrow cultural understanding of knowledge.

Discussion Questions

- Why does Alejo desire an education? What empowerment does he feel this might lend him, and why? Are his dreams inaccessible despite his U.S. citizenship? If so, why?
- Why does Viramontes use Perfecto's toolbox as a metaphor for Estrella's literacy?

- What are other moments of learning in the text for Estrella or other characters?
- What is the role of multilingualism in the text and the characters' education?

Class Activities

Activity A: Knowledge & Education in the U.S.

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3
- 45–50 minutes

This activity will give a platform on which students can interrogate what knowledge is, how it is formed, and why it is important in the context of the novel and real life. In the class before the discussion, assign students to do outside research pertaining to the discussion questions stated below. Consider assigning students the documentaries *Teach Us All* (2017) about the history and contemporary reality of school segregation in the U.S., and *Precious Knowledge* (2012), about Ethnic Studies curriculum in Arizona public schools. Using the novel, invite the students to discuss the following: what is knowledge? What is knowledge in Estrella's life? How does she form it? Why is it important to her? Consider the problems, historical and contemporary, in the U.S. education system presented in *Teach Us All*. Consider the effectiveness of the Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson High School chronicled in *Precious Knowledge*. What does each documentary suggest about the transformative power of education?

What models of education do they present? Thinking through both the novel and the documentaries, what do you think the purpose of education should be? How does the novel value education that occurs outside of the classroom? What is the relationship between education and knowledge? Consider assigning a 250-word response for students to bring to the discussion, assuring that they are prepared to discuss.

Activity B: Reflecting on Education & Knowledge

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1, 2, & 3
- 15–30 minutes

In class or as an assignment, ask students to reflect on their own experiences with education and knowledge. This can take the shape of a formal essay, a spatial map with short written reflections, or another type of visual project. Potential questions to ask include: What is their personal history with learning? How have experiential and situational forms of knowledge factored into their lives? What have been their greatest sources of knowledge? Is it formal institutions? Grandparents? Coaches? Books? The Internet? What did they learn from these sources? How is it similar to or different than that from *Under the Feet of Jesus*? What does it say about their own positionality?

Resources

Fusion. "For Many Child Farmworkers, Getting an Education is Almost Impossible." *YouTube*, Fusion, 4 Jan. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpi1kukUeaM>.

Millán, Daniel. "Undocumented and Distracted: How Immigration Laws Shape the Academic Experiences of Undocumented College Students." *California Immigration Research Institute*, Summer 2018, <https://ccis.ucsd.edu/files/CIRI%20Research%20Briefs/rb8-millan.pdf>.

Morin-Labatut, Gisele, and Shahid Akhtar. "Traditional Environmental Knowledge: A Resource to Manage and Share." *Development*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1992, pp. 24-30.

Purcell-Gates, Victoria. "Literacy Worlds of Children of Migrant Farmworker Communities Participating in a Migrant Head Start Program." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol.

48, no. 1, 2013, pp. 68-97.

Roosa, Mark W., Megan O'Donnell, Heining Cham, Nancy A. Gonzales, Katherine H. Zeiders, Jenn-Yun Tei, George P. Knight, Adriana Umaña-Taylor. "A Prospective Study of Mexican American Adolescents' Academic Success: Considering Family and Individual Factors." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2012, pp. 307–19.

Sheils, Jim. "The 6 Pillars of Experiential Education." *YouTube*, Family Board Meetings, 15 Jun 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAlCHO_kDr0.

Smith, Julia. "Voices From the Harvest: The Role of Language, Identity, and Life Experience in the Education of Young Children of Migrant Farmworkers." *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 2017, pp. 1–16.

Chicana Feminism/Xicanisma



Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Articulate how Viramontes engages with Chicana Feminist thought through her characterization and attention to feminist concerns, such as representation, reproductive justice, and the burden of the second shift.
2. Use the novel as an entry point to the theory of **intersectionality** and a Chicana Feminist approach to gendered/raced/classed experiences of privilege and oppression as connected to scenes in *Under the Feet of Jesus* and in their own lives.
3. Discuss the depictions of faith and religious practice in the novel, including Catholicism, in relationship to the novel's Chicana feminist perspective.

In the initial waves of feminism, the unique concerns of women of color were often treated as peripheral to those of white, middle-class women. Many **Chicanas** in the early Chicano Movement felt that their voices as women were going unheard. Alongside other women of color feminisms, Chicana feminists began to insist that an **intersectional** approach be taken up. Chicana feminism and activism focuses on the specific intersectional oppression Chicanas face (colonialism, **racism**, sexism, classism, heterosexism, etc.), potential paths to liberation, and the uniqueness of Chicanas as **mestiza**. Some members of the movement emphasized a reclaiming of the colonized land of

Aztlán as part of this connection to indigeneity. *Under the Feet of Jesus* opens with a young Estrella who, through the course of the novel, develops a sense of the multi-layered **borderlands** she faces as a Mexican American, member of the working-class, and Chicana within an anglo-androcentric culture. Tensions between women of color feminisms and the early waves of primarily white, middle-class feminism (a controversy that was at its peak during the novel's publication) are highlighted in the novel when Estrella confronts an embodiment of white middle-class feminism: the nurse. During the family's visit to the medical clinic, Estrella comes head to head with the nurse's indifference toward her family and herself, particularly with "[h]ow easily [the nurse] put herself in a position to judge" (Viramontes 144, 149). In addition, the author's strategic imagery of the mythical **La Llorona** throughout the novel draws on the Chicana literary practice of refiguring traditional images of disenfranchised women as embodiments of decolonized feminine power.

Discussion Questions

- How does a Chicana feminist lens help us understand the specificity of intersecting oppression and privileges (gendered/raced/classed) in the family, farm worker community, and greater social dynamics in *Under the Feet of Jesus*?
- In the moment with Estrella and the nurse, do you find yourself sympathetic toward the nurse and/or Estrella? Why? How do you see Estrella's role in this encounter? How might Estrella's confrontation with the nurse be interpreted as a critical feminist moment?
- In Chapter Five, Petra considers her own mother and grandmother's roles in connection with her relationship with Estrella. Why do you think Viramontes spends some time here introducing readers to the interconnectedness and individual personhood of "las mujeres de la familia" (Viramontes 165)? How and where do you see intergenerational relationships among women functioning in the text, and for what purpose?
- Where do you see religious imagery, figures, or practices in the novel? How do you interpret these images, figures, or practices in relation to the novel's Chicana feminist perspective? How might you interpret the meaning of the title *Under the Feet of Jesus*?

Classroom Activities

Activity A: Chicana Feminist Cultural Refigurations

- Addresses Learning Objectives 1 & 3
- Approximately 50-120 minutes

Introduce students to the history of La Malinche, La Llorona, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and the Aztec goddesses Tonantzin and Coatlicue in Mexican culture and Chicana literature (20–30 minutes).

- Option one: before class, read the first chapter of Debra J. Blakes' *Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art (2008)*, titled "The Power of Representation: History, Memory, and the Cultural Refiguring of La Malinche's Lineage," and present the information to students during class.
- Option two: assign students to read the first chapter of Debra J. Blake's *Chicana Sexuality and Gender: Cultural Refiguring in Literature, Oral History, and Art (2008)*, titled "The Power of Representation: History, Memory, and the Cultural Refiguring of La Malinche's Lineage," before class.
- Option three: use a combination of one of the previous options and representations in art. Give a brief historical account then provide images of La Virgen de Guadalupe, and then

provide images of La Virgen de Guadalupe by Yolanda López. Walk students through a comparison of the differing representations. Note the presence or absence of patriarchal, colonial, and religious influences. Also note that some scholars (such as Debra Blake) have interpreted the snake, traditionally under La Virgen's feet, as representing female sexuality. In Lopez's image, La Virgen de Guadalupe grasps it in her hand.

- Helpful resource: "La Malinche, La Llorona, La Virgen: My Mother's Ghost Stories" *The Hair Pin*, 2014. <https://www.thehairpin.com/2014/06/la-malinche-la-llorona-la-virgen-my-mothers-ghost-stories/>.

Next, ask students to think of a historical or mythical figure that has been important in their own life, family, or culture, and to reimagine that individual's traditional representation through a feminist lens, creating their own version of an archetypal figure. Allow them to capture these refigurations in whatever form they feel most confident, be it art, poetry, song, a short narrative, etc. (20–30 minutes).

- Option one: assign this as an out-of-class project
- Option two: give students 20–30 minutes in class to create a refiguration.

Have students briefly present their project in class. Ask them to specifically articulate what wrestling through the process of refiguration taught them, or how it furthered their understanding of Chicana feminism (20–30 minutes).

- Option one: informal and brief popcorn-style "presenting" from their seats
- Option two: give them an opportunity to practice developing a brief presentation and verbally articulating their work in front of an audience

Transition into a discussion on how Viramontes's novel is working in a similar way to dismantle patriarchal and colonizing representations. Consider preparing discussion questions to prompt and guide the conversation. Specifically, how do these refigurations allow the voices of Chicana women to be heard? How do they see Viramontes engaging with this practice? (30 minutes)

Activity B: What's in a Word?

- Addresses Learning Objective 2
- 50 minute class

Word Tree: Xicanx. Much like identities, etymologies of words are highly contested and frequently changing. Through an investigation and diagram of the word "Xicanx", students can engage each element of the word to discuss colonization, gendering, and reclamation of language. Start with the hypothesized Nahuatl/indigenous root of the word for people of current-day Mexico/southwestern United States (**Aztlán**): "Mexica" as pronounced closely to "Meshica" in English.

Next, ask students why they think the word was likely changed to "Mexicanos" in Spanish language. You can afterward explain to students colonization of language (both Spanish and English) and privileging of masculine word ending for the naming of peoples in Spanish (as those considered full people were men).

Next, ask students to explain why they think the identity term becomes "Chicana" by focusing on the beginning of the word and then the end of the word. Explain to students the reclamation of the "ch" sound for a word that describes identity. Explain the use of "a" ending in the gendering of Spanish language.

Then ask students why they think "Chicanx" ends in an "x" given the gendering of o/a

ending. Ask students why they think it might this be accepted or rejected? Ask students if they know of other modifications to these words. You can explain the strategic move to a more gender-inclusive identifier using the resource provided below.

Next, ask students why they think “Xicanx” has Xs at the beginning and end of the word. You can explain the reclamation of an even closer marker of Nahuatl pronunciation with beginning “X” combined with gender-inclusive marker at the end of the word. You can explain that these changes are still emerging, are inherently political, and emanate from social movements and scholarly work in the contemporary.

>Mexica (x pronounced close to “sch” in English)

>Meshicanos/Mexicanos (x then pronounced close to “h” in English)

>Chicana & Xicana

>Chicanx & Xicanx & Latinx

Helpful Resource: Flores, Joseph. “From Chicano to Xicanx: A brief history of a political and cultural identity”, Daily Dot, 2017.

Resources

Anzaldúa, Gloria. “Preface” and “Chapter 1.” *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
(Available at the UO Library)

“Borderlands, A Feminist Concept.” *Equality Archive*,

<https://equalityarchive.com/issues/boderlands-a-feminist-concept/>.

Cotera, Maria and Linda Garcia Merchant. “Chicana Por Mi Raza: Uncovering the Hidden History of Chicana Feminism.” *Chicana por mi Raza*, 2012,
<http://chicanapormiraza.org/content/visualizations>.

Curiel, Barbara Brinson. “‘Had They Been Heading for the Barn All Along?’: Viramontes' Chicana Feminist Revision of Steinbeck's Migrant Family.” *Rebosos de Palabras: An Helena María Viramontes Critical Reader*, University of Arizona Press, 2013, pp. 27-47.

“Helena María Viramontes.” *YouTube*, uploaded by mil mascaras, 21 Jan 2010,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBT8R7oHdFs>.

Martínez, Elizabeth. “La Chicana.” *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim. 3rd ed., Routledge, 2013, pp. 113-15.

Zavella, Patricia, Gabriela F. Arredondo, Aida Hurtado, Norma Klahn, and Olga Najera- Ramirez. *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Interpreting the Text: Questions to Enhance Class Discussion

This section is designed to enhance the reading of the novel for people across disciplines. It models the kinds of questions a literature instructor might ask of the text in order to make approaches to a literary text available to instructors and students across the disciplines. Author interviews and teaching resources are available at the end of this section.

Temporality & Setting

Under the Feet of Jesus has a nonlinear plot, meaning that it does not follow a structured timeframe and events are often presented out of chronological order. Viramontes constantly interrupts the narrative with flashbacks to, for example, Estrella's early childhood and Perfecto's adulthood before meeting Petra. Much like a memory arises at random, characters' past experiences appear seemingly out of nowhere and influence their thoughts and actions in the present moments. The setting, too, frequently shifts ambiguously to some other place or some other time. What effect does this technique have on the text? How does this time-warping affect readers' interpretation of the text?

Narrative Voice & Shifting Perspectives

The novel is told through the perspective of more than one character, seamlessly shifting between omniscient narratives with little punctuation. This type of narration can have the effect of muddling who is speaking and when, potentially influencing the readers' comfortability with the text. What does this style of narration through shifting perspectives provide to the story overall? How does it affect the progression of events that occur? What does Viramontes's minimal-punctuation formatting lend to the text?

Language & Code Switching

While the majority of the novel is written in English, Viramontes includes some terms, phrases, and passages in Spanish. Furthermore, the characters' encounter with the English-speaking nurse reveals that most of the dialogue between characters is actually in Spanish, despite appearing on the page in English. While non-Spanish speaking readers may feel a sense of distance at these moments, it is essential to critically examine what reading with this language barrier adds to the text as a whole. How does the reader's ability or inability to read Spanish inform their reading of the text? Refer back to the scenes where characters' code-switching (alternating between multiple languages or modes of speaking) is made apparent; how do these shifts in language affect readers' experiences of the text?

Imagery

Notice the vivid imagery in the text and how Viramontes uses specific recurring images to give the reader insight into what the characters think and feel throughout the novel. Key images scholars have paid much attention to include: bones, oil, and the La Brea tar pits; the barn and Estrella's moment of consciousness raising at the medical clinic; and the baseball scene which Estrella views from the train tracks. Why might Viramontes have used these particular images and what does she want to convey through their symbols and contexts? If a symbol is something tangible representing something abstract, what are the abstractions that Viramontes wants her readers to understand

through her imagery? What sentiments does Viramontes create for the reader through these specific images? Religious imagery also plays a significant role in the novel, particularly through the title and scenes that reference it. Who or what is under the feet of Jesus? What does this imagery convey about the story and characters?

Figurative Language

Viramontes's use of figurative language throughout the novel fashions a vivid world by appealing to readers' sense perception. For instance, Viramontes writes, "cars screeching with murderous brakes, long piercing dial tone of horns (the first of the month speeding faster than any car), the siren ring of the phone stilling her heart like spears of a broken clock" (18). This passage uses sound to communicate feelings of anxiety in the reader that Petra is experiencing in this instance. Viramontes often uses imagery and figurative language that the characters might have used or felt to make an impression on the reader, allowing them to relate to the characters in the text. How does figurative language communicate to the reader the character's feelings or additional information about the scene? What kind of imagery does she use to create the feelings that coincide with the character's feelings and with the text? Where can other examples of figurative language in the text be found?

Interpreting the Ending

Since Estrella's closing scene at the barn is ambiguous, presenting no one definitive resolution, it yields numerous potential interpretations. One thing that critics have noted is Viramontes's decision to commence and close the novel with the same image: the barn. The religious language used to refer to the barn, the flying imagery before and in this final scene, the events leading up to this point, and the emergence through both a physical and symbolic ceiling have also influenced critics' readings of the ending. Why might Viramontes have begun *and* ended with the barn? How might we interpret Estrella's actions? What prompts Estrella to make the climb? Is there any symbolism (using symbols/images to represent some larger idea) at play in this scene?

Teaching Resources & Author Interviews

[American Passages](#)—A unit on migrant struggles in U.S. literature contextualizing Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. It includes videos, timelines, a glossary, and activities.

"[Helena Maria Viramontes Honored at the Latino Spirit Awards.](#)" *YouTube*, uploaded by Blue Number Media, 3 June 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytKhYEC6c6Y>.

"[Helena María Viramontes.mov.](#)" *YouTube*, uploaded by mil mascarar, 21 Jan. 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBT8R7oHdFs>.

[University of Oregon Teaching Engagement Program Resources.](#) "TEP supports teachers across rank and discipline, building an inclusive, engaged, and research-led campus-wide teaching culture. It creates occasions for faculty and graduate student instructors to develop and refresh their pedagogy in dialogue with one another; to engage with campus, national, and scholarly conversations about excellence in higher education; and to use teaching insights to inform UO policy and core curriculum renewal."

Art & Media



Artists & Art Centers

- "Andrew Zermeño." *Hammer*, <https://hammer.ucla.edu/now-dig-this/artists/andrew-zermeno/>
- *Common Reading Exhibit*. Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, OR
- Emanuel Martinez. Emanuel Martinez, 2013, <http://emanuelmartinez.com/>
- Emilio Mercado. "Helen Chavez Button Collection" 1995, <http://amadeusmag.com/blog/viva-la-huelga-art-united-farm-workers/>
- Ester Hernandez. Ester Hernandez, 2012, <http://www.esterhernandez.com/>
- Juana Alicia. <http://www.juanaalicia.com/>
- Judith Baca. <http://www.judybaca.com/artist/>
- Luana Boutilier. "Brothers of the Sun," <https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/gallery/displayimage.php?album=2&pid=15>
- "Mechicano Art Center." *KCET*, 7 Nov. 2011, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/mechicano-art-center>.
- Susan Due Percy. "Farmworker Movement Art 1972." *Syndic Literary Journal*, <http://www.syndicjournal.us/syndic-no-6/art-50th-anniversary-farmworker-movement-by-susan-due-percy/>.
- "Yolanda Lopez." UC Santa Barbara Library, <http://emanuelmartinez.com/>

Community Resources

- PDX Latinx Pride. PDX Latinx Pride, <http://www.pdxlatinpride.org/>.

Documentaries

- Bergman, Lowell. *Rape in the Fields*. PBS Frontline and Univision. 25 Jun 2013. (Available at the UO Library) Description: Sexual harassment and sexual assault in the fields.
- Bratt, Peter. *Dolores*. 5 Stick Films. 20 Jan. 2017. (Available at the UO Library) Description: Celebration of farm movement organizer, Dolores Huerta.
- Campbell, Donna. *Harvest of Dignity*. PBS, 2012. Description: Farmworkers in North Carolina.
- Getzels, Peter and Eduardo Lopez. *Harvest of Empire*. Onyx Films. 28 Sep. 2012. (Available at the UO Library) Description: Broader history of Latinxs in U.S.
- Kennedy, Scott Hamilton. *The Garden*. Black Valley Films. 18 June 2008. (Available at the

UO Library) Description: Campaign to save community garden in Southern California.

- Rawal, Sanjay. *Food Chains*. Screen Media, 2014. (Available at the UO Library) Description: Agricultural Slavery in contemporary Florida.
- Roberto Romano, U., director. *La Cosecha*. Cinema Libre Distribution, 2011. (Available at the UO Library) Description: Human rights look at child labor in US agriculture.
- Silverbush, Lori and Kristi Jacobson. *A Place at the Table*. 2012. Description: Investigation of food insecurity in the United States.
- United Farm Workers. *The Wrath of Grapes*. 1986. Description: Farmworker interviews on commercial grapes and pesticides in CA.

Film

- Ford, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Twentieth Century Fox, 1940. (Available at the UO Library)
- Rivera, Alex. *Sleep Dealer*. Maya Entertainment, 2008. (Available at the UO Library)

Historical Archives & Documentation

- *Bracero History Archive*. Bracero History Archive, 2018, <http://braceroarchive.org>.
- Cotera, Maria and Linda Garcia Merchant. "Chicana Por Mi Raza: Uncovering the Hidden History of Chicana Feminism." *Chicana por mi Raza*, 2012, <http://chicanapormiraza.org/content/visualizations>.
- Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. University of California San Diego, San Diego, CA.
- Garcia, Jerry. "Latinos in Oregon." *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hispanics_in_oregon/#.W-hQwXpKjq1.
- Latino Roots in Oregon at University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.
- "Principles of Environmental Justice." First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991, <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.
- PCUN Collection at University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.
- Stephen, Lynn, editor, in collaboration with PCUN staff and members. *The Story of PCUN and the Farmworker Movement in Oregon*. Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies (CLLAS). https://cllas.uoregon.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/PCUN_story_WEB.pdf
- United Farm Workers of America. Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.
- United States Department of Agriculture. "Food Environment Atlas." USDA, 2017. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/>.
- University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History. <https://natural-history.uoregon.edu>.

Music & Radio

- KPCN RADIO MOVIMIENTO. PCUN. 2018. <https://pcun.org/radio-movimiento>.
- Farmworker Movement Documentation Project. UC San Diego Library. September 2015. <https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworkermovement/medias/music>.
- "Farm Worker Songs." National Farm Worker Ministry. 2018. <http://nfwm.org/education-center/faithbasedresources/farm-worker-songs/>.

- Flores-Gonzalez, Nilda. "Latino Millennials: Citizens, But Not Americans." *The Morning Show*, Wisconsin Public Radio, 12 October 2017, <https://www.wpr.org/listen/1173831>.
- "UFW Music Hour." *YouTube*, uploaded by GETchan, 26 Sept. 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQnpNCnGJCo>.

Photography

- *Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program 1942–1964*. Smithsonian Online Exhibit, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/bracero/introduction>.
- Black, Matt and Diana Marcum. "'Papá, I don't think you should go to work today.'" *The California Sunday Magazine*, <https://story.californiasunday.com/matt-black-undocumented-migrant-farmers>.
- "John A. Kouns." *California State University Northridge*, <https://www.csun.edu/bradley-center/john-kouns>.
- Nadel, Leonard. http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/siris_arc_363437
- Richards, Harvey. "Photo Images." *Harvey Richards Media Archive*, 2018, <https://hrmediaarchive.estuarypress.com/photo-images/>.
- Rothman, Lily. "Long-Lost Photos Reveal Life of Mexican Migrant Workers in 1950s America." *Time Magazine*, <http://time.com/4711867/bracero-program-sid-avery>.
- Street, Richard Steven. *Everyone Had Cameras: Photography and Farmworkers in California, 1850–2000*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008. (Available at the UO Library)
- Street, Richard Steven. *Jon Lewis: Photographs of the California Grape Strike*, University of Nebraska Press, 2013. (Available at the UO Library)
- Street, Richard Steven. *Photographing Farmworkers in California*, Stanford University Press, 2004. (Available at the UO Library)

Video Poetry

- "Cristina Martinez - 'Chicana' @WANPOETRY (UNOFFICIAL NPSCYPHER 2016)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Write About Now, 16 Aug. 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zXZD5R3vMU.
- "Melissa Lozada-Oliva - 'My Spanish' (WoWPS 2015)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Button Poetry, 6 July 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE-c4Bj_RT0.
- "Mercedez Holtry - 'My Blood is Beautiful' (IWPS 2014)." *YouTube*, uploaded by Button Poetry, 24 Feb. 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiOyn6NQEEg>.
- "Paola Gonzalez & Karla Gutierrez - 'At The Wall, US/Mexican Border, Texas, 2020'." *YouTube*, uploaded by Button Poetry, 20 Sep. 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loHz2oQhLEI>.

Videos

- "A Brief History of Environmental Justice." *YouTube*, uploaded by Propublica, 4 August 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30xLg2HHg8Q>.
- "Environmental Justice, explained" *YouTube*, uploaded by Grist, 26 Jan. 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dREtXUij6_c.

- “Food + Justice = Democracy: LaDonna Redmond at TEDxManhattan 2013.” *YouTube*, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 4 March 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydZfSuz-Hu8>
 - “Forgotten Voices: The Story of the Bracero Program.” *YouTube*, uploaded by emerydonovan, 6 Dec. 2010, <https://youtu.be/AL5d9CWV0Xg>.
 - “For Many Child Farmworkers, Getting an Education is Almost Impossible.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Fusion, 4 Jan. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpi1kukUeaM>.
 - “Helena María Viramontes.mov.” *YouTube*, uploaded by mil mascararas, 21 Jan 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBT8R7oHdFs>.
 - Martinez, Gabriela. “Latino Roots in Lane County: Contemporary Stories of Settlement in Lane County, Oregon.” *The UO Channel*, <https://media.uoregon.edu/channel/archives/1956>.
 - “Our food system hurts: living with migrant farmworkers | Seth Holmes | TEDxYakimaxSalon.” *YouTube*, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 4 Mar 2015, <https://youtu.be/MTS9FdddXDY>.
 - “The 6 Pillars of Experiential Education.” *YouTube*, uploaded by Family Board Meetings, 15 June 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAlCHO_kDr0.
 - “What Being Hispanic and Latinx Means in the United States | Fernanda Ponce | TEDxDeerfield.” *YouTube*, uploaded by TEDx Talks, 10 April 2017, <https://youtu.be/Q1A4Vsh5Qas>.
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Take Action



Use this guide to help get your students more engaged with relevant issues on campus and in their communities. This section is broken into a few separate parts. First, there is an events list specific to Common Reading related activities for the 2019-2020 academic year known at the time of publication. Then, a list of potential organizational partners is offered. The organizations listed below offer a wide variety of volunteer, service learning, or advocacy opportunities, some of which are aimed toward internship opportunities and long-term commitments whereas others offer one-time volunteer events for individuals and larger groups.

Whether you are interested in scheduling field trips or just providing your students with potential outreach opportunities, make sure to contact these organizations first to confirm that your vision of student engagement supports the organization’s own mission and capacity.

Events with author HELENA MARÍA VIRAMONTES

October 21 at 4pm

Public Talk
Emu Ballroom

October 22 at 6pm

Public Reading & Conversation
Eugene Public Library

Oct. 23 at 10am

Teaching Writing Workshop
for Faculty and GEs

Additional *UNDER THE FEET OF JESUS*/Common Reading Events 2019-2020

WIKI-A-THONS

Art & Film Exhibitions & Talks

Environmental Justice Summit

Research Colloquiums

Food Parties

Have Recommendations for
activities? Email
commonreading@uoregon.edu

Environmental Justice (EJ) Organizations

- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) (Portland, OR) is a state-wide grassroots organization uniting Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice by empowering, organizing, and advocating with these communities.
- Beyond Toxics (Eugene, OR, with other Oregon offices) is dedicated to eliminating toxins from the lives of Oregonians. They co-host the monthly dance party Noche Latinx to help raise funds for their EJ campaign.
- Center for Environmental Futures (CEF) (UO Campus) is an interdisciplinary group of UO faculty and students that cultivates relationships with the campus and regional community and builds projects aimed at tackling the most pressing environmental and social problems.
- Climate Justice League (CJL) (UO Campus) is a student-run UO organization empowering students to organize their communities and be leaders in the climate justice movement.
- Coalition Against Environmental Racism (CAER) (UO Campus) is a UO student group that works to build awareness about environmental racism on UO's campus and in the wider Eugene-Springfield community.
- OPAL (Organizing People, Activating Leaders) (Portland, OR) uses grassroots methods to work with communities impacted by environmental injustices to fight for reformed policy and create safe and healthy living and working environments.
- Oregon Just Transition Alliance (Oregon) is a movement of frontline communities facing environmental racism, climate change, and economic exploitation. It is made up of a

coalition of organizations, many of whom are included in this list.

- Rural Organizing Project (Cottage Grove, OR) is a state-wide organization made up of numerous local groups that work to create communities accountable to a standard of human dignity: the belief in the equal worth of all people, the need for equal access to justice and the right to self-determination. They work on a variety of issues immigrant fairness, democracy & civic engagement, and economic justice.
- Unite Here (Portland, OR local branch) is a labor union representing U.S. and Canadian workers in the hotel, gaming, food service, manufacturing, textile, distribution, laundry, transportation, and airport industries. They are dedicated to combating workplace issues such as health and safety violations, sexual harassment, and wage theft.
- Unite Oregon (Portland, OR) is led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty aiming to build an intercultural movement for social justice in Oregon. Their programs range from political advocacy to leadership development and community organizing on issues including racial justice, immigrant/refugee rights, and the environment.

Food Justice & Farmworker Organizations

- Huerto de la Familia (Eugene, OR) is dedicated to supporting Latino families in Lane County attain health and economic self-sufficiency through the management of garden plots for families to use and workshops and other advocacy projects to help these families learn organic growing methods and even to start their own businesses.
- Food for Lane County (Eugene, OR) is a non-profit food bank working to provide access to healthy foods. They run a number of local community gardens in the Eugene-Springfield area that welcome volunteers and interns.
- Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Woodburn, OR) is Oregon's largest Latino organization. A union of farmworkers, nursery, and reforestation workers, PCUN (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United) works to empower farmworkers to understand and take action against systematic exploitation and its effects.
- School Garden Project of Lane County (Eugene, OR) uses garden-based educational programs for youth to help sow the seeds of healthy eating, land stewardship, and contributing to the community.
- UO Food Studies Program (UO Campus) works to develop fuller understandings of complex food-related issues. It joins faculty and students from a board range of disciplines that relate to food in some way. The program includes a graduate specialization and an undergraduate minor in food studies.
- UO Student Food Security Working Group (UO Campus) aims to improve student access to proper nutrition and offers a number of different programs for students experiencing food insecurity.
- UO Urban Farm (UO Campus) is an outdoor classroom where UO students can learn how to grow their own food organically and sustainably.

Latinx Organizations

- Centro Latino Americano (Eugene, OR) is a bilingual agency dedicated to empowering Latino families and building bridges to create a strong and connected community. They provide numerous social services including employment advocacy, translation, mental health, youth mentoring, and more.

- MEChA de UO (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) (UO Campus chapter) is a student-run organization that meets weekly to promote higher education, self-determination, and political involvement.
- UO Latinx Strategies Group (UO Campus) is an alliance of faculty, staff, students, and community members that meets monthly to collaborate on improvements to educational access and equity among Latinx students at UO and in the local area.
- CAUSA (Salem, OR) is an Oregon-wide coalition that aims to improve the lives of Latino immigrants and their families through advocacy, coalition building, leadership development, and civic engagement.
- LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) of Lane County (Eugene, OR) is a Latinx civil rights and advocacy group that works to provide Latinxs with improved access to education, housing, healthcare, and economic and political opportunities.
- Mano a Mano (Salem, OR) is a Latino and immigrant-led community organization that works to provide its community members with the knowledge and skills to be self-sufficient and gain access to basic needs such as healthcare and food.

UO Dreamers Resources to Support Students in Common Reading, 2019-2020

These resources have been provided by Justine Carpenter, Director, Multicultural and Identity-based Support Services in the Office of the Dean of Students.

Undocumented and Dreamer support: <https://www.uoregon.edu/dreamers>

Dreamers Working Group: uodreamers@uoregon.edu

CMAE | Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence:

<https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/content/center-multicultural-academic-excellence-cmae>

Counseling Center Latinx Student Specialists | Eric Garcia: egarcia3@uoregon.edu and Michael Carrizales: mcarriz@uoregon.edu

MEChA | Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/mecha/>

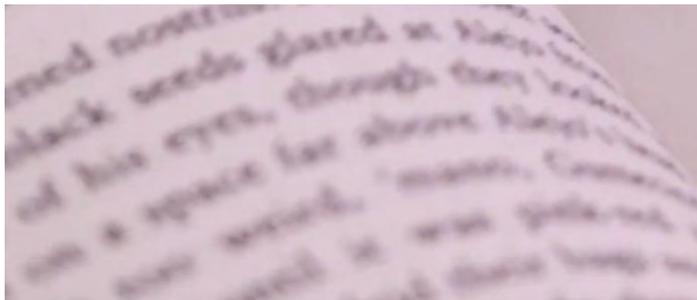
MCC | Multicultural Center: <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/mcc>

LSG | Latinx Strategy Group: <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/latinx-strategies-group>

Latinx Male and Allies Alliance: <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/latinx-male-student-and-allies-alliance>

CLLAS | Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies: <https://clas.uoregon.edu/>

Glossary



Aztlán: Ancestral lands of the Nahua peoples. Lands of contentious location and borders, Aztlán came to symbolize Chicana/o/@/x cultural and political liberation in connection to indigeneity and the Mexican territories annexed to the United States through The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

Belonging: To identify with, feel like a contributor to, and/or be a participating member of a particular group or culture.

Border Enforcement: The U.S.-Mexico border has been enforced, managed, and policed since the termination of the Mexican-American War, but contemporary enforcement via legislative measures, physical barriers, and military violence began during the 1950s and has gradually become more extreme. Current enforcement strategies include wall building, forcing individuals to walk through some of the most dangerous landscapes in the United States, constant control by the Border Patrol (i.e. La Migra), militia groups, sexual abuse, deportation, and detainment.

Borderlands: One way to think about the borderlands is through the work of Gloria Anzaldúa who refers to the ever-changing liminal spaces created in the physical world, in our bodies, and in our consciousness by the construction of geographic, identity, and subconscious “borders” that divide communities, cultures, and individuals from one another. These spaces are always in contestation and can become spaces from which the self is empowered in relation to dominant society.

Chicana/o/@/x: Collective Mexican American identity which emerged in the early 1960s from social and political movements against worker exploitation, educational institutional discrimination, and racism. Perhaps originally used derogatorily, the term was reclaimed by activists as term of pride and community in collective action. The use of the “@” and, more recently, the “x” resists the gendered logic of a language rooted in masculine/feminine markers. The “x” also marks an indigenous presence in the Chicax identify.

Citizenship: A status that allows one to be legally recognized by the state which, in turn, is supposed to ensure certain rights and privileges. There are multiple forms citizenship which you can read about under “resources” in the section titled “Belonging.”

Code-switching: Alternating between multiple languages or modes of speaking during conversation.

Deportation: To forcefully remove and exclude a person or peoples from a country. The nation-state exercises the power of deportation in an attempt to control the individuals present within the country’s borders. While deportation has been practiced by the United States since the country’s founding, efforts to forcibly remove individuals have become more standardized and tacticalized with the recent development of the Department of Homeland Security’s “Immigration Customs and Enforcement”

(“ICE”) agency. In 2016 this agency spent \$3.2 billion to deport undocumented immigrants. On average, it costs nearly \$11,000 to remove someone from this country. More harmful than the cost, however, deported individuals are frequently separated from their families, held in appalling conditions, and not informed about their basic rights while undergoing the deportation process.

Environmental Justice: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines “environmental justice” as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Environmental Racism: Racial discrimination via the targeting of ethnic and minority communities for exposure to toxic and hazardous waste sites and facilities, coupled with the systematic exclusion of minorities in environmental policy making, enforcement, and remediation. (Inspired by Benjamin F. Chavis’s definition of “environmental racism.”)

Farmworker: Those who are employed to work on a farm in order to cultivate, till, grow, harvest, and otherwise work to produce agricultural goods. A person hired to perform agricultural labor. Historically and in the present, farmworkers have disproportionately been people of color. Currently, the majority of farmworkers are immigrants and the majority are Latinx. They typically work in difficult positions for low wages.

Food Desert: The defining attribute of a food desert is limitation in access. This refers to areas in which a population has less access (due to expense or physical proximity) to nutritious food. Food deserts disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income communities; consequently, many people of color food activists prefer the term “food apartheid” than food desert, in reference to intersections of race, poverty and hunger within an inequitable food system.

Food Justice: “A food justice framework ensures that the benefits and risks of how food is grown and processed, transported, distributed, and consumed are shared equitably” (Gottlieb and Joshi). Food justice seeks to address inequality in food systems, which are made up of production (Who is doing the harvesting? Under what conditions?), distribution (Which areas have access to healthful foods? What are the costs?) and consumption (Are culturally relevant foods available? How does access to nutritious food connect to health?).

Food Sovereignty: “Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.” (Declaration of the Forum of Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007)

Immigration: The process of moving to a country with the purpose of residence there.

Institutional Bias: Discrimination that begins on an institutional (or systemic) level, and trickles down to the individual level.

Intersectionality: A framework for considering how systems of power interlock and impact personal experience. This means considering how race, class, sexuality, gender, age and ability interact on a structural level to create individual experiences.

Latina/o/@/x: This term generally refers to U.S. individuals and communities with heritage from

Mexico, Central America, South America, or the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. In Spanish, the “a” is feminine and the “o,” masculine. The use of the “@” and, more recently, the “x” resists the gendered logic of a language rooted in masculine/feminine markers. The “x” also marks an indigenous presence in the Latinx identity.

La Llorona: A figure of Mexican folklore who is said to have drowned her children and then herself. This myth differs slightly depending on the regional variation, but in every version she continues to haunt some specified location (typically bodies of water) in search of her children. This story is often used to scare children into behaving, usually with the explicit purpose of ensuring that they do not go out at night. La Llorona and other female archetypes who are traditionally represented as oppressed subjects of patriarchy are frequently reimaged in Chicana literature as symbols of resistance and female empowerment.

Mestiza: Identification with the interconnection of racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic heritages (primarily Indigenous, Black, and Spanish). Gloria Anzaldúa conceptualized the “new mestiza” consciousness as an awareness and identification with the complexity and multiplicity of identities as a way to challenge the power and conflict inherent in binaries.

Mexican-American War/Guerra de Estados Unidos a Mexico (War of the United States against Mexico): A war initiated by the U.S. federal government following the 1845 annexation of Texas to steal lands from Mexico and help fulfill the colonial mission of Manifest Destiny (the goal to possess all lands and waterways that extend to the Pacific Ocean through the act of genocide). The war occurred from 1846-1848 and when it ended Mexico forfeited the territory that is now California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming to the United States.

La Migra: The Spanish term for the Border Patrol. The term conjures up trauma in many Latinx communities.

Migrant Laborer/Worker: A person who moves within or outside of their home country to perform work (often seasonally) and does not remain permanently in an area. Poverty often drives these individuals to pursue migratory work.

NAFTA: The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the United States came into effect in 1994. The alleged purpose of NAFTA is to facilitate investment and trade between the three nations by eliminating certain tariffs, or taxes on imported goods. However, NAFTA has instead plunged many Mexican communities into deep poverty and encouraged immigration north.

Pineras/os: Latinx forest workers who predominantly work in the Pacific Northwest.

Piscadores: The Spanish term for field laborers.

Proposition 187: A piece of legislation approved by the voters of California in 1994 which banned unauthorized immigrants from accessing public education, health care, and welfare. The bill also required officials to report individuals who were suspected of living in the state without proper documentation. It was overturned two years later for being unconstitutional.

Race: A category constructed socially and legally with no basis in genetics that shapes life experiences and outcomes. Race has gained its power historically in part through false associations with biology.

Racism: Racism is an ideology and power structure based in the presumed biological or cultural

superiority of one group over another group. Racism exists not primarily in individual acts of discrimination but in larger patterns of institutional biases and the maintenance of historical inequities.

La Raza: This term derives from José Vasconcelos's "La Raza Cósmica," meaning "the cosmic people." "La Raza" is often misinterpreted to mean "the race," but is more accurately translated as "the people" or "the community," and became a rallying cry for the Chicana/o Movement. Individuals participating in this movement often identified with "La Raza Unida"—or "The United Race"—Party, an activist group of Chicana/o identified individuals who fought for Chicana/o rights in courts, on the streets, and through legislative measures.

Seasonal Laborer/Worker: A person who is hired for a specific season (i.e. the harvest season), often to perform agricultural labor.

Situational Knowledge: Knowledge gained through lived experience that informs one's actions when a similar situation presents itself.

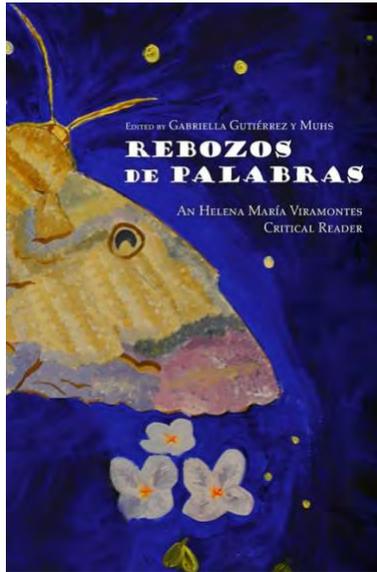
Structural Violence: A form of systematic violence where a social structure or institution disproportionately harms or disadvantages populations and individuals, often along lines of class, race, gender, and sexuality. For example, in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, we might consider how the U.S. healthcare system perpetuates structural violence against people of color.

Tejana/o: A resident of Texas who has Mexican ancestry. Alejo and Gumecindo are both Tejanos in *Under the Feet of Jesus*.

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican- American War in 1848, ceded the lands that are now California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming to the United States, and established the contemporary U.S.-Mexico border.

Undocumented/Unauthorized: The preferred terms for immigrants who do not, at one point in time, possess documentation that proves their migration was authorized by the receiving nation-state. The term "undocumented" emphasizes the lack of documents to prove one's legal identity while the term "unauthorized" stresses one's position as not being authorized to exist in one place by the state. Many families have mixed status, which means that some individuals possess documentation from the state while some do not. It is important to note that the terms "illegal immigrant" and "illegal immigration" should never be used because human beings are not illegal and because citizenship is not a static, or fixed, category.

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