

Heritage Telecollaboration

Produced by
Aránzazu Borrachero, Valeria Belmonti, and Katherine Entigar



The Graduate Center, CUNY
365 Fifth Avenue, Room 4415

New York, New York 10016

cilc.gc.cuny.edu

(212) 817-2084 | cilc@gc.cuny.edu

 [@CILC_CUNY](https://twitter.com/CILC_CUNY)

 facebook.com/CILCCUNY

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Family and Migration

Preparation and Resources

Objectives

Students will work independently and with their peers from both institutions (C1 and C2) to:

1. investigate their family origins, including their migration histories and reasons for coming to the United States
2. explore the relationship between their family's country of origin – its history, politics and economic context – and their family's migration experiences
3. investigate how the history and politics of the United States are related to their family's migration history

Materials

1. Documentary: *Harvest of Empire*. Dirs. E. López and P. Getzels (2012)
2. Information for creating in-text APA citations and APA-formatted References/Works Cited sections:
 - a. In-text citations (APA style)
 - i. <http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/apaquickguide/intext>
 - ii. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>
 - b. Creating a References/Works Cited Section:
 - i. <http://irsc.libguides.com/apa/formatreference>
 - ii. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/03/>

Technology Resources/Requirements

1. Class website
2. Video conferencing platform such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime [to be used with Mac/Apple users]

Activity 1: Contextualizing Family Histories

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn about the broader economic, political, and social contexts surrounding the migration of their families to the United States through a documentary film and through individual research.

Preparation for Videoconference

Harvest of Empire

Show the first 15–20 minutes of *Harvest of Empire* in class and discuss it with students. What are some initial impressions, reactions, and questions that emerge for them in watching this first block of the documentary? What are some ideas that surprise them? What did they already know? Assign the rest of the movie for students to watch on their own in preparation for next steps in this module.

In class, divide students into small groups to discuss *Harvest of Empire*. Have each group choose 1–2 countries they are interested in and assign 1–3 additional countries to each group for discussion. (The goal is for all eight countries to be covered by the different student groups in the class.) See below a list of suggested questions for discussion of the countries included in the film. In addition to focusing on individual country histories, have students discuss the questions included in the Conclusions block below. When students have finished their small group discussions, debrief as a class, building upon student ideas and offering additional insights as needed.

1. Questions (adapted from original online resource [no longer available]):
 - a. Puerto Rico
 - i. Why was the United States interested in Puerto Rico? Cite historical facts and economic factors.
 - ii. How has the United States benefited from Puerto Rican migration? How have Puerto Ricans benefited?
 - iii. What type of discrimination have Puerto Ricans faced in the United States?
 - b. Guatemala
 - i. What did Arbenz try to do in Guatemala?
 - ii. Is the United States responsible for the killings of Guatemalan soldiers? Why or why not?
 - c. Mexico
 - i. What is the meaning of the statement "We did not cross the border, the border crossed us"?
 - ii. Describe the relationship of Mexicans in the southwestern United States during the last 150 years to U.S. society, culture, and economy. What role(s) have Mexicans played? Do you think this is fair? Why or why not?

- iii. What does the story of the Mexican doctor tell us about immigrants from Mexico and why they come to the United States?
 - iv. What have been the effects of NAFTA in Mexico? What about in the United States?
 - d. Cuba
 - i. How do you explain the fact that, during the first half of the 20th century, Cuba was both independent from and dependent upon the United States?
 - ii. Why did the Cuban refugees come to the United States after the Cuban revolution? What were they hoping to find, create, and/or change about their lives and those of their families?
 - c. The Dominican Republic
 - i. Why did the United States initially support Trujillo? Why did it stop supporting him?
 - ii. What have the experiences of immigrants from the Dominican Republic been in the United States?
 - d. Nicaragua
 - i. How would you describe the Somozas?
 - ii. Who helped put an end to Somoza's domination?
 - iii. What did the Sandinistas do in Nicaragua?
 - iv. Explain the "Iran-Contra" scandal. Why was it a scandal?
 - e. El Salvador
 - i. The United States has historically been supportive of, or at least permissive to, political regimes which advocate and employ torture as a means of suppressing the general population in El Salvador. Why?
 - ii. The United States has historically admitted Latin American military leaders into the School of the Americas who later return to their countries and enact policies and actions that violate human rights. Why do you think this continues into the present day? Would you have supported Bishop Romero? Why or why not?
 - iii. What does the following quote from the documentary mean?: "When you finance and train a group of uniformed butchers who perpetrate massacres and destroy entire towns, you cannot say that people are emigrating, but rather that they are fleeing."
2. Conclusions
- a. Explain the title of the documentary.
 - b. What is its thesis (main idea and goal)?
 - c. What advantages and challenges do many Latin American immigrants experience when they arrive in this country?
 - d. Does the United States have a moral obligation to help people in the countries in which it has created instability? Why or why not?

- e. At the end of the documentary, Juan González says: "We are all Americans of the New World and our most dangerous enemies are neither one nor the other, but the great wall of ignorance that exists between us." What does he mean by this?
- f. What most surprised you in the documentary? What did you find revealing? What did you find painful? What was inspiring to you?
- g. After watching the documentary, have your perceptions of immigration, and the political, social, and economic contexts in which it takes place, changed?
- h. What is the "spirit of America" that is mentioned at the end of the documentary?

(See additional teaching resources [here](#).)

Background Research

Depending on the students' research skills and experience, instructors may have to review and practice how to search for appropriate sources both online and offline, how to cite sources within a text and in the References/Works Cited section, how to avoid plagiarism in its different forms, how to summarize information in support of an argument, and other relevant topics.

Inform students that they will conduct independent research about the political, social, and economic circumstances that existed in their families' countries of origin leading up to and during the years in which their families migrated to the United States. Remind students to look for explanations, not simply descriptions or data. Suggested questions to guide students' investigations include the following:

1. Set the political stage for your family's country of origin at the time of their migration. Who were the country's leaders? What political groups were in power? Were there other political actors, either inside or outside of the country, at the time?
2. What was happening in the world at this time? What was the country's relationship to the rest of the world politically and economically?
3. What was the political, economic, and social state of affairs in your family's country of origin at the time of their migration? What effect did such a context have on the population? How did this influence some people's choice to immigrate to the United States?
4. Are the immigration stories of other individuals and families in your country similar to your family's story? In what ways? What, if anything, is unique about your family's story?
5. Were there any actions taken by the United States in your family's country of origin which influenced its stability, safety, and/or ability to provide opportunities for its people? Consider economic, political, and/or social forces, pressures, and tensions across borders and between leaders and political groups.
6. How was immigration from your family's country of origin depicted by the U.S. media, politicians, and other public entities at the time? Find a news story or report that provides an example of this public discourse. How are immigrants from your family's country of

origin described and how is immigration described in broader terms? What stands out to you about this, if anything?

Important: Remind students to take notes while they do their research, which they will then share with the rest of the class and with their peers at C2 by uploading them to the class website as a blog. In addition, have students create a Reference list for the sources they have consulted, which they will also include in their uploaded notes.

Task: Videoconference

Inform students that they will be meeting with the students at C2 to discuss their research and collaborate on new understandings about family migration and the historical, economic, and political contexts in which it takes place. In preparation for the videoconference, ask students to read their C2 peers' research notes (see “**Pre-Videoconference Activities: background research**”), write three questions they want to ask them, and publish them as a question bank in the project home site. Sample questions include the following:

1. What have you discovered in your research that you didn't know about your family's country of origin? Is there anything that you still want to find out?
2. Have you had a chance to discuss your findings with any other member(s) of your family?
3. If so, what was their response to your sharing the research you completed?

Have students discuss the questions they have generated in small groups with the students at C2 via videochat. When students have completed their chat with their peers at C2, have them upload their notes on the conversation to the class website in blog format.

Post-Videoconference Step

In-Class Discussion

1. Ask students to read at home the notes uploaded by their C2 peers.
2. Meet as a class to debrief about the videoconference experience. Ask students to reflect on what they found interesting, surprising, troubling, inspiring, etc. about their conversations with the students at C2.
 - a. What new insights do they have about their own family backgrounds and histories, as well as the broader community histories this may reflect?
 - b. Ask students to identify any patterns, similarities, differences, and/or unanswered questions that emerged in their discussions with the students at C2.
 - c. How might this new knowledge contribute to knowledge sharing and solidarity building?

Activity 2: Exploring Family History through Interviews

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn about their families' migration stories through interview-based research, and to compare these histories with those uncovered by their peers at C2.

Preparation for Videoconference

Blog

Have students write short blog comments on the class website in which they discuss what they know about their families' personal migration histories¹. Ask them to reflect on the following. How did your family get here, when, and why? Invite them to include anecdotes that they are comfortable with sharing. When students are finished, have them each comment substantively on another student's blog, asking clarifying questions or drawing comparisons and contrasts with their own posts.

Family Interview

Prepare students to conduct research about family migration histories and experiences. They will accomplish this in the form of interviews conducted with a relative from their parents' generation or from the previous one. In addition to the interview, students may include pictures of photographs, artifacts or other realia shared by their relatives, or create drawings of their own. It is important to inform students that interviews can bring up sensitive topics, memories and emotions, and that they must get permission from their interviewees to include any of the information collected, while also agreeing to omit anything that interviewees prefer to keep private. Interview questions can include some of the following:

1. Tell me about how you came to the United States. Why did you emigrate from your country?
2. Why did you choose the United States?
3. What and who did you leave behind in your country of origin?
4. Do you have any contact today with the country where you come from?
5. Have you visited your country of origin since you have been in the United States?
6. What language or languages are spoken in your country of origin and in your region of the country? Do you speak it/them with your family here or back home?

¹Please note: As an individual's or family's immigration story is both personal and powerful, instructors should be sensitive to issues of safety and privacy. Students' decision to share – or decision not to – should be paramount and thus be respected without question. A related issue to be considered is the sharing of personal/family information on the project home site; given the current political environment, students may justifiably feel anxiety about issues of exposure related to their or their family members' status. In such instances, we suggest that instructors consider employing alternative ways for students to share family stories that do not reveal any identifying information, e.g., writing a collective post for the class, anonymizing posting, etc.

7. Do you think it is important for your children to speak the language(s) of your country of origin and/or your region of the country? Why or why not?
8. Did you study English before coming to the United States? Have you studied English since you've been here? Explain.
9. In what language do you dream? In what language do you think?
10. What is it like to live between two countries, two cultures, and two languages?
11. Did you bring an important personal object with you when you emigrated? Why did you bring this with you? Do you still have it? If so, would you mind if I took a picture of it?
12. Do you have a photograph of yourself or another artifact from the time before you migrated? If so, would you mind if I took a picture of it?

Have students post to the project home site their completed interviews along with an image; for example, a photograph they took of a family artifact, an image they drew to document the experience, or something else. Ask them to include a short (3–5 sentence) description of this image, including an account of why they chose it to represent their family's immigration story.

Ask students to read at least two interviews (one from a C1 peer and one from a C2 peer) and comment on them on the home site.

Task: Videoconference

Ask students to form small groups (3–4 students). Inform them that they will work together to discuss with their C2 peers the artifacts they posted to the project home site and their interviews with their relatives. Instruct students to take notes on the ideas and themes that emerge during the telecollaboration, paying attention to similarities and differences between stories, perspectives, and experiences. Some ideas and questions to discuss with their C2 partners may include:

1. What was it like to research your family's migration history?
2. What new facts and stories did you learn?
3. What feelings and reactions did this bring up?
4. What commonalities and/or differences have you detected between your family's migration history and that of other students in C1 and C2?

Post-Videoconference Step

In-Class Discussion

Have a class conversation addressing students' observations about the experience of exchanging images and family migration histories with the students at C2. Some guiding questions may include:

1. What was it like to share your family's migration history with the students at C2, and to learn about their families' stories? What feelings and reactions did this bring up?
2. What commonalities and/or differences emerged in your family's migration history compared to that of other students in your class? What about the students at C2?

3. What role did/does language play in the telling, recording, and reporting of your family's migration history? Are there some experiences, details, etc. that need to be expressed in one language rather than the other? Explain.
4. Are there any general themes/ideas that have emerged in our shared immigration backgrounds? How might these ideas be a basis for building shared understandings and solidarity among immigrant groups?

At Home: Written Reflection

Prepare your students to reflect on this experience in a written response. Invite them to draw upon their research and the activities they have completed in this module to write a 2–3 page essay summarizing what they have learned. They should write in narrative form, rather than responding to questions point by point, about the topics listed below. Prior to assigning the written reflection, discuss the rubric with the class. See a sample reflection at the end of the document. Remind them also to include the bibliography that they have used. These reflections will be posted on the project home site and shared with their peers at C2 for comments/feedback.

1. What is your family's country of origin? Describe its historical, political and economic context before and around the time your family migrated to the United States.
2. What do you know about the history and politics of the United States in relation to your family's country of origin and to Latin America in general?
3. What are the connections between the contexts described above and your family's decision to migrate?
4. What have you learned from working with your C2 peers? Analyze and explain similarities and differences between families' experiences and stories.

Have students post the reflection on the class website. Ask them to comment substantively on and/or ask questions about two other reflections either by their classmates at C1 and/or the students at C2. For example, they can state that they like/identify with the reflection, but they should also think critically about what was said, why the creator did what s/he did, etc., and comment on this. Have students respond to one comment that they received about their own reflection.

Rubric: Reflection

Instructions: Based on your research and the activities you have completed in this module, write a 2–3 page essay summarizing what you have learned about the following topics. Please write in narrative form rather than responding to questions point by point:

- What is your family's country of origin? Describe its historical, political and economic context before and around the time your family migrated to the United States.
- What do you know about the history and politics of the United States in relation to your family’s country of origin and to Latin America in general?
- What are the connections between the contexts described above and your family’s decision to migrate?
- What have you learned from working with your C2 peers?

Important: All reflections must be spell-checked prior to submission. Include the bibliography that you have used, making sure that it conforms to APA format.

Content	Excellent, very good 90–100	The author addresses all the topics laid out in the instructions. The reflection includes relevant details about the history of the country and about US policy toward that country. These historical and political aspects are clearly connected to the migration story of the student’s family. All ideas are developed thoroughly and in depth. Reading the reflection is enjoyable.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	The author does not address all the topics, and/or one or more important historical, economic or political aspects are missing or not sufficiently developed. However, there are some interesting observations.
	Poor 70–79	The observations and data are scarce, insufficient or irrelevant. The development of ideas is superficial and/or incomplete. There are not enough ideas or the same ideas are repeated several times.
	Insufficient Below 70	Not enough information to evaluate. Content is undeveloped and/or based on unsubstantiated claims.

Organization	Excellent, very good 90–100	Writing shows clarity, fluidity and logical organization. It is cohesive and main ideas are reinforced. Very good transitions from one idea to another.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	Generally clear organization, though may at times lack clarity and/or show uneven organization. Some ideas overlap or are not well distinguished from other ideas. Some transitions between ideas are missing.
	Poor 70–79	Unclear and/or inconsistent organization. It is not clear which the most important ideas are. There are few transitions between ideas.
	Insufficient Below 70	There is no logic in the organization of ideas. Difficulty in understanding the text.
Accuracy	Excellent, very good 90–100	The writing uses a wide variety of grammatical structures with minimal or insignificant errors that do not impede comprehension. Word choices and phrases are suitable for the purpose, topic and audience. Varied, and topic-specific vocabulary is employed. For the most part, the author has paid attention to spelling and accentuation.
	Good, acceptable 80–89	The use of grammatical structures is generally correct, though at times may tend to be repetitive. Excessive use of simple structures. Occasional errors do not impede comprehension. Generally correct use of topic-specific vocabulary, although sometimes it is insufficient or repetitive. Sporadic failures in spelling and accentuation.
	Poor 70–79	Grammatical errors, word choice/form, and/or syntax at times impede comprehension. Limited vocabulary which is often repeated. Confusing and imprecise terms sometime make reading difficult. Frequent errors in spelling and accentuation.
	Insufficient Below 70	Multiple errors on various levels make understanding difficult. Very limited vocabulary which is repeated often and/or used inappropriately. Confusing and imprecise terms abound. Frequent errors in spelling and accentuation.

Sample Reflection

Familia y emigración

Todos los estudiantes de C1 y C2 vienen de familias de inmigrantes, pero hasta ahora no nos habíamos interesado por saber un poco más de estas historias de inmigración: cómo es que estamos aquí o por qué nuestras familias- papás, abuelos o bisabuelos- emigraron. En este módulo de *Familia y Emigración* todos hemos tomado conciencia de dónde provenimos y de que, gracias a nuestra familia de inmigrantes, estamos donde estamos, con una mejor vida y con un buen porvenir, sin necesidad de pasar sufrimiento, de aguantar hambre por la pobreza o sin tener dónde vivir por culpa de decisiones políticas y económicas de los poderes que nos gobiernan.

Mi familia viene de Guatemala. Al investigar sobre Guatemala he sentido que descubría un nuevo país. Hay tantas cosas que desconocía. He sabido que, antes de que los españoles llegaran, Guatemala fue la cuna de una civilización muy desarrollada, con 2,000 años de antigüedad: los mayas. No me voy a extender sobre la historia maya porque quiero hablar sobre las razones que llevaron a mi familia a emigrar, pero me ha gustado mucho saber que en mis orígenes hay una cultura indígena muy avanzada que se mezcló con la cultura española durante la colonización.

Voy a saltar hasta los siglos XIX y XX para hablar de la presencia de los intereses comerciales de los Estados Unidos en Guatemala, que se reflejan muy bien en la historia de la United Fruit Company en mi país. La United no estuvo presente solo en Guatemala, sino que se enriqueció con los productos de la tierra de varios países de Centroamérica y Sudamérica. He encontrado un poema de Pablo Neruda titulado “La United Fruit Co.” que dice:

la Compañía Frutera Inc.
se reservó lo más jugoso,
la costa central de mi tierra,
la dulce cintura de América. (Canto general, 1950)

Y así fue. Con la complicidad de las oligarquías guatemaltecas y gobiernos como el de Justo Rufino Barrios (1873–1885), Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898–1920) y Jorge Ubico (1931–1944) la United se convirtió en la fuerza económica más importante del país. Esta situación cambió con la llegada de Juan José Arévalo (1945–1951) y, sobre todo, Jacobo Arbenz (1951–1954). Arbenz intentó llevar a cabo una reforma agraria que iba en contra de los intereses norteamericanos. Por ejemplo, la United Fruit tendría que devolver tierras al Estado. Esto hizo que los Estados Unidos, a través de la CIA, apoyara un levantamiento militar contra Arbenz, a quien acusaron de comunista y loco.

A partir de entonces se desató una guerra civil en Guatemala que duró más de treinta años. La guerrilla campesina, el ejército y los grupos paramilitares de ultraderecha se enfrentaron y dejaron decenas de miles de víctimas. En 1982, otro golpe de estado militar puso en el poder al general Efraín Ríos Montt, responsable de un genocidio contra los indígenas. La violencia extrema continuó con otros presidentes hasta que se firmaron los acuerdos de paz en 1996.

En total, la guerra civil dejó más de cien mil muertos y cuarenta mil desaparecidos y obligó a más de cien mil personas a dejar el país. Mi familia sufrió en carne y hueso la violencia política de Ríos Montt. A mi papá lo obligaron a pelear con el ejército y después lo dejaron libre, pero un tío de mi papá, que se opuso a colaborar con el ejército, fue asesinado. Lo dejaron tirado en el monte, muerto. Enterarme de lo que mi familia pasó antes de llegar a Estados Unidos fue sorprendente.

Al leer las investigaciones e historias personales de los estudiantes de C1 y C2, he averiguado que muchos venimos de familias que buscaban un refugio para poder seguir viviendo, para salir adelante; que la mayoría de nuestros padres han venido a los Estados Unidos sin saber inglés y sin papeles, y superando grandes obstáculos; que nuestros países tienen problemas en común, como la desigualdad y la pobreza, que obligan a que las personas emigren. Aprendí que las políticas de Estados Unidos también son responsables de estos movimientos de migración. Estados Unidos es un país que, así como da, también quita y comete injusticias.

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