Diana Alvarado

**Thesis title:** Buscando a Mamá: The Unattainable Scripts of Motherhood and Value of Deviancy

**Key words:** Latinas, motherhood, gender, transnationalism, deviancy, heteronormativity

Being an “authentic” or “valued” woman in society is intimately bound to the achievement or completion of motherhood. While motherhood is attainable through various forms and structures, society privileges biological reproduction. Living within a capitalistic nation, production, labor, and economic desires and demands become driving forces that shape, influence, and maintain migratory patterns into the United States, specifically from Mexico. With continuous and gendered waves, there has been a valuable amount of work done on how these patterns alter familial relationships and family structures. Focusing on the performance of transnational motherhood, I argue that a substantial amount of scholarly work holds onto romanticized narratives of motherhood, therefore upholding idealistic understandings of it through their work. In addition, I highlight forces, specifically naturalized gender dynamics and economic structures, that don’t allow for the conventional performance of being a “mother” achievable. Utilizing a queer lens to analyze social science literature and the film *Buscando A Leti (2006)*, I aim to demonstrate and destabilize current understandings of motherhood in contemporary visual culture.
Monica Gonzalez

**Thesis title: Don't Teach Them They're Oppressed: "Color-Blind" Legal Thought and its Exclusionary Practices in Education**

**Key words:** education, HB 2281, Mexican immigrants, ethnic studies, color-blind policy, Arizona politics, xenophobia

“Don’t Teach Them They’re Oppressed: Color-Blind Legal Thought and Its Exclusionary Practices in Education,” examines HB 2281, the ban of ethnic studies in Arizona in relation to color-blind ideology in law and in the context of curriculum. In doing so, it focuses on the contradictions of the bill and in its surrounding discourse as anti-discriminatory. Its discourse targets the Latino population in Arizona, specifically The Tucson Unified School District, which is the only school district in the state that offers ethnic studies at the K-12 grade levels. The color-blind ideology that is encompassed in HB 2281 attempts to equalize education and the learning of a national history, when it ultimately denies people of color the opportunity to learn about their identities and the history that forms their communities.

This Thesis critiques HB 2281 and compares it to the similar legislation passed in the State of Arizona that resemble it in text and discourse and also respond to the demographic shift. This thesis also provides a historical background and analyzes past and current learning environments of Latino students in the state, specifically in Tucson, to counter-argue the myths and negative interpretations of the goals of Ethnic Studies programs. Furthermore, it analyzes the current social studies/history curriculum provided to students of color and explains how it excludes the narratives of these students. Therefore, Ethnic Studies provides an alternative history, one that includes students of color as active participants in the history of the US.
Enrique J. Guerrero

Thesis title: Brown Spots on the Silver Screen: Visions of Reality?

Key words: Latinos, film, stereotyping, gender

Technology has been key tool in disseminating information to the public over time. The media, more specifically films, is no exception. Latinos/as have been in American-produced films for a number of years now. However, the characters they play are what raise a red flag and call for questioning, because of the way they are portrayed in the film. How are the ways that Latinas/os are portrayed in these films impacting the way unfamiliar audiences view us?

This essay analyzes and unpacks stereotypes in various films featuring Latinas/os. These films all involve Latinos/as and portray them in a specific way. Stereotypes in films range from the Maid in “Abajo La Misma Luna” to the Latin Lover in “Desparado.” This paper challenges and questions whether or not the way Latinas/os are depicted cause visions of reality for audiences who have not come into contact with people from Latina/o backgrounds.

I used interviews from a diverse group of individuals as means for answering some of my research questions. Films such as “Spanglish,” “Abajo La Misma Luna,” “Desparado,” and several others were used in this study as a means of samples for subjects to view. I followed their viewing of specific scenes with an interview regarding the depiction of the Latina/o character. I did not mention any information regarding the study beforehand to keep the interviews controlled and unbiased. They were only allowed to view the series of clips once. This was used to gain a better understanding of their perceptions; both Latinas/os’ view of themselves and unfamiliar audiences of Latinas/os.
Cynthia Ledesma

**Thesis title:** Performing Citizenship as a Political Strategy: Deconstructing Normalizing Discourses in the DREAM Act

**Key words:** DREAM Act, citizenship, legality, criminalization, undocumented immigrants, biopolitics, heteropatriarchy

Using a Foucauldian framework, this thesis examines how the disciplined citizen-subject is constructed discursively in the DREAM Act. I deconstruct the legal text of the DREAM Act by interrogating the ways in which it renders the desire for rights inseparable from the desire for normativity. By examining the narratives of self-identified undocumented students from two organizations that are migrant youth-led, I illustrate the contradictions and possibilities that emerge when undocumented students complicate citizenship by performing it as a political strategy. I conclude by examining the various ways in which practicing a normalizing citizenship logic, or performing citizenship as a political strategy, not only challenges citizenship as an institution but also offers an alternative logic to help us achieve a more socially just future.
As a Puerto Rican raised most of my life in the United States, I have always wondered what exactly was the big deal about race and race relations in Puerto Rico. After having a very interesting conversation with a good friend of mine I realized that race wasn’t an issue that was just secluded to Puerto Ricans; in fact, it was also very common in the Dominican Republic. I took a particular interest in this topic, and began to uncover in some of my classes at the University of Illinois why race was such a big issue is these two societies.

Using literature, music, poetry and many personal experiences this thesis thus examines how race was constructed in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico; how it has developed historically and has affected the perceptions of self for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans; lastly, whether, and if so how, those perceptions have changed over time and influenced perceptions of race among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans living within the United States. Through my multidisciplinary research I found that the notions of race are still very strongly inscribed in the people as well as the culture of these two groups, but also finding that for the generations that are raised here in the United States they have a better understanding and are more accepting of their Afro-Latinidad. In the end, it is that generation that has the capacity to challenge the perceptions of race and conceptions of belonging among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.
Joe J. Palencia


Key words: Latinos, military recruitment, post 9/11, education, economic mobility

Since the turn of the century, the Latina/o population has grown considerably and is now the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. During this critical period, several laws and policy changes dealing with citizenship and immigration have affected this demographic. The tragic events of 9/11 had led the United States into a new war, and has increased the efforts made by the military to recruit young men and women into the armed forces. U.S. military recruiters have stepped up their recruitment efforts within the Latina/o community due to several political factors, and these unique circumstances have made the Latina/o population the ideal target group for military conscription. Indeed, the military has been presented as the ideal remedy for the problems facing the Latina/o population. Military recruiters are well aware of the issues facing Latina/os and have used marketing tools in Spanish to attract young Latina/o men and women into the armed forces. The political issues facing this community merits attention due to the fact that this growing and changing population has not achieved significant success in other areas such as education in comparison to other groups. Several institutions have not addressed the needs of this dynamic demographic and advocacy is imperative for Latina/o success.
Andrea Guadalupe Rosales Sierra

Thesis title: Imagining the Impossible by Subverting "Illegality"

Key words: undocumented immigrants, illegality and criminalization, immigration reform, US nationalism, anti-immigrant discourse, immigrant legislation, student activism

As undocumented immigrants continue to be negatively affected by policies and laws currently being enacted in the U.S., particular questions arise that posit immigration as an “issue” that affects all sectors of society. Nevertheless, debates surrounding immigration often articulate the issue in simple terms as a matter of following the law; however, the law is what prevents the current immigration system to recognize its faults and contradictions. Thus, the debates do not take into account any arguments that do not center the legal construction of immigration. In this thesis, I critique established systems of legal knowledge that guide the ways in which “il/legal” is produced and reproduced. Only by doing so, I argue, can we highlight the law’s contradictions and search for possibilities outside of the constraints that the “il/legal” construction imposes on imagining immigration reform.
Natalia Santillán

**Thesis title:** Black, Brown and Beautiful: Constructions of Women of Color in the Media

**Key words:** women of color, media representation, racial identity, beauty, citizenship, femininity, Latinidad

This thesis will demonstrate how mainstream magazine articles and advertisements construct the definitions of beauty and femininity for women of color. By focusing on celebrities and advertising campaigns spokeswomen of different racial identities such as Eva Longoria, Salma Hayek, Michelle Obama and Queen Latifah, this project will provide a critical content and textual analysis of the magazine articles and advertisements in which they are featured. In addition, media coverage surrounding Jennifer Aniston will be examined to provide a contrast of the discourse that takes place surrounding women of color and the all-American woman. It is important to understand how beauty is constructed in the media as it plays a major role in how women of color conceptualize who they are and how they are conceptualized by others. Furthermore, these individuals were chosen as they are iconic carriers of identity in their communities, allowing us to see the intersection of race and gender. *People, People en Español,* and *Ebony* magazines from January to December 2009 will be used as text locations for these units of investigation because of their wide readership and specific ethnic audiences. Consequently, I will address the following questions: How is beauty for women of color, specifically Latina and African-American constructed by popular media? What are some of the key similarities and differences in how beauty is discussed for women across ethnic and racial categories? What are the implications of these conceptualizations for women of color in the United States? And how are these formations central in the imagining of the nation and citizenship in the U.S. and abroad?