

LLC Syllabus

Coming to America: RI Immigration, 1636-2017

Fall 2017

When? Mondays, 1:00-3:00 pm at Temple Beth-El
September 11-November 27, 2017
NOTE: No class on September 25 or October 9

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Course Description In this class, we will look at each major group of immigrants to Rhode Island, starting with Roger Williams and the English, and continuing up to the present day. We will examine them in historical order, with the English followed by other small groups of minorities or persecuted individuals. Irish immigration started in about 1830; French Canadians followed them after the Civil War. In the late 19th century, Northern Europeans, Italians, Portuguese, Polish, and Russians (mostly Russian Jews) arrived. In the 20th century, these groups were joined by Lebanese/Syrians, Cape Verdeans, Puerto Ricans, West Africans, Guatemalans, and Dominicans.

There will also be a few optional field trips to museums and ethnic restaurants. Dates for these will be selected once the class is underway so we can accommodate as many of your schedules as possible!

Readings There will be a packet of readings distributed in the first class, and readings from this packet will be assigned for each week.

In addition, some session leaders may ask you to read

or view something before class.

Format

Participants will be expected to read the assigned selections from the packet, as well as other readings distributed during the course, and to participate actively in the discussions. They will also be asked to report on one national origin group.

See the detailed schedule below for dates and topics. If you choose a particular national origin group, you should plan on doing the presentation the week that it is scheduled—so keep your own schedule in mind when making your selection. We are trying to have the presentations follow somewhat of a historical sequence!

In addition, starting with the 3rd class, we'll spend a few minutes at the beginning of each class where you may wish to share something you've read or observed during the week about immigration to, or immigrant groups in, Rhode Island.

Guidelines for Presentations

You are welcome to present by yourself or in a team of two. Your session (whether individual or team) should be no longer than 45 minutes in length (including at least 20 minutes of class discussion time).

An outline of all the possible areas of discussion is contained in the next section of this syllabus (“Outline for Presentations.”) We don’t expect you to cover EVERY point, but if you use this outline to guide your exploration, you should be in good shape.

There are many different formats you may use for your session. You are welcome to do a PowerPoint presentation, or to use flip charts or handouts. You may wish to point the class ahead of time to an article or video that helps to illustrate your topic, and then manage a discussion of it. You may wish to send some discussion questions out to the class ahead of time. You may show a video in class, as long as it’s no longer than 15 minutes. You may invite a guest speaker whose ancestry is from your country of choice, and have them help you cover the material.

Audiovisual support (whether it’s photographs, maps, musical recordings, video, etc.) will help to tell your story better than straight text.

NOTE: For one presentation, we have identified a full-length film (Cathy has a copy). In that case, the presenter can lead a discussion on the film.

Please use relevant research material from a variety of sources—not just a Wikipedia article. Use your own words. And please try not to read your presentation. It’s OK to work from notes, but be sufficiently familiar with the material that you can take a breath and make eye contact with the class!

Please have a plan for involving the class, and stimulating discussion, whatever format or topic you’ve chosen. If you want to send material to the class ahead of time, you can send it yourself, or you can send it to one of us and we will forward to the class. If you plan to do this, please try to get this information to your classmates as early as possible (ideally at least a week ahead).

We encourage you to consult LLC's guidelines for session leaders which you can find on this page:

<http://lifelonglearningcollaborative.org/resources-for-class-members-session-leaders/>

Outline for Presentations

Where (in the country of origin) did they come from?

Did they come directly to Rhode Island or did they spend time (months, years, decades) in another part of North America first?

Why did they leave their country of origin? Were there political or economic or religious issues that drove them? Why did they choose to come to America? Were they recruited by America in some way? Were there changes in US law that affected their reasons for/ability to come? (See this Pew Research website for details on all of the US laws impacting immigration.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/30/how-u-s-immigration-laws-and-rules-have-changed-through-history/>)

Who were they? Were they educated or not? What was their religion? What kind of work did they do there? What was their language and culture? Were they young and single or did they come as whole families? Did more men or women come or was it about equal?

When did they come? Look at the first years of significant immigration of this group, and peak years. Was there one big exodus or multiple waves, or a slow build?

How did they get here? Did they arrive by boat (or later plane) from abroad, or had they already landed in another city and made their way here by some other means? If they arrived by boat, at what port?

Where in Rhode Island did they settle and why? Was it a rural or urban area? How did they live when they first got here? Did they live in houses, apartments, tenements, farms? Did they live individually or communally? Did they live in company housing of some sort? Did they live in close proximity to other immigrants from their country of origin? Did they come seasonally

or permanently when they first came? If they started seasonally what caused them to become permanent exiles from their country of origin?

**Outline for
Presentations
(cont.)**

What was life like for them when they first arrived? Was church attendance an important part of their life here? Was there already a church/temple/mosque here or did they raise money to build one? If they were Catholics, was their version of Catholicism different from that of other Catholic immigrant groups? What kind of work did they do when they got here? Did they belong to unions? Were there social service organizations that supported them here? Did they join or found community organizations? What was their social life like? What was their relationship to the law? What was their relationship to the most recent immigrant group who came before them? What was their relationship with the people in their country of origin? Did they visit that country? Did they bring more relatives over after they got here?

Did they want to assimilate or keep separate? Were they interested in upward mobility? How did assimilation or separation or mobility efforts work for them? Did they pursue higher education? Did they keep their culture and language? How/why? How did immigration affect their family structure? For any of these issues—was it different for their children or grandchildren?

And finally, think beyond their arrival to the present day. How would you describe the folks from that country of origin today? Do they congregate in certain areas or communities? What has been their influence on Rhode Island? (Think community building, sports, food, professions, language/vocabulary (words and expressions), literature, art, music, public monuments, historical sites, etc.) Who are some well-known Rhode Islanders whose ancestry is from that country of origin?

Overall, remember to take an interdisciplinary look at your immigrant group. We are interested in history, economics, geography, sociology, psychology, culture, etc. Think as broadly as possible!

**Research
Sources**

The Mary Elizabeth Robinson Research Center at the RI Historical Society, 121 Hope St., Providence, has a wealth of RI history information, and the librarians will be happy to help you with your research. We recommend calling and making an appointment. They are open Wednesday-Friday 10 am-5 pm. Free admission for RIHS members; \$5 for seniors otherwise; be sure to bring a photo ID.

<http://www.rihs.org/library/before-you-visit/>

For the French-Canadians, you may wish to visit the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket (also a RI Historical Society property); the exhibits there focus on the French-Canadian immigrant experience.

There are a number of books written or edited by Patrick Conley on various RI immigrant groups; check your local library.

The next link describes a number of organizations that support RI Latinx immigrants—might add some good information about the current state of immigration for Dominicans, Guatemalans, and Puerto Ricans.

<http://www.rilatinoarts.org/RICommunityResources.html>

NOTE: For groups whose immigration history is more recent, it's important to look for current information. Explore newspaper articles, websites, immigrant support organizations, churches that cater to particular immigrant groups, etc. Get creative in your research!

Class	Date	Topic	Reading	Presenters/ Discussion Leaders
1	Sept. 11	Introduction of class members (Why did you select this class? What do you know about the topic?) Introduction to class Introduction to history of RI Immigration		<u>Cathy Hurst & Shirley DiMatteo</u>
2	Sept. 18	TOPIC: Native American, British, African-American Diaspora, and other minority/persecuted groups before 1830 (including Quakers, French Huguenots, and early Jewish immigrants)	Roger Williams handout (for discussion) BOOK, pp. 4-24, 30-31, 48-59, 80-81, 92-97	<u>Cathy Hurst & Shirley DiMatteo</u>
3	Sept. 25	NO CLASS		
4	Oct. 2	TOPIC: Irish (starting about 1830) TOPIC: French Canadians (starting about 1865; exclude French who came directly from France)	BOOK, pp. 24- 27, 29, 59-61, 98-101, 138- 143, 151-152	<u>Maureen Robbins</u> <u>Susan Gordon & Betty Havrylik</u>
5	Oct. 9	NO CLASS		
6	Oct. 16	TOPIC: Northern Europeans (German, French, Swedish; starting before 1880; exclude French Canadians since they were addressed last week) TOPIC: Polish (starting about 1880)	BOOK, pp. 33- 37, 62-66, 76- 79, 102-105	<u>Cathy Hurst & Shirley DiMatteo</u> Need presenter
7	Oct. 23	TOPIC: Italians (starting about 1880) TOPIC: Portuguese (primarily Azorean; exclude Cape Verdeans since they will be included later in the semester;	BOOK, pp. 27- 28, 40, 66-69, 71-76, 106-113, 144-150, 153- 161	<u>Sandra DelSesto</u> <u>Myra Jerozal</u>

		starting about 1880)		
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8	Oct. 30	<p>TOPIC: Russian (mostly Russian Jews—one wave in 1880s and second more recent wave)</p> <p>TOPIC: Lebanese and Syrians (starting in early 1900s, with various additional waves up to the present)</p>	BOOK, pp. 31-32, 38-39, 41, 81-91, 114-121	<p><u>Bev Rosen</u></p> <p><u>Carol Rooney & Zibby Marinelli</u></p>
9	Nov. 6	<p>TOPIC: Cape Verdeans (some came with the whaling industry in the 19th century, and a new wave started in the 1960s)</p> <p>FILM: <i>Some Funny Kind of Porto Rican: A Cape Verdean American Story</i></p> <p>NOTE: Presenter should view the video ahead of time.</p>	BOOK, pp. 69-71, 122-125	<u>Eleanor McCarthy & Jeanne Perry</u>
10	Nov. 13	<p>TOPIC: Puerto Ricans (not immigrants since part of US, but share characteristics of some other Hispanic groups; early wave in 1920s, and later waves since late 20th century)</p> <p>TOPIC: West Africans (Liberians, Nigerians, Ghanaians; exclude those who came as part of the slave trade since they were studied earlier in the semester; this more recent wave started mostly in the late 1960s/early 1970s)</p>	BOOK, pp. 42-47, 126-129, 162-165	<p><u>Kathy & Mike Webster</u></p> <p><u>Nancy Nowak</u></p>
11	Nov. 20	TOPIC: Guatemalans (starting mostly in the 1970s)	BOOK, pp. 130-137, 166-169	<u>Carol Traynor</u>

		TOPIC: Dominicans (starting mostly in the 1980s, although some came earlier)		<u>Pam Perkins</u>
12	Nov. 27	PANEL: Recent Immigrants PARTY: Potluck ethnic foods!		<u>Cathy Hurst & Shirley DiMatteo</u>