

Teaching Suggestions for *Exiled Home: Salvadoran Transnational Youth in the Aftermath of Violence* (Duke University Press, 2016)
<https://www.dukeupress.edu/exiled-home>

By
Susan Bibler Coutin

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I am pleased to provide these teaching resources to support faculty who adopt *Exiled Home* for use in their classes. Schedule permitting, I would be happy to visit or skype into the class of any instructor who adopts this book. I can either do a guest presentation or simply discuss the book with your students. Please note that royalties generated by book sales will be donated to scholarship funding for students.



Exiled Home is appropriate for use in both undergraduate and graduate level courses on a variety of topics, including Central American Studies, Chicano and Latino Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, immigration, migration, violence, globalization, transnationalism, citizenship, nationalism, sociolegal studies, testimony, narrative, activism, and childhood. In preparing this guide, I am imagining that the book might be assigned in an undergraduate course in which students read a chapter at a time. I am therefore providing discussion questions, suggested activities, and additional resources for each chapter. Of course, it is also possible to assign the entire book at once (e.g., in a graduate seminar or an undergraduate course where

students are used to a heavier reading load), or in larger chunks. Hopefully, the suggestions below will be useful, regardless.

As described on the book jacket at the Duke website, the key themes in the book are as follows:

In *Exiled Home*, Susan Bibler Coutin recounts the experiences of Salvadoran children who migrated with their families to the United States during the 1980–1992 civil war. Because of their youth and the violence they left behind, as well as their uncertain legal status in the United States, many grew up with distant memories of El Salvador and a profound sense of disjuncture in their adopted homeland. Through interviews in both countries, Coutin examines how they sought to understand and overcome the trauma of war and displacement through such strategies as recording community histories, advocating for undocumented immigrants, forging new relationships with the Salvadoran state, and, for those deported from the United States, reconstructing their lives in El Salvador. In focusing on the case of Salvadoran youth, Coutin’s nuanced analysis shows how the violence associated with migration can be countered through practices that recuperate historical memory while also reclaiming national membership.

Suggestions for teaching, organized by chapter:

Introduction to the book: The Introduction lays out the key themes of the book, introduces the central concepts of re/membering and dismemberment, outlines the history of child migration between the United States and El Salvador, and details the connections between the core concepts of the book and ethnography as a research method. This chapter, like all of the chapters, opens and closes with a vignette.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is this book called “Exiled Home”? What are the possible meanings of this title?
2. The author chose to open the book with a vignette about a testimony recounted at a sanctuary caravan stop in 1987. How does this vignette introduce the themes of the book?
3. What does the author mean by “re/membering” and “dismemberment”? What do you think of these concepts? Can you think of other examples of situations that involve “dismemberment,” or other activities that could be described as “re/membering”?

4. Why did young children immigrate from El Salvador to the United States during the 1980s? Do you see similarities to and differences from other migration histories that you are familiar with?
5. What methods were used to gather the material on which this book is based? What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of these methods?
6. On p. 15, the author writes, “My own ethnographic activities cannot be set apart from the forms of re/membering that I analyze in this book.” What does she mean by this statement?
7. How can performances such as the play, *De la locura a la esperanza* (“from madness to hope”), promote recognition of and accountability for atrocities and human rights violations?

Activities/assignments for students

1. Choose a country and research its immigration history. Do people tend to migrate to this country from elsewhere? If so, from where? Do citizens of this country tend to migrate to other places? If so, to where? What are some of the key reasons for these migrations? Were migrants welcomed when they arrived? How does the case of migration that you studied compare the experiences of children who migrated from El Salvador to the United States during the Salvadoran civil war?
2. Examine the websites of a pro-immigrant organization (<http://immigrationforum.org/>) and of an organization that favors restricting immigration (e.g. <http://www.fairus.org/>). How does the terminology used in each website differ? What arguments are made on each website? Can you see any examples of “re/membering” or of “dismemberment”?
3. Choose a social location (such as a coffee shop or a student hang-out) and spend an hour or so doing an observation there. As you observe, take notes about the social interactions that take place, the physical lay-out of the setting, decorations, etc. When you are finished, write up your notes to provide an overview of what you observed. In class, exchange these with another student and provide comments for each other. What can you learn about social interactions through observations? What insights does this give you into the ways that ethnographers gather material for their work?
4. This chapter ends with a question, “What is your story?” Write a short essay answering this question. You can write about any aspect of your personal experience that you think is important to re/member.

Additional Resources

1. Film: *El Norte*. This 1983 film depicts the journey of a Guatemalan brother and sister to the United States after experiencing the violence of the Guatemalan civil war and recounts the challenges that they experience after arriving. This film provides context about the circumstances of Central American refugees during the 1980s. For a review, see <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-el-norte-1983>
2. Images from the play, *De la locura a la esperanza*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EubFdmpsGT8>
3. Truth commission report on El Salvador, “From Madness to Hope”
<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf>
4. Legal case: *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh*, 760 F. Supp./ 796 (N.D. Cal. 1991) (see also <https://www.uscis.gov/laws/legal-settlement-notice/american-baptist-churches-v-thornburgh-abc-settlement-agreement>)

Chapter One: Violence and Silence This chapter examines the relationship between membership and memory, focusing on interviewees’ experiences of the Salvadoran civil war, immigrating to the United States, and encountering U.S. immigration law.

Discussion Questions

1. This chapter opens with a narrative provided by Milda Escobar, a young woman interviewed by the author. What forms of violence did she experience? Why is this chapter entitled, “Violence and Silence”?
2. In this chapter, the author argues that violence should be defined broadly to include not only things like war but also the suffering associated with immigrating to the United States without authorization. What is the author’s reasoning? Do you agree?
3. This chapter includes many narratives about civil war and immigration experiences. Which of these stand out to you? Why?
4. Why would parents be inclined to avoid discussing family experiences of violence with their children? What would you do, if you were in their shoes?
5. What challenges or hardships did young people experience traveling to the United States? Who or what is to blame for these hardships?
6. This chapter contrasts the legal experiences of two individuals who immigrated to the United States as children: Rosa Hernandez and David Zavala. What do the contrasts between their experiences reveal?
7. This chapter concludes by describing an exhibit of work by artists Beatriz Cortez and Carolina Rivera. What does their work convey about experiences of violence and displacement?

Activities/Assignments for Students

1. Recently, children have been migrating to the United States from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Go online to find a news story about the experiences of these children. Write a short essay reflecting on how the experiences of these recent children compares to the accounts featured in this book.
2. Choose a country. Go to the US state department website (<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>) and look up the requirements for a citizen of that country to obtain a visa travel to the United States. In class, compare your findings to those of other students. How do the requirements vary from country to country? How hard is it for people to travel here? Also, how hard is it for citizens of the U.S. to get a visa to travel to the country that you studied?
3. If you needed to leave the country urgently, because your life was in danger, how would you do it and where would you go? What resources would you need in order to be successful? Try to make a plan, taking travel restrictions and costs into account.
4. Interview another student about their life experiences, and write up your interview in vignette form, incorporating direct quotes and also summarizing portions of the individual's life in your own words.

Additional Resources

1. Film *Which Way Home*. This documentary follows the experiences of unaccompanied minors traveling from Central America to the United States. <http://whichwayhome.net/>
2. Film *Romero* This feature-length film depicts the life of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was assassinated in March 1980 during mass. http://www.fandango.com/romero_45710/plotsummary
3. Film *Sin Nombre* Filmed in Spanish with English subtitles, this film portrays fictional stories of a young woman migrating to the United States from Honduras and a young man who hopes to leave the gang that he joined. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sin_Nombre_%282009_film%29
4. Dickson-Gomez, Julia. 2003. "Growing up in Guerrilla Camp: The Long-Term Impact of Being a *Child Soldier* in *El Salvador's* Civil War." *Ethos* 30(4): 327-356. This article highlights the ways that children were involved in the Salvadoran civil war as combatants.
5. Orellana, Marjorie Faulstich, Barrie Thorne, Anna Chee, and Wan Shun Eva Lam. 2001. "Transnational Childhoods: The Participation of Children in Processes of Family Migration." *Social Problems* 48(4):572-591. This article is useful in showing how children have agency during migration processes.
6. Website featuring work by Beatriz Cortez: <https://beatrizcortez.com/> And here is her faculty website: <http://www.csun.edu/humanities/central-american-studies/beatriz-cortez>

7. Youtube video (in Spanish) about the Commemoration event described in the conclusion of this chapter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unXU41rmSuI>
Definitely worth showing, as some of the artwork is featured, as well as the recording of the sounds of the names of victims of the massacre in El Mozote.

Chapter Two: Living in the Gap This chapter explores Salvadoran youths' accounts of growing up in Southern California neighborhoods and schools, as well as of transitioning to adulthood.

Discussion Questions

1. How have language skills, word choice, and accent been taken as markers of belonging or of foreignness? What does the opening passage, quoting Hector Tobar, indicate about how variation in language can also serve as a source of creativity?
2. What does the author mean by “gap” and “disjuncture” in this chapter? What sorts of gaps are described in the chapter?
3. This chapter also includes numerous narratives of personal experiences. Which stand out to you and why?
4. What challenges did the young people who are featured in this book face growing up in Southern California? How did they respond to these challenges?
5. In what ways does this chapter highlight young people's creativity?
6. In the conclusion, the author writes that the material presented in this chapter demonstrates “the continued salience of race in producing belonging and exclusion” (p. 92). Based on your own experiences, do you agree that race continues to be salient in settings such as schools, neighborhoods and the workplace? Why or why not

Activities/Assignments for students

1. Write a short essay about your own experience growing up and going to school. How does your experience compare to those described in the chapter? Are there any that you can relate to? In particular, what sorts of social groups existed in the high school that you attended?
2. Go to the US Census Bureau website and look up the demographics of the city that you live in. Now go to your campus website and look at the characteristics of the student population. How do they compare to the city where you are living? What does this comparison suggest regarding the accessibility of college education in your community?
3. People in the United States speak English differently from each other, whether due to regional variation, ethnic background, learning English as a second language, age, or other factors. Have you ever felt criticized because of the ways

that you speak English (or another language)? Could what others may have criticized actually be a source of strength? Make up a short story that includes dialogue, in order to explore these issues.

4. Interview someone that you know about their childhood. Were they born in the U.S. or did they immigrate from elsewhere? What was the neighborhood where they grew up like? What were their experiences going to school? How and when did they get their first job? In class, present a short oral report on the results of the interview. After you have listened to other students' reports as well, reflect as a group on common themes and sources of variation.

Additional Resources

1. Website: Hector Tobar's commentary about his book, *The Tattooed Soldier*.
<http://www.hectortobar.com/tattooedsoldier>
2. Washington Post website allowing individuals to look up income information associated with particular zip codes, and to compare that to nearby neighborhoods:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/local/2013/11/09/washington-a-world-apart/>
3. National Public Radio broadcast about a Salvadoran father who lives in the U.S. and is separated from his children in El Salvador:
<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/07/01/419076129/a-father-in-california-kids-in-el-salvador-and-new-hope-to-reunite>

Chapter Three: Dreams This chapter describes three forms of activism in which interviewees engaged: the undocumented student movement, campus student organizations, and writing collectives.

Discussion Questions

1. What obstacles do undocumented college students face trying to pursue higher education? How do these compare to the obstacles faced by students more generally? What resources exist in your state or on your campus to assist such students?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the forms of activism described in this chapter?
3. What do you think of the goals and strategies of the activists and writers described in this chapter?
4. Do you agree that writing poetry or literature can be a form of activism? Why or why not?
5. What is *testimonio* or "testimony"? How have personal stories been important to the forms of activism described in this chapter?

6. What dreams do the students and writers described in this chapter pursue? Are your own dreams similar or different?
7. Is it important for young people to have a voice in the critical issues of our day? What do you think are the most important issues? And how can you and others have a voice?

Activities/Assignments for Students

1. On your campus, what resources exist to assist undocumented students? Draft a guide outlining the obstacles these students might encounter and listing any resources that are available on your campus.
2. Review the websites of United We Dream (<http://unitedwedream.org/>) and of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (<http://www.fairus.org/>). What does each say about the issue of DREAMers? What arguments do you find most persuasive, and why?
3. Does your campus have clubs or organizations that focus on students of a particular ethnic, national, or racial background? Invite a representative of one of these clubs to talk to your class about the club's goals and focus. Be prepared to ask questions, based on the description of the student organizations featured in this chapter.
4. Review the two poems featured in the appendix, as well as the "Literary Voices" section of this chapter, then write a poem or creative essay exploring your own identity, or identity more broadly.
5. Review the requirements for and benefits of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. See <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>. To what degree does DACA resolve the challenges faced by undocumented students?

Additional Resources

1. United We Dream "Dreams from our Families" – features testimony of student who qualified for DACA: <http://unitedwedream.org/blog/dreams-families-oliver-merino/>
2. USEU facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/USEUcalifornia>
3. Film: Children of the Diaspora <https://childrenofthediaspora.com/> (can be purchased for \$15, if you would like to show it to your class.)
4. Website of poet and writer Maya Chinchilla: <https://mayachapina.com/about/>

Chapter Four: Exiled Home through Deportation This chapter describes the experiences of Salvadoran youth who grew up in the United States but who were subsequently deported.

Discussion Questions

1. How and why were individuals who had grown up in the United States and in many cases had received temporary or permanent legal status in this country deported to El Salvador?
2. What does the author mean by “producing deportability” (p. 136)?
3. The author describes detention centers as “portals” where individuals are transformed “from potential citizens into removal aliens” (p. 149). How does this “transformation” take place?
4. Why does the author describe deportees’ experiences in El Salvador as “exile”? How were the individual deportees who were interviewed by the author received by Salvadoran society?
5. What would you do if you suddenly learned that you were going to be deported and that you would not be able to return to the United States legally? How would you cope, once you were sent to live in another country? Imagine the moment when you got off of the plane there. What challenges would you face?
6. In your opinion, should U.S. immigration judges have discretion to evaluate whether individuals who have lived in the United States for much of their times should be deported? Or should there be no such discretion, for certain people?
7. Legal scholar Daniel Kanstroom has argued that U.S. immigration policies have given rise to an “American diaspora,” as noncitizens who are essentially American are deported to other countries, sometimes accompanied by their U.S. citizen relatives. Do you agree with Kanstroom that it is possible for someone to both be “American” (at least culturally and socially) and deportable?

Activities/Assignments for students

1. As described in discussion question #5, above, develop a plan for what you would do if you were deported to another country. What challenges would you face there? How would you cope? To answer these questions, choose a specific country and do some research on that country. E.g., what is the unemployment rate, the per capita income, the language, etc. Write a short essay outlining these issues and describing your plan.
2. Review summaries of the following three legal decisions: *INS v. St. Cyr*, *Kim v. Holder*, and *Padilla v. Kentucky*. What insights does your review give you into current legal debates about U.S. deportation policies?
3. A recent controversy that has gotten media attention is the construction of family detention facilities designed to house women and children who are apprehended crossing the U.S. Mexico border. What is your stance on this issue? Has it changed after reading this book and if so, why? Is it appropriate to hold children in a detention facility? Write an opinion piece arguing for or against this practice.

You may wish to consult the Immigration and Customs Enforcement website (e.g. <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ices-new-family-detention-center-dilley-texas-open-december>), news coverage (e.g. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/16/us/homeland-security-chief-opens-largest-immigration-detention-center-in-us.html?_r=0) and perspectives of opponents (<http://www.aileadershipblog.org/2016/06/17/this-fathers-day/#more-4485>) and residents (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/may/22/immigrant-mothers-dilley-family-detention-center-texas>).

Additional Resources

1. Website: Daniel Kanstroom, post-deportation human rights project
<http://www.bc.edu/centers/humanrights/projects/deportation.html>
2. Audiorecording: PBS news story Deported Salvadoran teen returns home to threat of gang violence
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/day-deportation-salvadoran-teen-returns-town-fled/>
3. Radio diary story recorded by Jose William Huezo Soriano, “Weasel’s Diary,” featured on NPR, <https://www.wnyc.org/radio/#/ondemand/413327> 31 minutes long, originally broadcast when he was first deported to El Salvador after growing up in the United States, includes an update on how he is doing 15 minutes later. *Definitely* worth listening to!

Chapter Five: Biographies and Nations This chapter examines the ways that individuals negotiate national membership categories, focusing on the relationships that undocumented or temporarily authorized individuals forge with the United States, deportees’ relationships with the U.S. and El Salvador, and U.S.-based Salvadorans’ relationships with El Salvador.

Discussion Questions

1. What key experiences informed individuals’ understandings of their relationships to the United States and El Salvador?
2. Which of the narratives recounted in this chapter stand out to you the most? Why?
3. What makes somewhere a “home”? Do you identify multiple places as “home”? If so, are they multiple countries or multiple other locations or communities? How do you navigate these relationships? Also, can defining somewhere as home create boundaries that include some people, but keep others out?
4. Does the United States have an obligation to young people who grew up here and who identify with the country? What if those young people commit crimes?
5. Is it possible to develop membership categories and forms of identity that acknowledge the multiple relationships that individuals have? If so, what might

these be? And can they be granted legal recognition? Or, would doing so somehow weaken existing understandings of citizenship and dilute individuals' patriotism?

6. In your own life, are there particular memories that you find yourself dwelling on when you attempt to define your own identity?
7. The massacre at El Mozote was discussed in the introduction ("de la locura a la esperanza), Chapter 1 (the exhibit accompanying the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Salvadoran peace accords) and in the epilogue to this chapter. What is the importance of these ways of commemorating this massacre? What, if anything, can artwork, sculpture or theatre convey that other sorts of exposition cannot?

Activities/Assignments for Students

1. Write a short essay, poem, or fictional piece about the idea of "home." As you write, think about whether home has a single location or multiple locations?
2. Develop a skit, artwork, song, or some sort of creative work that conveys your understandings of the ways that identity and identification work within your life, or within the lives of those around you.
3. Review the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service website (<https://www.uscis.gov/greencard>). What are the ways that individuals can acquire a green card (lawful permanent residency) in the United States? To what degree do these programs take the strength of individuals' ties to the United States into account?
4. Increasingly, there are regional forms of membership, such as within the European Union, that transcend national borders. Review a description of EU membership (<http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/>). Could something like that work in the Americas? Why or why not? Discuss this question with your classmates.

Additional Resources

1. Film: Homeland directed by Doug Scott (for synopsis, see <http://www.brooklynfilmfestival.org/films/detail.asp?fid=202>)
2. Youtube video about USEU delegation to El Salvador, produced by : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM6iucztUNY>

Conclusion

Discussion Questions

1. Now that you have read the book, what do you think the title, "Exiled Home" means? And what about the subtitle?

2. Also, now that you have finished the book, what do you think of the concept of re/membering? How would you define this term, in your own words? What examples of re/membering stand out for you, from reading the book? Do you have any criticisms of this concept or of the way that it is applied?
3. What do you think of the policy recommendations that are made at the end of the book?
4. Has reading this book inspired any research ideas for you to pursue in the future? If so, what are they?

Activities/Assignments

1. Write a short essay evaluating this book. What did you like about it? What could be improved?
2. If you were in charge of reforming U.S. immigration policies, what would you do? List the key reforms that you would make. When you come to class, compare your ideas with those of your classmates. Is there a broad consensus? Or are there disagreements?
3. Go to the websites of the presidential candidates and study their policies regarding immigration. Do you agree with any of the proposals? Are there any that you disagree with? How does what you learned from this book inform your response?

Additional Resources

1. President Obama's speech regarding Deferred Action (DAPA and DACA):
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-president-address-nation-immigration>
2. Motomura, Hiroshi. 2010. "What is 'Comprehensive Immigration Reform'?: Taking the Long View." *Arkansas Law Review*, Vol. 63, pp. 225-241.
3. Website (in Spanish) of the Salvadoran Vice Ministry for the Community Living Abroad:
http://www.rree.gob.sv/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=810

Possible assignments for the book as a whole:

1. Choose a topic related to El Salvador, and write a paper about it. How does your topic relate to the themes presented in *Exiled Home*?
2. Choose a country and investigate its migration history and relationships with the US. What issues are those communities facing? Present your key findings in class.
3. Interview someone who immigrated to the United States (or read a biography of someone who came to this country as an immigrant) and compare their experiences to those of the people interviewed for this book. In what ways, if any, are key concepts from the book relevant to interpreting the interview that you conducted?

Please feel free to send me additional teaching suggestions. I plan to update this guide periodically. I also would like to thank Erica Vogel for her comments and suggestions.