

My Experience in the Global Twin Cities Scholar Program

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The Global Twin Cities Scholars Program (GTCS) is a new program for incoming first-years that focuses heavily on topics of immigration, transnationality and identity. The program consists of two sister classes that are paired with Augsburg Seminar: (Im)Migration and Transnationality and Identity, Belonging and Place. The classes were co-taught by Raziel Valiño at Augsburg's Cuernavaca campus and Sarah Degner Riveros. The last component of the program will take place next summer or whenever it is safe to travel. Everyone in the class will either complete an internship in Minneapolis or take a trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico and the surrounding rural areas to see for ourselves the places from which many Mexican immigrants come.

The classes focused on immigration from the state of Morelos, Mexico to Minnesota, specifically to the Twin Cities. Part of the class is also devoted to talking about the large Hmong and Somali populations that live in the Twin Cities, as well as the Native American peoples and their histories of resilience.

Every week, our class of 19 students would cover a different topic through readings, podcasts and videos. In class, we would

discuss the media we had consumed. We reflected on what we learned and what we still did not know. The topics we covered were not easy ones: they ranged from the Bracero program to the Chicano and Undocuqueer movements and to the horrible way refugees and asylum seekers are treated at the U.S.-Mexico border. Discussions could get quite personal, but I feel that we formed a safe and accepting community where everyone who wanted to share could do so freely.

Due to the pandemic, we were not able to meet in person for regular class, but we did have two in-person events. About half the class attended a trip to Indigenous Roots to look at murals in person while the other half Zoomed in. A little more than half attended our ofrenda for Día de los Muertos in person. Between these events and our discussions, I feel that I really connected with my classmates.

In both classes, we listened to a number of speakers share their stories. We were honored to hear from Margarita Ortega of the Little Earth community, Columba Reyes of the Migrant Club: Cuernavaca-Axochiapan-Morelos, Maggie Loreda, co-director of Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA) and many others. I could

go on for pages about how inspirational and powerful the speakers were. Many of them are actively involved in advocating for their communities and volunteering in grassroots organizations. Some even founded their own organizations.

Finally, I want to give a big shout out to Raziel. I am so grateful that she and Sarah taught these courses because I learned so much. I gained not only scholarly knowledge about immigration policy and theory but also a deeper understanding of the struggles that immigrants face. These classes pushed me to think critically about hard topics that are too often oversimplified. Dr. Valiño emphasized intersectionality. People are never just one thing.

I am so glad I had the opportunity to take these courses, and I will miss them next semester. I met so many awesome people, and I think I can confidently say these classes changed my life. I don't know in what way yet, but I'm certain they did.

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