US-Mexico Border Research Project: Brainstorming

1. What are some of the questions about this topic (broad or specific) that you would actually like answers to? This is actually the hardest question.

What's with the persistent focus on the Mexican border being the source of illegal immigration when we get so many illegal immigrants that come through other ports (e.g. the Canandian border) of this country?

Statistically it's a lot higher.

What are the effects on legal immigration? How many can actually make it across and do they get harassed if they don't have the right papers?

When did it become a major political issue? It wasn't immediately after the Mexican-American War, but how did it progress and when did communities and politicians start being concerned about it?

In the '96 presidential election, the candidates viewed that the public had strong sentiments about immigration – cyclic: they thought that's what people wanted to hear and then public got more inflamed. Turns out politicians overestimated.

Security and terrorism role. Legal rights of illegal immigrants. Recent policy change that restricted medical care to the newborns of illegal immigrants?? Like prop 187 but on a national level.

Wall at Mexican border. "Keep America Safe" Act. What are the financial and social costs?

What are the effects on the economy because of the lack of migrant workers?

The leaderships of the Mexican and US governments – what do they talk to each other about? There doesn't seem to be any mention on the Mexican role.

Role of remittances and how Mexico would support immigration to America.

Does Mexico see it as a problem because it's helping their own economy. But we don't know...

Do we have sheer numbers of how many people are actually coming here each year? What percentage of those people crossing the border are illegal?

Economic impacts? "steal away American jobs" vs. jobs that Americans wouldn't want to take/work for lesser money. So Americans wouldn't be able to purchase goods for cheaper.

Are the people who are currently occupying these jobs really being displaced that they're now unemployed or do they have better jobs?

Are they putting *limits* on immigration?

What is the process of how they decide who's allowed in and isn't? It seems so random.

2. What kinds of sources would be useful in answering those questions? Don't worry too much for now about whether those sources are easily available at MIT, would be in English or Spanish, etc. For now, the sky's the limit.

Episode of South Park that deals with illegal immigration.
Unions
AFCIO
Department of Homeland Security
Census Bureau
Interviews with immigrants themselves
CA, AZ, NM, TX, FL state archives – court cases, etc.
Newspapers

3. Do you have any ideas about what a good format for our collaborative research should be? Would you rather see small groups presenting to each other? Creating a website or a documentary film? Collecting a group of documents that student in the next version of this class can use as resources? Again, for now, the sky's the limit.

Website – put our stuff out there
Editable Wiki
Presentation – discuss findings
Blog – for communication purposes throughout project

4. What kinds of skills and interest do you bring to this that other students in the class might not? This should include practical skills (web design, powerpoint, Spanish, digital movies). But I'd also like to know what kinds of topics interest you most (arts and music, politics and law, the technical details of border surveillance, economic data, etc.)

Students answer individually and turned in.