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### **Narrating the Battle of Ciudad Juárez: An OER term project for a Latin American/border studies course**

Oswaldo Zavala

*CUNY College of Staten Island*, [oswaldo.zavala@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:oswaldo.zavala@csi.cuny.edu)

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# Narrating the Battle of Ciudad Juárez: An OER term project for a Latin American/border studies course

Created by *Oswaldo Zavala* **May 2, 2021**

<https://opened.cuny.edu/courseware/lesson/1026>

Author: [Oswaldo Zavala](#)

Subject: Languages, World Cultures, Journalism, U.S. History, World History

Level: College / Upper Division

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Language: English, Spanish



## Overview

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A term project for undergraduate students of Latin American and/or border studies, focusing on the 1911 battle of Ciudad Juárez during the Mexican Revolution.

Assign this activity as a midterm or final term project for a Latin American or Border studies course at the undergraduate level. Full Spanish-language proficiency needed. Recording in English or Spanish is optional for students, per guidelines set by the instructor.

The border city of Juárez has been at the center of crucial historical processes in the construction of México's Nation State and its geopolitical relation with the United States. In 2019, it drew national attention after a horrid image surfaced: a concentration camp of migrants, mostly minors, improvised under one of the international bridges by the riverbanks of the Rio Grande, the natural border between the Juárez and El Paso, Texas. But the border has been the recurrent site for crucial conflicts and political events binding and separating both countries. In 1865, as Napoleon the III invaded and turned the country into a temporary European crown, Benito Juárez, the first and only indigenous president of México to date, took shelter in the city then known as Paso del Norte. After he rebuilt his government, President Juárez's strategy became in fact a preventive political mechanism allowing future presidents to be embodied with the country's capital and move it with them in times of war. Almost a century later, Ciudad Juárez became again the center of a new conflict: the so-called "war against drugs". In 2008, then President Felipe Calderón ordered more than 10,000 troops and federal agents to storm the city as part of a national strategy to militarize anti-drug efforts.

Understanding the city as "the point of departure for important transformations," President Andrés Manuel López Obrador began his presidential campaign in Ciudad Juárez a decade later, on April 1, 2018, delivering his first political speech from a local monument to President Juárez. In its intimate proximity to the United States, we must understand this border city indeed as the epicenter of some of the most transformative episodes in Mexican history, a logical site for revolution.

From May 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of 1911, the revolutionary forces led by general Francisco I. Madero, colonel Francisco Villa and general Pascual Orozco seized Ciudad Juárez in a key three-day assault that forced the resignation of President Porfirio Díaz after a 30-year dictatorship, effectively ending the first phase of the Mexican Revolution. Drawing from open-access archival documents, photographs and video, students will research the key battle of the world's first revolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and reflect on the singular life at the border region. Students will consider the relevance of the geopolitical implications that facilitated the rebellion between the border cities of El Paso Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Students will then write and produce a five-minute slide presentation on the battle's historical importance from the point of view of its binational and bicultural community. The research project has three phases:

### **PHASE 1: STUDY the revolution.**

1. READ and WATCH archival documents on the May 8-10, 1911 battle of Juárez:
  1. Official Website about the battle of Juárez by Mexico's Ministry of Culture: [https://www.cultura.gob.mx/centenario-ejercito/batalla\\_cd\\_juarez.php](https://www.cultura.gob.mx/centenario-ejercito/batalla_cd_juarez.php)
  2. Documents and photographs from the U.S. Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/mexico/serdan.html>; <https://www.loc.gov/photos/?fa=language%3Aenglish%7Csubject%3Amexico%7Ccontributor%3Abain+news+service&dates=1910-1919&sb=>
  3. Other archival video and photographic material of the battle: <https://youtu.be/uxZZW6ID3Lw>; <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/rare-photos-battle-of-ciudad-juarez/>;

### **PHASE 2: WATCH and ANALYZE an example of a narrative about the battle of Juárez:**

1. *Las luces de la batalla* (Ángel Estrada Soto, 2003), open-access fiction short-film: <https://vimeo.com/391376534>

### **PHASE 3: CREATE your own narrative of the battle of Juárez following these steps:**

1. After exploring various options with your instructor, CHOOSE a character: it may be a rebel "maderista" soldier, a federal army soldier, a protagonist of the battle (Pancho Villa, Francisco I. Madero, Pascual Orozco), a Juárez/El Paso civilian of any profession (teacher, local businessman, a young boy or girl), a foreign or Mexican journalist covering the battle.
2. DOCUMENT your character's point of view: his/her involvement in the battle, his/her opinions of the revolution, his/her position in the border community, his/her description of the battle.
3. WRITE a script for a five-minute narrative along with audiovisual materials and produce your own video

of the battler using PowerPoint (or any other slide presentation program of your choosing). As an optional challenge, you may choose to act the part as in *Las luces de la batalla*, using a cell phone camera to insert commentary and memories of the battle.

4. UPLOAD the video in the course's You tube channel, as indicated by your instructor.

**Oswaldo Zavala** is Professor of contemporary Latin American literature and culture at the College of Staten Island and at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY).

Email: [oswaldo.zavala@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:oswaldo.zavala@csi.cuny.edu).

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