

Mexican American Studies students to unveil mural at Baytown library

BAYTOWN, TX — Students in the Mexican American Studies program at Lee College will unveil a new, hand-painted mural next week at Sterling Municipal Library that draws on the history of Baytown and depicts the stories of those who have made an impact on Latino and multicultural history in the region.

The mural will be revealed in a special reception set for 6-8 p.m., Wednesday, May 4, in the library conference room. The event is free, open to the public, and being presented in conjunction with the Puente Project at Lee College and with the cooperation of Sterling Municipal Library.

A group of 8 students created the mural for “HUMA 2319 – American Minority Studies: Chicano/Latino Art,” an interdisciplinary Mexican American Studies course that examines the diverse cultural, artistic, economic, historical, political and social aspects of minority communities in the United States. Students in the class have explored topics ranging from race and ethnicity to gender, socioeconomic class, sexual origin, and religion.

Much of the public art created in recent years has been more graphical in nature, said Orlando Lara, instructor of the HUMA 2319 course and lead faculty member for the Mexican American Studies program. By contrast, Mexican muralists of the 1920s and 1930s — and later Chicano muralists of the 1970s and 1980s — created artwork that experimented with social and political content. He hopes the students’ mural will begin to bring back the more social and political aspects of art.

“I hope this will help reinvigorate their love of learning, community work and the role that art can play in recovering and acknowledging history,” Lara said. “For the community, both the students and I hope that it will help spur a more robust and urgent public art movement in Baytown.”

Felicite Herrera said creating the mural has given her and her classmates the opportunity to send a message and make people see what is happening in their city. “It’s about empowering everyone and not letting Mexican-American and African-American history be erased,” she said.

For more information about the mural unveiling or the Mexican American Studies program at Lee College, contact Lara at 281.425.6431 or olara@lee.edu.