



SPA255Y (Virtual): Introduction to the Hispanic World: Spanish Tradition, Art, History and Religion through Popular Literature
Professor: John Julius Reel

Course Description

As one of the oldest countries in Europe, Spain possesses a vast, rich and multicultural past. How to even start to understand it? In this course, we will use popular world literature to introduce ourselves to the history, art, religion and folkloric traditions of Spain and the Hispanic world, with a special focus on Seville, which by 1600 had become the largest and wealthiest city in Spain and one of the commercial capitals of the world, owing to the fact that all ships bound to the New World had to make Seville their one and only point of departure and arrival.

We will begin with the reading and analysis of the short story, set in Seville during the Spanish Golden Age, “Rinconete and Cortadillo” (1613) written by the colossal Spanish writer, Miguel de Cervantes. This tale, like many of the readings in the course, will be enhanced by virtual visits to (and/or streamed tours of) the parts of the city where the story’s characters roamed and made their mischief.

Our understanding of the Spanish Golden Age will be bolstered by excerpts from Washington Irving’s *Tales of the Alhambra*, a best-selling travel book upon publication in 1832, which has since earned its place as a classic portrait of Spain before its Christian Reconquista (Reconquering) was complete in 1492, the start of the Golden Age.

Excerpts from writings from renowned English and North American writers and hispanophiles, such as Ernest Hemingway, Anthony Trollope, Jan Morris, and the controversial American art critic Robert Hughes will give students a good general knowledge of the mix of cultures, beliefs, traditions and history that have helped forge Spain’s identity over the years, and therefore have left a mark on Hispanic culture in general.

So that students see how contemporary Spain, specifically Seville, continues to be shaped by the Spanish Golden Age, by the centuries-long occupations of the Roman and Al-Andalus empires, and by traditions such as Catholicism and Baroque art, the second half of the course will focus mostly on the study of Spanish writer Arturo Pérez-Reverte’s best-selling novel *The Seville Communion*, first published as *Piel del tambor* in Spain in 1995.

Andalusia, and specifically Seville, will be our classroom, as we use streaming technologies to walk in the footsteps of the characters and immerse ourselves in the conundrums and plot-twists of Pérez-Reverte’s mystery, set in modern-day Seville, with many of the scenes taking place in parks, bars, plazas, streets, hotels, churches and quays that continue to be a vital part of the city’s day-to-day existence.

The literature of both contemporary and classic masters will come to life in this course, with Hispanic culture as the principal protagonist.

Course Structure

The streets, bars, churches, monuments and museums of Seville and other key Andalusian cities reflect the current-day Hispanic world. For that reason, our virtual classes will often be



led from on-site locations in Seville, Granada, Córdoba, as well as from towns and archeological sites. Our visits to key Andalusian sites, some touristy, others off the beaten path, will complement the material covered in the texts. At the end of the course, thanks to the texts read and close virtual contact with Southern Spain, students will be able to answer key cultural questions and make connections between the time periods studied and our own time.

As part of the class, students will have the chance to learn Spanish vocabulary, expressions and grammar useful for daily life abroad.

All readings are in English. No knowledge of Spanish is required.

The course is open to students from other disciplines.

Texts

The Seville Communion, by Arturo Pérez-Reverte (the 1998 translation by Sonia Soto), originally *Piel del tambor*

Class handout, including:

- "Rinconete and Cortadillo" (1613) by Miguel Cervantes
- Excerpts from *Tales of the Alhambra* (1832), by Washington Irving
 - "Reflections on the Muslim Domination of Spain"
 - "Inhabitants of the Alhambra"
 - "Mementos of Boabdil"
 - "Legend of the Three Beautiful Princesses"
 - "Muhammed Abu Alahmar, the Founder of the Alhambra"
 - "Yusef Abul Hagig, the Finisher of the Alhambra"
- "Hemingway in Pamplona," by John Affleck, *Literary Traveler*
- Excerpt from *The Dangerous Summer*, by Ernest Hemingway
- Excerpt from *Barcelona the Great Enchantress*, by Robert Hughes
- Excerpt, "Four Cities" from *Spain*, by Jan Morris
- Excerpt, "Holy Week in Seville" from *On the Shores of the Mediterranean*, by Eric

Newby

- Excerpt, "Holiday," from *Spanish Recognitions*, by Mary Lee Settle
- "John Bull on the Guadalquivir," a short story by Anthony Trollope

Online Readings:

- "Babelia: Living and Speaking Spanish in Seville, Spain," by J.J. Reel, *Cleaver Magazine* (<http://bit.ly/2jGh2kE>)
- "Eyes to See the Orange Trees," by J.J. Reel, *Ruminant Magazine* (<https://bit.ly/2y7bNqN>)
- "Convert," by J.J. Reel, *Gravel* (<http://bit.ly/2E8XfbV>)



Virtual Tours/ Live Stream Visits (to be scheduled to match the trajectory of course content)

The Alhambra in Granada, corresponding to readings from *Tales of the Alhambra*, by Washington Irving.

The Cathedral and the Giralda Tower, corresponding to the reading of “John Bull on the Guadalquivir” by Anthony Trollope.

Sanlucar de Barrameda, corresponding to the reading of “John Bull on the Guadalquivir” by Anthony Trollope and “Holiday” by Mary Lee Settle.

The Roman ruins of Munigua in the Sierra Norte, of Italica in Santiponce, various sites in the center of Seville, to emphasize the city’s connection to ancient Rome.

The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba, to reinforce the prevalence of Al-Ándalus culture in the region.

Barrio Santa Cruz, Triana, La Campana, La Capilla de San José, Casa Cuesta, Plaza del Pan, Parque María Luisa, Palacio Arzobispal, Hospital de la Caridad, Torre del Oro, etc., corresponding to “Rinconete and Cortadillo” by Miguel Cervantes, and succeeding chapters of *The Seville Connection* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte.

Assignments and Exam

(15%) Class attendance and active class participation.

(30%) Two analytical papers (5 pages/ 1,800-2000 words each).

Select and research a personage, a work of art, an event, a monument, a painting, a church, a religious icon, a plaza, a street, a holiday, or an aspect of Spanish or Hispanic culture mentioned in one of the class readings and analyze her/his/its significance and if – why or why not – she/he/it is worthy of being celebrated and/or commemorated.

(20%) Quizzes on the readings

(10%) 15 minute oral presentation on a work of Baroque Art.

Choose one work of Spanish Baroque Art or Architecture – perhaps something by Murillo, Velázquez, and Zurbarán – and speak the work’s and the artist’s relevance, significance, and mastery. The presentations will be scheduled and spread out over the 19 class days.

(25%) Final Exam/ Project

Class Schedule

Day 1: Course Introduction, Expectations, and Objectives.

Reading: “Babelia: Living and Speaking Spanish in Seville, Spain,” (<http://bit.ly/2iGh2kE>);



“Eyes to See the Orange Trees,” (<https://bit.ly/2y7bNqN>).

Day 2: Perspectives on Spanish Character.

Reading: Excerpt from “Rinconete and Cortadillo”; “Inhabitants of the Alhambra,” from *Tales of the Alhambra*.

Day 3: The Outsider Looking in.

Reading: “Holiday,” from *Spanish Recognitions*; “John Bull on the Guadalquivir.”

Day 4: Islamic Spain. The History and Influences of Al-Andaluz.

Reading: From *Tales of the Alhambra*: “Reflections on the Muslim Domination of Spain”; “Mementos of Boabdil”; “Legend of the Three Beautiful Princesses”; “Muhamed Abu Alahmar, the Founder of the Alhambra”; “Yusef Abul Hagig, the Finisher of the Alhambra”.

Day 5: Institutional versus Popular Catholicism.

Reading: Prologue and Chapter I, “The Man from Rome,” of *The Seville Connection (TSC)*; “Holy Week in Seville”.

Day 6: The Current Sevillian Cityscape.

Reading: Chapter II and III of *TSC*, “Three Villains” and “Eleven Bars in Triana.”

Day 7: Faith, Christian and Otherwise.

QUIZ ON CHARACTERS, RUNNING THEMES AND PLOT THREADS OF TSC.

Reading: Chapter IV of *TSC*, “Seville Oranges and Blossoms.”

Day 8: Soul versus Guile and Greed.

FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE

Reading: Chapter V of *TSC*, “Captain Xalac’s Twenty Pearls”; “Hemingway in Pamplona”; and excerpt from *The Dangerous Summer*.

Day 9: Macarena: Sevillian Virgen and Femme Fatal.

Reading: Chapter VI of *TSC*, “Lorenzo Quart’s Tie”; “Convert.”

Day 10: Rituals, and the Power of the Catholic Mass.

Reading: Chapter VII of *TSC*, “The Bottle of Anis de Mono.”

Day 11: Pride versus Virtue, the Stars as Common Ground, and the Patched Drum Skin.

Reading: Chapter VIII of *TSC*, “An Andalusian Lady.”

Day 12: “The past and the present... side by side.”

Reading: Chapter IX of *TSC*, “It’s a Small World.”

Day 13: Baroque Art as a Remedy for “The desperation of intelligence.”

Reading: Chapter X of *TSC*, “In Ictu Oculi.”

Day 14: Art and Architecture Reflecting and Interpreting Religion

Reading: excerpt from *Barcelona the Great Enchantress*; excerpt, “Four Cities” from *Spain*.

Day 15: A Futile Battle or Heavenly Light?

QUIZ ON CHARACTERS, RUNNING THEMES AND PLOT THREADS OF TSC.

Reading: Chapter XI of *TSC*, “Carlota Bruner’s Trunk.”

Day 16: The Victors and the Vanquished.



SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE

Reading: Chapter XII and XIII of *TSC*, "The Wrath of God" and "The *Lovely*."

Day 17: Mixing Metaphors.

Reading: Chapter XIV and XV of *TSC*, "Eight O'Clock Mass" and "Vespers."

Day 18: Course conclusions. Review for the final exam.

Day 19: FINAL EXAM/ PROJECT