

SPA255Y0: Introduction to the Hispanic World: Spanish Tradition, Art, History and Religion through Popular Literature

Professor: John Julius Reel

Semester: Summer 2023

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 visits to 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.

Seville will be our classroom, as we 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 reflect the current-day Hispanic world. For that reason, we will regularly meet outside of the classroom, with the city as our laboratory of observation and analysis. Our visits to key Sevillian sites, some touristy, others off the beaten path, will complement the material covered in the texts. At the end of the course, students will be able to not only roam the city on their own, but 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 useful Spanish vocabulary and grammar in order to practice it in their daily life in Seville.

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

The course is open to students from other disciplines.

Field Trips

In addition to various classes being held at (or while touring) relevant sites around the city, this course includes mandatory field trips to famous cultural meccas, including a three-day trip to the Andalusian cities of Cordoba and Granada, and another to the tableland city of Salamanca.

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, *Ruminate Magazine* (<https://bit.ly/2y7bNqN>)
- "Convert," by J.J. Reel, *Gravel* (<http://bit.ly/2E8XfbV>)

Assignments and Exam

(15%) Class attendance and active class participation.

(30%) Two 15-minute class presentations.

Select a personage, a work of art, an event, a monument, a painting, a film, a book, a church, a religious icon, a plaza, a street, a holiday, or an aspect of Spanish or Hispanic culture and analyze her/his/its significance and if – why or why not – she/he/it is worthy of being celebrated and/or commemorated. The presentations will be scheduled and spread out over the 19 class days.

(20%) Quizzes on the readings

During the course, at least five random quizzes will be given, either on material learned from peers' presentations, or on the characters, running themes and plot threads from the assigned readings. Remember, paying attention to your fellow students' work, and keeping up with the class readings is crucial in order to keep class discussions lively!

(15%) 15-minute class 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 about the relevance, significance and mastery of the work and the artist. The presentations will be scheduled and spread out over the 19 class days.

(20%) Final Exam. In-class.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

Monday, June 26: Course Introduction, Expectations, and Objectives.

Reading(s) to discuss: "Babelia: Living and Speaking Spanish in Seville, Spain," (<http://bit.ly/2jGh2kE>); "Eyes to See the Orange Trees," (<https://bit.ly/2y7bNqN>).

Tuesday, June 27: Perspectives on Spanish Character.

Reading(s) to discuss: Excerpt from “Rinconete and Cortadillo”; “Inhabitants of the Alhambra,” from *Tales of the Alhambra*.

Wednesday, June 28: The Outsider Looking in.

CLASS TRIP: Sites and setting from “Rinconete and Cortadillo”

Reading(s) to discuss: “Holiday,” from *Spanish Recognitions*; “John Bull on the Guadalquivir.”

Thursday, June 29: Islamic Spain. The History and Influences of Al-Andaluz.

Reading(s) to discuss: From *Tales of the Alhambra*: “Reflections on the Muslim Domination of Spain”; “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”.

Monday, July 3: Institutional versus Popular Catholicism.

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

Tuesday, July 4: The Current Sevillian Cityscape.

CLASS TRIP: Tour of La Campana, La Capilla de San José, y Triana.

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter II and III of *TSC*, “Three Villains” and “Eleven Bars in Triana.”

Wednesday, July 5: Faith, Christian and Otherwise.

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter IV of *TSC*, “Seville Oranges and Blossoms.”

Thursday, July 6: Soul versus Guile and Greed.

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

Monday, July 10th: Macarena: Sevillian Virgen and Femme Fatal.

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

Tuesday, July 11th: Rituals, and the Power of the Catholic Mass.

CLASS TRIP: Class held in the Glorieta de Becquer, in Parque María Luisa

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter VII of *TSC*, “The Bottle of Anis de Mono.”

Wednesday, July 12th: Pride versus Virtue, the Stars as Common Ground, and the Patched Drum Skin.

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter VIII of *TSC*, “An Andalusian Lady.”

Thursday, July 13th: “The past and the present... side by side.”

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

Monday, July 17th: Baroque Art as a Remedy for “The desperation of intelligence.”

CLASS TRIP: Palacio Arzobispal and/or Iglesia y Hospital de la Caridad

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter X of *TSC*, “In Ictu Oculi.”

Tuesday, July 18th: Art and Architecture Reflecting and Interpreting Religion

Reading(s) to discuss: excerpt from *Barcelona the Great Enchantress*; excerpt, “Four Cities” from *Spain*.

Wednesday, July 19th: A Futile Battle or Heavenly Light?

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

Theme: The Victors and the Vanquished.

CLASS TRIP: Torre del Oro

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter XII and XIII of *TSC*, “The Wrath of God” and “The *Lovely*.”

Thursday, July 20th: Mixing Metaphors.

Reading(s) to discuss: Chapter XIV and XV of *TSC*, “Eight O’Clock Mass” and “Vespers.”

Course conclusions. Review for the final exam.

Friday, July 21: IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM