BARC SOSP 362: Spanish Culture and Society

Credits: 3
Prerequisites: University-level course in European history

Course Description
In this course we study the diverse elements that have merged together to form the cultural and national identity of what we call Spain. We examine the different cultural threads and identities that have been woven together throughout history and that have visibly influenced the design of contemporary Peninsular society. Far from viewing Spain as a seamless entity we consider conflicts and tensions that have been present throughout history: the dialectics of center-periphery, monoculturalism-pluriculturalism, tradition-modernity, Catholicism-secularism, Europeanization-Hispanization, etc. The course consists of three parts: In the first part, we study culture and society from the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages, and from the Renaissance to modernity with a view to elucidate how the aforementioned tensions have played out in history. In the second part, we explore the social and cultural complexity of contemporary Spain. And in the third part, we discuss the challenges that “new Spaniards” face.

The course examines the most significant customs, traditions, costumes, living subjects, idiosyncracies, and various regional cultures around the country, underlining the differences and similarities among all historical and autonomic territories in Spain. This course will also focus on cultural aspects of Spain that define and distinguish Spaniards within the contemporary European context. The in-class lectures and several visits to places of interest will allow the students to better understand the rich Spanish culture. By the end of the course the students will have gained a broad knowledge of the past and current culture, traditions and gastronomy of Spain and an understanding of Spaniards’ character and customs.

Rationale and Impact of the Course
Spain is often perceived by outsiders through stereotypes of the tourist industry -- Flamenco dancers, bullfighters, Don Juans and Don Quixotes. This course seeks to undo this image of Spain in favor of a plural, nuanced and cultural understanding of society and history

Primary Learning
The course consists of lectures complemented by on-site classes (field studies), seminar discussions of assigned readings and audiovisual aids. Students are expected to do the reading assigned for the class ahead of time and to participate actively in discussions.
Also, students are expected to immerse themselves in the Spanish culture as much as possible.

**Learning Outcomes and Expected Student Competencies**

At the end of this course, students will have developed the following skills:

- A broad understanding of the main lines of Spanish history and from Roman times to the present.
- Analytical skills used to interpret culture and history while taking into account diverse perspectives.
- Awareness of the complexities of contemporary Spanish society in light of the past.
- General knowledge of Spanish history, culture and society.
- Ability to critically analyze current events.

**Course requirements**

*Required Readings*


**Field Work**

In this course there are four on-site classes or field studies.

**Forms of Assessment**

In this course there is a midterm exam, a final exam, a research paper and a class presentation of that paper. Both the Midterm and the Final Exams consist of short and essay-like questions about the class lectures, the readings, the field studies and any other materials used in class. Written work consists of a research paper (topic to be discussed and agreed upon with the professor) that the student presents to the class during the last two weeks.

**Percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written work</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Learning outcomes and forms of assessment**

Both the midterm and the final exams measure knowledge whereas the research paper and the class presentation measure analytical skills. Therefore, learning outcome number one relates to the exams and learning outcomes two and three to the final paper, class presentation and class participation.

**Other policies**

Attendance is mandatory. Students with more than three absences will be penalized. Students with more than 6 absences will not be eligible for credits.
Course Outline

Week 1
Introduction to the course: Discussion of the syllabus and of learning outcomes and expectations.
Spain, one or many?

Week 2
- The lasting impact of the Roman presence in Iberia
- Field trip: Visit to the Museu d’Història de la Ciutat.

Week 3
- Medieval society and culture. The coexistence of the three cultures and the three religions.
- Field trip: Walking tour of the Ribera neighbourhood.

Week 4
- The discovery of America and the encounter with “the other”
- The Ultra-Catholic Habsburg Monarchy.

Week 5
- The 18th century: Enlightenment and reformism.

Week 6
- The 19th century: the struggle for modernity.
- The “Disaster of 1898.” An identity crisis. The emergence of peripheral nationalisms.
Week 7
- Modernisms and the Avant-Gardes in Spain and Catalonia.
- Walking tour around Modernist Barcelona.

Week 8
- Midterm Exam.
- The so-called “two Spains:” the Republic and the Civil War.

Week 9
- Field trip: the sites of the Civil War in Barcelona.
- Francoism. From National-Catholicism and autarky to a consumer society. Culture during Francoism.

Week 10
- The transition to democracy. National reconciliation. The state of the autonomies

Week 11
- The Basque, the Catalans and Spain

Week 12
- Women in society. New gender roles. The changing role of the Catholic Church
- Spanish Culture in the seventies and eighties: the “destape” and the “movida.”

Week 13
- Movie: Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.
- The nineties: The triumph of Europeanization over isolationism.
Week 14
- Spain in a globalized society. From an emigrant society to an inmigrant one.
  Reading: To be assigned.
- Spaniards in the year 2006.

Week 15
Class presentations and Final Exam
Bibliography


