

Cervantes and his World: Exemplary Novels (1613)

Academic Year: (2018 / 2019)

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Department assigned to the subject:

Coordinating teacher: COLAS GIL, MANUEL JESUS

Type: Compulsory ECTS Credits : 6.0

Year : 1 Semester :

DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS: PROGRAMME

What do the Exemplary Novels mean or represent today? Twenty first-century readers might find the volume just entertaining, or weird, but a close reading of this collection of short stories illuminates the depth of an experimental literary process that opens a window to Cervantes' preoccupations and participation with his fictional works in some of the most hotly social debates of his time. This course explores literary representations of social, political and religious issues in Cervantes' Exemplary Novels. We will look at this collection of short stories to analyze the relationship between literary fiction and its historic and cultural determinations. Also this approach will allow us to reflect on topics from Cervantes' time that are still relevant in debates in contemporary Spain.

In 1613 Cervantes publishes in Spain the Exemplary Novels. The volume is a collection of twelve brilliant and sophisticated short stories that comes out a few years after Cervantes' suddenly acquired fame. In his book the author of Don Quixote explores literary techniques and displays a myriad of topics and characters from his contemporary life: crime in cities, poverty, prostitution and public health, government corruption, gypsy communities, pirates and delinquency on the sea, religious tensions, madness and social alienation, etc.

Cervantes lives and writes during one of the richest and most remarkable periods of Spanish literature, but also under the decline of the Spanish Empire. The author of Don Quixote explores some of the main problems that affect a society that lives and struggles to survive under the monarchy of the Habsburg. The city is a common scenario in his stories: Madrid, Valladolid, Salamanca, and specially Seville and the Andalusia region where Cervantes spent a great amount of time.

BEYOND THE TEXTS:

A list of visits and activities in Madrid and surrounding areas are suggested: from museums to convents, churches, synagogues, mosques, temporary exhibits, libraries, palaces or cultural institutions. This way students could learn about Cervantes' time not only from his literary works but also from paintings and other fine arts, civil and religious architecture, manuscripts, theater and music.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

At the beginning of every class the students are given relevant historical and social information, which will be used as a guide to the analysis of the reading, and as an introduction to the class discussion. Students' performance is evaluated every day, since participation in class is part of their final grade. As part of the evaluation, the student has to submit homework, and write a final essay. Attendance in this course is mandatory, and class participation is essential. If a student misses class, it is his/her responsibility to get the information, which was covered during the class that they missed. Valuable class participation is the result of a careful, responsible and critical reading of the texts.

Throughout the course, the student has to submit several assignments to the instructor. These assignments consist of a few questions that should be elaborated at home and turned in on the dates marked on the class chronogram. These assignments are graded and returned to the student. They should be seen as valuable writing exercises in preparation for both exams, and the final paper. Order and articulation of ideas, clarity in the presentation, and the critical and analytical aptitudes of the

student are evaluated.

Throughout the semester, the student takes two written exams (a midterm and a final). In each exam, the student has to answer theoretical questions discussed in class. The exam also includes a practical section in which they have to answer questions about a given passage. At the end of the semester the student has to write a final essay about a text and a topic of his/her interest. A few weeks before the submission date, the instructor suggests a list of topics to the students. The students have the freedom to pick any topic he/she might be interested in. The essay should be 7 pages long, and a hard copy should be submitted the day of the final exam. Late submissions are penalized.

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cervantes, Miguel de Exemplary Novels. Translated from the English by Edith Grossman. Edited by Roberto González Echevarría, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016