

CERVANTES AND HIS WORLD:
EXEMPLARY NOVELS (1613)

This literature course might be out of your “academic comfort zone” but offers the unique opportunity to learn about one of the most influential figures in Western literature, Miguel de Cervantes, his work and also about the city of Madrid where he lived, wrote and died. Some of you, living under the Age of Technology, might wonder what a literature course is for in the XXI century. The *Humanities* are considered the fragile disciplines nowadays, but many experts and intellectuals stress their vital importance in higher education, noting that Humanities courses help students to develop valuable skills that transcend disciplines -among them critical thinking, analytical reading, moral reasoning and imagination. Don't be scared and join the class!

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What do Cervantes' *Exemplary Novels* mean or represent today? Twenty first-century readers might find the volume just entertaining or weird, or maybe both, but a close reading of this collection of short stories illuminates the depth of an experimental literary process. At the same time, this reading 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.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND COURSE EVALUATION:

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. **The use of technology is prohibited in the classroom.**

In the middle of the semester, the student has to submit a mid-term essay to the instructor. The essay consists of an analytical reading of one of the short stories already read in class. This essay is graded and returned to the student. This work is a valuable writing exercise in preparation for both the final exam, and the final paper. Order and articulation of ideas, clarity in the presentation, and the critical and analytical aptitudes of the student are evaluated.

At the end of the semester, the student takes a final exam. In this exam, the student has to answer one or two questions discussed in class. At the end of the semester the student has to write a final essay about a short story 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.

The final grade of the course is based on the following:

- 20% Participation, attendance, and punctuality
- 20% Mid-term essay (1,600 words)
- 20% Final exam
- 40% Final essay (1,600 words)

Given that attendance and participation are fundamental in this course, non-justified absences affect the final grade in the class in the following way:

- 1 absence (final grade goes down 0.3)
- 2 absences (final grade goes down 0.5)
- 3 absences (the course is failed)

READING LIST

- 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.

REFERENCES

LITERARY CRITICISM

- Cascardi, Anthony J. *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Cruz, Anne. *Discourses of Poverty: Social Reform and the Picaresque Novel in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Egginton, William. *The Man Who Invented Fiction*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016
- El Saffar, Ruth. *Novel to Romance. A Study of Cervantes 's Novelas ejemplares*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.
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- : Cervantes and the Material World. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Sieber, H. "Cervantes and the art of reading." The Beall-Russell Lectures in the Humanities. Office of Public Relations, Baylor University, 1997.

HISTORY REFERENCES

- Elliott, John: "Self-perception and Decline of Spain." Spain and its World 1500-1700. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989: 241-261.
- : Imperial Spain 1469-1716. London: Penguin, 2002.
- Feros, Antonio. Kingship and favoritism in the Spain of Phillip III, 1598-1621. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hütter, Robert. Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Sieber, Harry. "The Magnificent Fountain: Literary Patronage in the Court of Philip III." *Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 18.2 (1998): 85-116.
- Williams, Patrick. The Great Favourite: The Duke of Lerma and the court and government of Phillip III of Spain, 1598-1621. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEKS	SESSIONS	CONTENTS
1	SESSION 1 01/30	Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i> (1605-1615) and the <i>Exemplary Novels</i> (1613)
	SESSION 2 02/01	Prologue to the readers and dedicatory by Miguel de Cervantes
2	SESSION 1 02/06	The Novel of the Little Gypsy Girl
	SESSION 2 02/08	The Novel of the Little Gypsy Girl
3	SESSION 1 02/13	The Novel of the Generous Lover
	SESSION 2 02/15	The Novel of the Generous Lover
4	SESSION 1 02/20	The Novel of Rinconete and Cortadillo
	SESSION 2 02/22	The Novel of Rinconete and Cortadillo
5	SESSION 1 02/27	The Novel of the English Spanishwoman
	SESSION 3 03/01	The Novel of the English Spanishwoman
6	SESSION 1 03/06	The Novel of the Glass Lawyer
	SESSION 2 03/08	The Novel of the Glass Lawyer
7	SESSION 1 03/13	The Novel of the Power of Blood
	SESSION 2 03/15	The Novel of the Power of Blood REFLEXIONS ON THE FIRST HALF OF THE VOLUME MID-TERM PAPER SUBMISSION
8	SESSION 1 03/20	The Novel of the Jealous Extremaduran
	SESSION 2 03/22	The Novel of the Jealous Extremaduran
9	SESSION 1 03/27	The Novel of the Scullery Maid
	SESSION 2 03/29	The Novel of the Scullery Maid
EASTER BREAK (04/01-04/10)		
10	SESSION 1 04/10	EASTER BREAK
	SESSION 2	The Novel of the Two Maidens

	04/12	
11	SESSION 2 04/17	The Novel of the Two Maidens
	SESSION 1 04/19	The Novel of Señora Cornelia
12	SESSION 1 04/24	The Novel of Señora Cornelia
	SESSION 2 04/26	The Novel of the Deceitful Marriage
13	SESSION 1 05/01	The Novel of the Deceitful Marriage
	SESSION 2 05/03	The Novel of the Colloquy of the Dogs
14	SESSION 1 05/08	The Novel of the Colloquy of the Dogs
	SESSION 2 05/10	The Novel of the Colloquy of the Dogs REFLEXIONS ON THE SECOND HALF OF THE VOLUME AND THE COLLECTIONS OF THE STORIES
15 EXAM WEEK	SESSION 2 05/15	FINAL EXAM FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION 9AM-10:30AM Final essay