Cultures & Contexts: Spain at the Crossroads of Europe, North Africa and America

Class code: CORE-UA.9544.001

Instructor Details
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:00-6:00

Class Details
Wednesdays, 6:00pm – 8:50pm

Prerequisites
N/A

Class Description
Taking advantage of its location in Madrid, this course analyzes the ways in which historical, geopolitical, cultural, artistic, and popular views function to constitute and continuously transform a national culture. Specifically, the course concentrates on epistemological constructions of Spain—the idea of Spain—that emerges from competing external and internal perspectives. Students will examine in three modules how this national culture is constructed. The first analyzes Spain from North African perspectives as, on the one hand, the traditional site and myth of a lost paradise in Sephardic circles as well as in Hispano-Arabic literary traditions and, on the other, as a social collective which some contemporary historical interpretations view as a fairly unique, positive integration of different ethnic components. The second module looks at American perspectives in which the idea of Spain pits notions of Spanish imperial power and grandeur against the Black Legend, a term that Protestant circles in Europe and the United States promoted to attack the legitimacy of Spain’s New World empire. The third perspective focuses on European views and analyzes the depiction of Spain as the embodiment of German and French Romantic ideals beginning at the end of the 18th century and the reemergence of the same notion during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Throughout the course, students will have the opportunity to examine some of the principal textual and visual images that contribute to the historical and contemporary construction of a national culture that emerged at geographic and cultural crossroads.

Desired Outcomes
In addition to the cultural knowledge of the three ethnic groups to be studied in their multiple dimensions – history, national culture and civilization, sociology, religion, politics -, the course will also provide a study of the process of cultural transference and miscegenation involved in the creation of a new social collective.

Assessment Components

Grading Policy
Oral participation 10%
Midterm 25%
2 quizzes 10%
Short paper 1 10%
Short paper 2 15%
Long paper 30%
Attendance Policy

Attendance and active participation are essential and contribute significantly to the final grade.

Late Submission of Work

Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency.

Plagiarism Policy

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.

Plagiarism: presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:

- a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks
- an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work
- the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one’s own
- submitting evaluations of group members’ work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member
- altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.

For further information, students are encouraged to check www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

Required Text(s)

All texts will be available on NYU Classes.

Supplemental Texts available via NYU Classes


**SUGGESTED READING**


Books for further consultation will be placed on reserve in the library

**Session 1**  
February 4th

Introduction.
Américo Castro: revolution, myth or reality?


**Session 2**  
February 11th

**Module 1: Spain from Perspectives of Sephardim and Al-Andalus**

Medieval Spain: Paradise Lost for the Moors and the Sephardic Jews

Arguments against the traditional view of Spanish history.


**Session 3**  
February 18th

Arguments against the Castro School

A complex view of the human forces involved in the Peninsular wars. The Reconquista: myth or reality?


Session 4
February 25th
Sefarad: The Promised Land lost.


Discussion: Documentary: El último Sefardi.

Session 5
March 4th
History, reality, politics: the Spanish Inquisition/The Black Legend.


Discussion: Documentary on the Spanish Inquisition (BBC).

Session 6
March 6th (FRIDAY)
Short paper on Module one due

Module 2: Spain and the Americas

Religion, conquest, apology, or the role of ethics in historical analysis.


**Session 7**
March 11th
Religion, conquest, apology, or the role of ethics in historical analysis (continued).

Caribbean Slavery.


What Remains of Spain


Film Discussion: *The Mission.*

**Session 8**
March 18th
The formation of Criollo writing: transmission, assimilation, subversion.


**Session 9**
March 25th
Literature as history.


**Short Paper due on Module 2.**

**Module 3: Spain Seen From Europe and the United States.**

Romantic Spain: an idyllic view of a present past.


**Session 10**
April 8th

Discussion: Film, *Carmen* by Vicente Aranda (2003).
Session 11  
April 15th

The Spanish Civil War.

Towards the clash: century deep roots spring into sight.


Session 12  
April 22nd

The Internationalization of the Spanish Civil War.


Third short paper due.

Session 13  
April 29th


Film and discussion: *The Spanish Earth*

Session 14  
May 6th

Hemingway’s polemic defense of the Spanish Republic.


Long term paper due

Classroom Etiquette

Punctuality is expected. No eating or drinking in class. No cell phones.

Required Co-curricular Activities

There will be an individual visit to the Prado Museum and a group one to the Museum of Romanticism. The NYU excursion to Toledo is obligatory.
The list of suggested films and videos is a complementary aid to the readings, although some will be required and will be discussed in class. Likewise, it is advisable to incorporate them whenever possible in the papers to be written. In the event that a lecture, a theatrical representation or any other activity dealing with the course subject matter should be held, a group assistance will be organized.