Cultures and Contexts: Spain – At the Crossroads of Europe, North Africa and America

Class code: CORE-UA.9544.001

Instructor Details
Professor: Eugenio Suárez-Galbán
Email: esg8@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Wed.: 5:30-6:00

Class Details
Wed.: 6:00-9:00

Prerequisites

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**

There will be a midterm, 2 short papers, a final more extensive paper, periodical quizzes and a final exam.

**Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short paper 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam and Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

**Statement on Provisions to students with disabilities**

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website [http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html](http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.

Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: In classes meeting once a week, a 2% deduction from the student’s final course grade occurs on the occasion of the first unexcused absence.

Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

**Illness:** For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor’s note, at the discretion of the Assistant Directors of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor’s note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will
not be made up without a doctor’s note.

**Religious Observance:** Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Assistant Directors, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

**Please note:** if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly and notify them.

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**Late Submission of Work**

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

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

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**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.
- using language translation software.

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](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html)
Required Text(s) in Print Form


---. “Night Before Battle.” The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway. New
York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. 437-459.


---. “The Spaniards Arrive in Tenochtitlan.” The Broken Spears. The Aztec Account of


Rodríguez Puértolas, Julio. “A Comprehensive View of Medieval Spain.” Ed. José


**Suggested Readings:**


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

**Session 1**

*February 3rd*


**Session 2**

*February 10th*

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

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


**Session 3**

*February 17th*


**Session 4**
February 24th

SEFARAD


Session 5
March 2nd


Session 6
March 9th

Short Paper on Module one due


The Spanish Inquisition/The Black Legend


Session 7
March 16th

The Spanish Conquest and its interpretations.


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**Session 8**  
**March 30th**


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**Session 9**  
**April 1st (FRIDAY)**

Transculturation


The Bourbons


Towards the Civil War


Session 10
April 6th

Short paper on Module two due

**Romantic Spain**


---. “Spanish Romance”. *The Alhambra.*

---. Legend of the Moor’s Legacy”. *The Alhambra.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Castles in Spain”

**Towards the Civil War**


Session 11
April 13th


Session 12
April 20th


Long paper due

Classroom Etiquette

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

Required Co-curricular Activities

The trip to Toledo on April 8th is obligatory.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Lectures, films, theatre, expositions and other Madrid activities may be suggested
Although the Norse had explored and colonized northeastern North America c. 1000 CE, a later and more well known European colonization of the Americas took place in the Americas between about 1500 CE and 1800 CE, during the Age of Exploration. During this time period, several European empires—primarily Spain, Portugal, Britain, and France—began to explore and claim the natural resources and human capital of the Americas resulting in the disestablishment of some Indigenous Nations, and the Spanish Culture.

Key Concepts and Values. Face: Spanish culture places a large emphasis on personal pride. In a business context, personal attributes and character are frequently valued as much as technical ability, experience or professional competence. Uncertainty Avoidance: This is a vital element of Spanish culture that refers to the cautious approach the Spanish take towards new ideas. In Spain, individuals tend to avoid ambiguity but often accept a familiar risk situation. Europe’s third largest country, Spain has experienced a turbulent and reverberating past, including the dissolution of the Spanish Empire, civil war, fascist dictatorship and the introduction of democracy, all of which have had a significant impact on the Spanish cultural psyche. Post 'Europe at the Crossroads' On Amerika.org realist conservative blog. The passing of Eastern Europe under the Soviet yoke is not destructive of the historic and cultural integrity of Europe alone; that subjection is not merely a blow to its past and traditions; the losses of territory and population endured by Europe have rendered questionable its future as well. Since times immemorial, beginning even with prehistoric invasions, Eastern Europe has constituted the protective dyke to Western Europe. There it was that the tidal waves of barbarian invasions clashed first with the forces of resistance, and by the time they launched a fresh attack against the West the