

Readings in Latin American Culture
MWF 9:00-9:50 | KAUKE 305

INSTRUCTOR: Brian Cope, Ph.D.
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COURSE WEBSITE: <http://spanish224.voices.wooster.edu/>

OFFICE HOURS: MWF: 2-3 (or by appointment)
OFFICE: 209 Kauke Hall

Required Texts Available for Purchase via Course Director:

1. *Las buenas conciencias* by Carlos Fuentes
 2. *La invención de América* by Edmundo O’Gorman
- *Note: All other required materials will be posted to the course website.*

Description: This course is designed to impart knowledge of Latin American culture through the study of history, literature, art, film, music, and online media. Latin America is a culturally rich and ethnically diverse geographical region whose asymmetrical relationship with the West has left an indelible mark on its identity and material wellbeing. Likewise, we will examine the historical forces that have played a determining role in shaping the composition of Latin American civil society and which, in turn, continue to prefigure cultural production and cultural identity. The materials used in this course offer valuable insight and stimulate critical reflection on Latin American culture, but they should be seen only as *starting points* of an inquiry that will hopefully continue beyond this semester. In other words, these materials should not be seen as definitive statements or comprehensive treatments of the topics that they cover; but rather, again, as important *starting points*. The content of the course will gravitate around three historical periods or events: (1) colonialism (1492-1810); (2) independence (1810-1898); and (3) revolution (Mexico-1910 and Cuba-1953). These periods and events have conditioned—and continue to condition—the prevalent mentalities within both the dominant and the marginalized groups of Latin American society. Our task, therefore, is to gain an understanding of the global processes that have shaped Latin American society as a way to gain perspective on the unique variety of cultural expression and identity seen in Latin America. The scope of the course does not permit systematic study of every Spanish-speaking country in Latin America. Likewise, we will focus predominantly (but not exclusively) on Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina, and Cuba. Spanish 224 is writing-intensive and serves as a transitional step toward advanced courses in literature, culture and linguistics—whether at Wooster or abroad. You will likewise receive structured guidance in argumentative writing and in methods of literary and visual analysis. Prerequisite: Spanish 202, equivalent, or permission of the instructor. [W, C]

Learning Objectives: (1) to practice and hone, through conversation and writing, your reasoning and critical thinking skills in Spanish; (2) to continue building your language proficiency in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing; (3) to strengthen your command of vocabulary for both everyday communication and higher-order reasoning; (4) to acquire a broad and practical knowledge of contemporary Latin American culture and society that can serve as a foundation for further study of specific topics related to Latin America; (5) to develop strategies for effective analytical and argumentative writing; (6) to practice conventional methods of literary and visual analysis in preparation for advanced coursework in Spanish. All of the assignments and class activities are designed to achieve these goals.

Course Structure and Your Responsibilities: Spanish 224 is geared toward high-intermediate and low-advanced Spanish language learners whose purpose is to achieve a respectable level of *bilingualism* and in the process learn about Latin America through the lens of culture and history. Having studied the full range of Spanish grammar in Spanish 201-202 (or the equivalent), your task now is to gain structured and systematic practice with the language in the areas of reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Simulated immersion is the methodology used in the course, which means that **class is conducted entirely in Spanish** and that only culturally authentic materials are used in the course. In preparing for class and doing the

writing assignments, your objective is to actively engage with the assigned texts, develop a basic understanding of them, extract from them relevant information in accordance with your own critical judgment, and finally develop informed and reasoned views on the respective topics presented in them and explored in our class discussions. It is not enough to simply read or view the assignments; rather, *your task is to study them*. Likewise, it is suggested that you read/view all of the assignments twice: the first to familiarize yourself with the content and the second to look up words and take notes. The use of an online dictionary like *Wordreference.com* is recommended, and you are encouraged to develop your own system for learning and memorizing new vocabulary. Furthermore, it is expected that you continue to use *Conversación y repaso* (or a comparable grammar book) to review grammar independently as needed. **I must stress here that I expect that you will actively maintain the knowledge of Spanish grammar that you obtained at the 201-202 levels.* All of the assignments are posted on the online day-by-day (*programa*) and must be completed before the beginning of class for each of the days indicated. Substantive changes to the day-by-day will occur over the course of the semester and therefore you should bookmark the page in your browser instead of printing it. **NOTE:** Each class session will require a minimum of 3-4 hours of careful preparation, and your responsibilities can be summarized as follows: 1) to prepare all assignments thoroughly; 2) to attend all classes; 3) to engage with your peers and the professor in a productive and constructive manner, always demonstrating professionalism and respect; 4) to take ownership of your learning by preparing conscientiously for class and by printing and bringing to class the reading assignments posted on the day-by-day; 5) to review Spanish grammar independently as needed, utilizing the resources made available to you on the course website.

Evaluation (Grading: standard 10 point scale with + and -; below 60 is a failing grade):

Peer-to-Peer Engagement and Class Participation.....	10%
Timed Writings (homework).....	10%
Midterm Exams.....	25%
Essays (2-3 pages).....	30%
Presentation.....	5%
Research Paper (final draft only).....	20%

Attendance: It is imperative for the overall success of the course that you attend class regularly. As a discussion based course, your peers need you to be present—in mind and body—everyday. Because this is a language acquisition course, any student who is absent **ten** or more times during the semester will receive an automatic **F**, regardless of the circumstances. Graded assignments will be accepted late only for absences that are due to a documented illness or involvement in an official co-curricular activity for which you consulted with me well in advance. Any and all absences *after the first* that are not due to a documented illness or participation in an official co-curricular activity may be subject, at my discretion, to a reduction of up to five percentage points of the final grade for each instance. If absent, it is your responsibility to contact one of your classmates in order to ascertain whether the assignment was altered in any way and what was covered in class.

Peer-to-Peer Engagement and Class Participation: Your success in this course depends on your daily preparation and active participation. In class, you will discuss the assigned readings/viewings with your peers in a structured and guided manner. In order for learning to take place, it is crucial that all parties involved have a genuine interest in the subject matter and do the assigned work consistently and conscientiously. As a way to prepare for the discussions, you will be asked to complete a 20-minute timed writing at home, which will be collected at the beginning of class, graded, and returned to you at the next class meeting. In class, I will assign you to small groups (which will continually change in order for you to hear the perspectives of all of your classmates) and give you specific questions or topics to address, with group leaders being designated to facilitate the conversation. To that end, professional classroom etiquette is expected on your part at all times. Any type of behavior that is disruptive, distracting, counterproductive, or disrespectful to your peers will lead to penalties in your class participation grade. Such conduct includes arriving late, leaving the room during class, using your laptop computer or any other electronic device without the permission of the professor, speaking English, eating, or exhibiting a withdrawn or passive demeanor. While you discuss the

assigned texts, I will circulate between the groups, joining in or listening briefly. This is not a course in which you will be *severely* penalized for simply making mistakes—whether grammatical or informational—during class. Points are lost mainly for not being well prepared, for not being fully present and for not trying—not for making a mistake. Above all, I expect you to show initiative and to contribute substantively to the class discussions on a regular basis. You can expect to find a relaxed, informal atmosphere in the classroom, and the general understanding will be that each of us bears equal responsibility for bringing forth a stimulating and lively discussion. As the professor, my role is to facilitate discussions, lend my support to you as you acquire the ability to recognize, read and interpret literary or visual texts, and set the intellectual parameters within which you will engage in your own inquiries and reach your own unique understanding of the assigned material. In other words, the purpose of the course is not for me to share with you everything that I know about each assigned topic, but rather to help you make your own discoveries in a controlled, systematic and relevant way. You will earn points for your contributions, presence, and engagement with peers for every class period. **Note 1:** The only way to earn points for peer-to-peer engagement and class participation is by attending class. Because the work done in class cannot be recuperated, there is simply no way to make up points missed for days that you do not attend class, even if your absence is excused. **Note 2:** Your engagement with peers and class participation will be assessed on a twenty-point scale for each of our 40 class sessions (for a total of 800 possible points) and your lowest assessment will be dropped at the end of the semester. This means that you will receive one free absence or will be forgiven for one uncharacteristically off day. A written evaluation of your peer-to-peer engagement and class participation will be provided to you at least once during the semester. You may also inquire about your ongoing class performance during office hours. The following explains how the grades for peer-to-peer engagement and class participation are assigned:

20-19 points (A): Student participates voluntarily and enthusiastically and is noticeably well prepared; student remains focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are informed, rational, relevant and to the point; student displays a sound knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student arrives on time, remains focused throughout the duration of the class and does not take any questionable intermissions (i.e. bathroom breaks).

18-17-16 points (A- to B-): Student participates less voluntarily than what is expected but is noticeably well prepared; student remains focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are informed, rational, relevant and to the point; student displays at the very least an emerging knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have failed to arrive on time or failed to remain present or focused throughout the duration of the class.

15-14 points (C to C-): Student participates reluctantly, and is not noticeably well prepared; student remains mostly focused on the task at hand and works constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are less than well informed, rational, relevant and/or to the point; student displays less than a minimal or emerging knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have arrived to class more than ten minutes late or might not have remained focused or present throughout much of the class period.

13-12 points (D): Student participates reluctantly or not at all, and is not noticeably well prepared; student might not remain focused on the task at hand and/or might not work constructively with peers in a group setting; student's comments are not well informed, rational, relevant and/or to the point; student displays little to no knowledge of assigned terms, readings and films; student might have arrived to class significantly more than ten minutes late or might not have remained focused or present throughout much of the class period.

11-0 points (F): Student does not participate, and is not noticeably well prepared; student might not remain focused on the task at hand and/or might not work constructively with peers; student might have been present for only a short duration of the class.

Timed Writings (homework): These will be distributed at the end of the class period and collected at the beginning of the next. **Note:** If on any given day you do not receive a timed writing assignment, you are still expected to come to the next class with pre-formulated ideas and ready to discuss and debate. The following explains how the timed writing assignments are graded:

9-10 points (A): Student has completed a thoughtful, well-written response to the prompt that demonstrates close familiarity with the assigned reading or viewing. Although this is not a formal essay, the entry contains a clear beginning, middle and end, uses mostly correct grammar and punctuation, thoroughly explores an idea or spells out a valid and reasoned interpretation, is original and insightful, and serves as an excellent point of departure for the forthcoming class discussion.

8 points (B): Student's response shows some modest deficiencies, but makes a substantive contribution.

7 points (C): Student's response shows some notable deficiencies, but makes a substantive contribution.

6 points (D): Student's response shows some notable deficiencies and makes only a nominal contribution.

1-5 points (F): Student's response shows some glaring deficiencies and makes no substantive contribution.

0 points (F): Student failed to submit the assignment.

Midterm Exams: The purpose of these two exams is to assess your retention of information and understanding of the assigned texts. Possible questions will be given to you ahead of time in order for you to prepare. Preparation for these exams entails: researching information using the assigned texts for the course; reviewing your class notes; studying materials on the course website (i.e. PowerPoint presentations); looking

over your graded homework assignments; writing an outline; and completing a timed practice essay. Only a printed portable dictionary may be consulted during the exam—no prepared materials, notes, or cell phones. Think of these exams as extended timed writings. Your careful planning in their execution will make a big difference in the outcome.

Essays: You will write three papers on specific topics relevant to the assigned readings and viewings. The minimum length of these papers is 2 1/2 to 3 pages. All papers must contain a well formulated and evident thesis statement in the introduction, a cohesive and coherent argument in support of the thesis in the body, and a relevant and logical conclusion. Essays must follow MLA format, as well as be word-processed and double-spaced. Times 12 is the required font size with standard margins of 1 inch (left and right & top and bottom). The quality of thought, the quality of writing and argumentation, and the quality of the presentation will be evaluated using the rubric posted on the course website. You may consult with the professor or the language assistant about specific questions on grammar or usage at any point during the writing process. You may also do a peer editing exercise with other students enrolled in the course, documenting the process using the form posted on the course website and submitting it when you turn in the paper. Asking someone not enrolled in the course to help you with your paper and/or not following the peer-editing process constitutes academic dishonesty and will be reported to the Dean for Academic Engagement (depending on the severity of the incident). One goal of the course is for you to work toward editing and correcting your own work *independently*. This will entail learning to use the tools available to you (dictionaries, grammar books, Google, etc.), patience, living with a certain level of doubt, and above all self- sufficiency. Relying on others to “look over” or “correct” your work for you before turning it in without following the established protocols for receiving help circumvents the process and gives you an unearned advantage. Therefore you may not ask anyone, including the professor, the language assistant or your peers to simply “look over” or “correct” your papers for you before you turn them in for a grade; rather, you must always follow the peer-editing process and show your work-in-progress only to other students in the class. The bottom line: *Seek help from those who have permission to help you and don't let anyone do the work for you; conversely, lend help to your peers, if asked, but don't do the work for them.* **Note 1:** It is recommended that you make use of *Conversación y Repaso* (the grammar textbook for Spanish 201-202) to research your grammar errors or a Spanish grammar manual. A link to an online grammar manual can be found on the course website, and you can consult with the professor or the language assistant during office hours to go over how to best utilize a grammar manual for this and future courses. **Note 2:** Papers will be graded as follows: Paper 1: rough draft = 25% final draft = 75%; Paper 2: rough draft = 50% final draft = 50%; Paper 3: rough draft =75% final draft = 25%. The purpose of this system is to move you in the direction of writing increasingly more polished rough drafts so that by the end of the semester you have gained a degree of confidence in your ability to write argumentative papers, which in turn will serve you well in advanced courses.

Class Presentation and Research Paper: Each student will complete an independent project that will include a class presentation (10 minutes) and a research paper (6-8 pages) due **on Tuesday, May 10, before 5pm**. The purpose of this project is to study a topic related to the course that is of significant interest to you. Topics should have cultural significance and may include such things as music, art, architecture, monuments, popular traditions, history, gastronomy, or sports. Culture is something that evolves over time and varies by region and historical time period. Therefore, this final segment of the course will be structured around the students' interests in Latin America's cultural practices, cultural traditions, and cultural patrimony. A list of suggested topics can be found on the course website. During the final two weeks of class, each student will give a 10-minute presentation on his or her research topic to a small group of peers. The idea of the presentation is for students to learn from one another and for each presenter to receive constructive feedback from his or her peers and the professor before going on to complete the final research paper. Since no two students can have the same topic, you are encouraged to claim your topic as soon as possible. However, do so wisely since once you inform me of your topic you cannot change it without my permission. Also, I ask that you notify me of your topic by email before **April 1**. If your topic is already taken, or if it is unsuitable, I will ask you to come up with alternative one. On a similar note, the **final paper** represents the culmination of your research and the expectation is that it covers your topic in depth, is not strictly informative but rather has a clear thesis statement, presents a reasoned argument, and offers rational and relevant conclusions. All papers must follow MLA guidelines with regard to documentation and formatting. All papers must have at

least five peer-reviewed academic sources (preferably written in Spanish) that derive from the library's research databases. *Wikipedia* or any other encyclopedia may be consulted during the developmental stages of the project. However, you will not receive credit for encyclopedia entries in your bibliography, and using a disproportionate amount of information that derives from an encyclopedia or the Internet will result in a significant reduction of points. The criteria used to grade the final paper is the same as that used to grade the short essays and can be found on the course website.

On learning a foreign language: There are no shortcuts to acquiring a foreign language. Grammar and vocabulary must be actively reviewed and memorized independently for an extended period of time after having formally studied them in courses. At Wooster, the formal study of grammar corresponds to Spanish 101-102 and Spanish 201-202. Spanish 224 comes after Spanish 202 in the curricular sequence and is designed to put you on the path toward advanced literacy and linguistic proficiency by reinforcing the grammar and vocabulary that you have studied previously and that you will need to use with increased precision, control, and accuracy over the course of the semester in order to fully realize your potential in this course. Achieving increased proficiency in the language requires you to be an active reader, listener, and inquirer. Simply doing the minimum required work will not lead to any noticeable advancement in your present proficiency in the language *unless* you combine your daily preparation with a consistent effort to recognize and assimilate the grammatical structures that you have previously studied and commit yourself to carrying out a sustained independent review of the grammar that you have already studied and on which you have been tested frequently at this point. Not reviewing grammar and not being an active reader and listener will put you at significant risk of linguistic regression. Similarly, learning Spanish requires you to develop and execute your own individual strategy to actively use and live the language. Don't fool yourself. Learning a language does not happen by simply enrolling in courses and doing the minimum required work. Above all else, it requires a personal commitment to mastering the language that is supported and complemented by your coursework. I expect that if you have enrolled in this course your long-term goal is to achieve a respectable level of *bilingualism*. This being the case, you will do well to give this course the time that it needs in order for it to help you move closer to that goal. If this is not your goal, then this course is not a good fit for you and you should drop it today.

Extra Credit: Students who are in good standing in the class and have no unexcused absences may complete an extra credit assignment worth up to two percentage points of the final grade. Any student interested in doing extra credit must first propose a project to me that contains a writing component and obvious applicability to the class. All projects must be given pre-approval by me in order to qualify to receive extra credit upon their completion. No proposals may be submitted after April 8.

***Spanish Table:** Spanish Table meets once a week, every Tuesday noon-1:00 pm in Lowry 247/248 (small dining room off main cafeteria). Plan to attend for informal conversation in Spanish.

Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the copying of a sentence (partial or full) or segment of discourse from another source without giving proper credit to its origins. The college has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism. Any act of plagiarism will receive an automatic **F** on the assignment and may be reported to the Committee on Academic Standards, which can recommend that the student fail the course or be dismissed from the college. Desperation can, and does, lead even excellent students to act impulsively. Try not to lose sight of the big picture. The Writing Center offers tutorials for those in need of extra help or guidance with their writing. It takes practice and patience to become a strong writer, and there are many people here to assist you.

Policy on Submitting Papers: Unless otherwise noted, all papers are due at the beginning of class stapled and in hardcopy form on the date specified on the day-by-day. Unstapled papers will receive a discretionary reduction of points.

Policy on Acceptance of Late Work: All essay assignments and special projects are due on the date specified on the day-by-day. Extensions will be granted only in the case of documented emergencies. Points will be deducted for work received after the deadline: ten for papers turned in up to **24 hours late**, fifteen for

papers turned in **36 hours late**, twenty-five for papers turned in **48 hours late**. All papers turned in more than 48 hours late will receive an automatic **F**. This policy applies to all written assignments, including the final research paper. Remember, too, that sliding a paper under my door does not mean that it has been received and that late papers can be turned in via email so as to document the time.

Learning Center / Writing Center / Instructional Modifications for Students with Disabilities:

The **Learning Center** offers services designed to help students improve their overall academic performance. Sessions at the center are structured to promote principles of effective learning and academic management. Any student on campus may schedule sessions at the Learning Center.

I would like to hear from anyone who has a **disability** that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please talk with me after class or during my office hours. Also, for any students with a disability, The Learning Center offers a variety of services and accommodations based on appropriate documentation, nature of disability, and academic need. In order to initiate services, students should meet with Pam Rose, Director of the Learning Center, at the start of the semester to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Academic Integrity at The College of Wooster: Members of The College of Wooster community are committed to the high standards of academic integrity and to this end have accepted a Code of Academic Integrity, which can be found online at <http://www.wooster.edu/policies/coai.pdf>

As a student at The College of Wooster you are a part of this tradition and are expected to be familiar with the Code, to understand what constitutes academically dishonest behavior, and to avoid such behavior. Established violations of the code will result in appropriate punishment and is recognized as grounds for failure in the course.

If you have any questions about the code and what it prohibits please contact me.

Policy Regarding Conflicts with Academic Responsibilities: The College of Wooster is an academic institution and its fundamental purpose is to stimulate its students to reach the highest standard of intellectual achievement. As an academic institution with this purpose, the College expects students to give the highest priority to their academic responsibilities. When conflicts arise between academic commitments and complementary programs (including athletic, cultural, educational, and volunteer activities), students, faculty, staff, and administrators all share the responsibility of minimizing and resolving them.

As a student you have the responsibility to inform the faculty member of potential conflicts as soon as you are aware of them, and to discuss and work with the faculty member to identify alternative ways to fulfill your academic commitments without sacrificing the academic integrity and rigor of the course.

Policy Regarding Electronic Devices and Laptops: As a conversation based course, there is no substantial need for electronic devices or laptops in the classroom. Any notes that you wish to take can be written by hand; words can also be looked up using a portable paper dictionary. However, it is preferable to forego looking up words during group activities, as doing so usually brings the conversation to a standstill; it is better find another way to convey your idea in Spanish, or if urgent, to simply ask another member of your group or the professor. Points will be deducted from your class participation grade if I hear or see your cell phone, or for any disturbances caused by your use of any type of electronic device. This policy is a matter of common courtesy and is intended to protect the collective learning environment of the classroom.

Final Note: The structure of the course and its governing policies are designed to accomplish the proposed objective and assure the fair and equal treatment of the students as responsible adults. Your presence in the class is an indication that you understand and agree to the requirements of the class as stipulated in the syllabus.