The Hispanic Avant-Garde: Poetry and Politics

Spring 2018
Sills 207
6:30-9:25

Professor: Sebastián Urli
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Office Hours: Tuesdays: 4:30pm-6:15pm (or by appointment)

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**COURSE RATIONALE:**

What do we talk about when we talk about the avant-garde? Which were its manifestations in the Hispanic world in the first half of the 20th Century? How was it shaped by or contributed to shape the politics of its time? Are the historical avant-garde projects still relevant today? Focusing on poetry by Aleixandre, García Lorca, Borges, Neruda, Huidobro, Storni, Lange, Novo, Andrade and Vallejo, among others, discussions will also consider a wide array of manifestoes and literary journals from Spain, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Peru, México and Brazil, as well as films and examples from other arts. Taught in Spanish with some theoretical and historical readings in English.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Students will be expected to:

- Identify and break down the most important ideas and concepts of different theories regarding the Hispanic Avant-Garde and its connections with Brazilian, European and American Avant-Garde.
- Use those main ideas and characteristics in the analysis of literary works. This will provide a solid formation with which to succeed in other literature courses.
- Familiarize with the Hispanic Avant-Garde literature and some of its cultural history through the exposure to a broad selection of exemplary work.
- Build strategies of active critical thinking in oral and written form both for the analysis of literary discourse and for the analysis of the relationships of poetry and politics.
- Refine Spanish language skills in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking.
- Participate in collaborative learning and teamwork by engaging in discussions.
- Criticize other student's and the professor's positions in a coherent and respectful way.
- Create a creative project, oral presentations and several short papers based on one or two key concepts or different aspects of a text.
- Write a coherent critical analysis of different literary texts in Spanish, 9-12 pages in length, applying some theoretical concepts about the Hispanic Avant-Garde and using a
COURSE DESIGN AND EXPECTATIONS:

This course is designed for anyone interested in exploring some aspects of the historical Hispanic Avant-Garde's literatures and cultures. It will also be useful for those students interested in learning different theoretical concepts that are useful for literary analysis in general but also for the Avant-Garde discourses (that include influences from other types of cultural manifestations such as film, music, paintings and political discourses). No previous specific knowledge or study is necessary regarding the Hispanic-Avant Garde; however, language proficiency in written and oral Spanish is essential and some notions of literary theory and genres are needed. The literary readings will be in Spanish and the theoretical texts may be in Spanish or English, yet all course activity—explanations, assignments and discussions—will be conducted in Spanish. Students are encouraged to speak to the instructor if they encounter problems with their speaking, reading or writing in Spanish as well as with their comprehension of the class.

The format of each class will vary to include introductions to selected writers or critical approaches lectured by the instructor, discussions, presentations and group work. The lectures on theoretical readings are meant to guide, not summarize, the day's reading assignment. Media resources will be employed such as PowerPoint presentations (i.e. reading introductions), dvd's or cd's and handouts for class activities. Some experts in different theories may attend specific classes in order to exchange their views with the students or to clarify some key concepts. The interactive nature of the discussions and the course in general will require the student active participation and thorough preparation. Therefore, students are expected to attend class with all reading assignments completed in order to actively participate in teamwork and contribute in general class discussions. It is crucial to understand that the exchange of ideas and building of critical thinking skills are central not only for the discussions but also for the written assignments and the final paper.

TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIALS:

We will use a variety of selected chapters, articles, books and handouts. All of these materials will be available for download from Blackboard or will be handed out in class. Students will be required to check Blackboard regularly and to download all necessary reading material for each week's class.

Class Requirements:

**Class participation** (10%): You should come to class regularly, having done the assigned readings and ready to discuss and participate actively. My policy is that there are no invalid or incorrect questions as long as they are related to the topics of the class, so please feel free to ask questions and give your opinion. It is your responsibility to make sure you have expressed yourself regularly throughout the semester. Take into account that one or two interventions throughout the course would not be enough and that group work requires active and meaningful contributions from all members of the group. You are expected to have read all the material to be covered in class before that day's session. In order to adequately prepare for class discussion, it is recommended to bring in a few **Discussion Points or Discussion Questions** for each of the
assigned readings. Sometimes I will assign these Discussion Points beforehand but in other cases I will ask you to create these Discussion Points.

More **than two unexcused absences** will result in a severe deduction from your participation grade: 5% for each absence. An excused absence is a documented medical problem or personal/family emergency.

**Homework** (15%): Based on the different readings, there will be three reading responses homework (5% each) in which you will have to explain some key concepts seen in class and apply them to some aspects of the text. This will help you to make use of the different theories accurately and prepare you to examine texts as a whole. Each missed homework assignment will result in a deduction of 5% for the homework grade for the month.

**Essays/short academic papers** (30%): You will turn in 2 short papers (15% each) throughout the semester (4-6 pages double spaced), due by the date indicated in the course schedule (you are welcome and encouraged to turn these papers in earlier, but NEVER after the due date). In them you will analyze a text either read in class or assigned by me for this task. The following are some criteria for evaluation of essays:

- The strongest essays will demonstrate individual opinion, not summaries, with arguments based on the material.
- They will use an accurate application of the theoretical readings seen in class in order to enhance the analysis of the literary text,
- They will take into consideration the social and historical context of the text/writer where possible and useful.
- They will be structurally organized in such a way as to show an introduction, a developing argument and a conclusion. The introduction should include a thesis statement or objective of analysis as well as preview the main points that will support the thesis in the body of the paper. The body of the paper develops the points that support the thesis, uses relevant evidence and examples from the literary text, the theoretical one and other research sources (other critic’s opinions) where necessary. The conclusion restates the essay's thesis and posits new questions and possibilities of analysis for future researchers. They will include at least one or two entries in the bibliography.
- They should be written in a clear, coherent and persuasive Spanish.

**Creative writing/photography/film project or oral academic presentation** (15%): You will have to turn in a creative project or an oral academic presentation by the end of March or beginning of April that deals with some of the challenges posited by the Avant-Garde but in a contemporary and personal context. This does not necessarily mean that you have to speak about your own life, but you should at least be able to show, in a creative way, the importance and limits of the Avant-Garde statements, ideas, techniques, etc, on a contemporary topic of your own choice. The project can be done individually, in pairs or in groups and it may consist of one of the following options: A. Write a poem or short story. B. Write a literary and personal essay about some new media and technological ways of self-representation (i.e. Facebook, selfies, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram, snap-shots, blogs, etc.) and it’s possible use as an Avant-Garde medium. C. Present a photograph exhibition or portfolio and a brief description of the project. D. Film a short
movie (5 to 15 minutes). E. Combine two or more of the previous options. F. Do an oral academic presentation for the rest of the class (15-20 minutes) on a topic related to the authors in the syllabus. Other artistic means of representation such as painting or music can be discussed on individual basis. More details and a rubric for the assignment will be handed out later in the course but take into account that for group projects options C or D may be more appropriate. In any case you will be evaluated individually and you will have to have a previous meeting with the instructor to discuss your project.

**Final paper (30%)**: Your final paper will follow the same format as the short papers, but will be more elaborate (9-12 pages) and include specific bibliography. Times New Roman 12, double spaced, MLA format for the quotes and the bibliography. This time YOU will pick both the text and the topic to be analyzed and let me know about it by the first week of May. I can always suggest and provide you with some options. Take into account that if you pick an author or work that is not in the syllabus and that I have not read I may ask you to pick a different text due to time limitations if the text is very long (400-500 pages novel Avant-Garde novel for example). Once we have talked about your text(s) you will turn in a paper proposal including the topic, thesis statement, paper outline and preliminary bibliography. All students will present their paper topic and a synopsis of their analysis to the rest of the class during the last week of classes so that they can benefit from their peer’s feedback.

**Late work**: not accepted (extenuating circumstances will be evaluated on a case-to-case basis)

**Grading Scheme**:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95+</td>
<td>Mastery of the material and exceptional skills and originality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>Thorough and above average understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>Average understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Satisfactory understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>Marginally satisfactory understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>51-69</td>
<td>Not satisfactory understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>Not satisfactory understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**CHRONOGRAM (Subject to change)**

**General introduction and European Avant-Garde**

**Tu Jan.23**

- Ricardo Piglia, *Las tres vanguardias*
- Texts about Formalismo ruso
- Texts about Futurismo
Tu Jan. 30
- Primer manifiesto dadaista y Manifiesto sobre el amor débil y el amor amargo (Specially fragment VIII)
- Primer manifiesto del surrealismo
- Walter Benjamin: “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and excerpts from “Surrealism” and “On Some Motifs on Baudelaire”
- René Clair’s film: “Entreacto” (You have the movie in you tube)
- Vértov’s film: “Man with a Movie Camera” (documental experimental ruso)

European Avant-Garde (continued) and Chile

Tu Feb. 6
- K. Marx and F. Engels: “Manifesto of the Communist Party”
- Fritz Lang’s Film: Metropolis (Expresionismo alemán)
- Borges y Mariátegui sobre el expresionismo alemán.
- Huidobro. “Non serviam”, “Arte poética” y Altazor (selección)

Due date: First homework/Reading Response.

-Tu Feb 13
- Gabriela Mistral. Desolación (Selección)
- Pablo Neruda. Residencia en la tierra (selección)
- Winett y Pablo de Rokka (Selección)
- Antología del grupo surrealista “La mandrágora”
- Excerpts from Greg Dawes’s book on Neruda.

Argentina

Tu Feb 20:
- Manifiestos del ultraísmo en Argentina.
- Jorge Luis Borges. Fervor de Buenos Aires (selección)
- Oliverio Girondo. Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía y Espantapájaros (Selección)
- Revista Martín Fierro (Manifiesto y “polémica” entre los grupos de Boedo y Florida). Mariani’s “La extrema izquierda”

Due date: Second Homework/Reading Response
Argentina (continued) and Ecuador

Tu Feb 27:

- Dra María Auxiliadora Balladares will give a Skype talk on the Ecuatorian poet Hugo Mayo.
- Norah Lange: Antología de poesía.
- Alfonsina Storni. Ocre (Selección)
- Manifiestos de la Revista Inicial y de Proa.
- Some Manifiestos from Ecuador (Hélice, Lampadario, Nervio)

Perú

Tu Mar 6:

- Revista Amauta. “Presentación” by Carlos Mariátegui.
- Selections of essays by Mariátegui and César Vallejo about surrealismo, marxismo and indigenismo
- Emilo Adolfo Westphalen Las ínsulas extrañas y Abolición de la muerte (Anthology)

Due date: First Short Essay

Spring Break: No classes until March 27th

Perú continued

Tu Mar 27

- Magda Portal. Selections of her poetry.
- César Vallejo. Selections of his poetry.
- Excerpts from Franco’s and Clayton’s books on Vallejo.

Due date: Creative project

España

Tu Apr 3:

- Ultraísmo y creacionismo en España. Gerardo Diego y Gómez de la Serna.
- Generación del 27: Las Sinsombrero: Josefina de la Torre y Concha Méndez. (Selections of their poetry). Paintings by Maruja Mallo and Margarita Manso.
- Guillermo de Torre “Madrid meridiano intelectual de Hispanoamérica” Reactions against this article.
Tu Apr 10:

-Segundo Manifiesto del surrealismo
-Luis Buñuel’s movies: *Un perro andaluz* and *La edad de oro*. Paintings by Salvador Dalí.
-Generación del 27: Surrealismo y política. Rafael Alberti (Selections from *Sobre los ángeles* and *El poeta en la calle*), Federico García Lorca (Excerpts from *Poeta en Nueva York*) y Vicente Aleixandre (Poems from *La destrucción o el amor*)

Tu April 17:

-Dr Greg Dawes (North Carolina State University) and Dr Gayle Rogers (University of Pittsburgh) will visit the class to talk about the Hispanic Avant-Garde, poetry and politics in a global context.
  - Avant-Garde Poetry and the Civil War: César Vallejo (*España aparta de mí este cáliz*), Pablo Neruda (*España en el corazón*), Miguel Hernández (Selection of his last poetry).
  -The importance of the Spanish Civil War for English and American Literature.

**Due date: Second short essay**

**México**

Th April 24:

- Los estridentistas. Manifiestos estridentistas. Selection from Manuel Maples Arce *Urbe* and Germán List Arzubide *Esquina*

**México (continued) and Brasil**

Tu May 1:

-Dr Nicholas Kupensky (Bowdoin College, Russian Department) will visit the first part of the class to talk about the influence of Russian Avant-Garde in México.

**Due date: Third homework/Reading response**

**Brasil (continued) and final remarks.**

Tu May 8:

-Paintings by Anita Malfatti y Tarsila do Amaral.
-Manifiesto verde-amarrillista: differences with the Revista de Antropofagia.

Due date: Final paper topic and basic bibliography.

THE FINAL PAPER SHOULD BE WRITTEN IN SPANISH. QUOTATIONS FROM THE LITERARY TEXTS SHOULD BE IN SPANISH BUT QUOTATIONS FROM THE ARTICLES CAN BE IN ENGLISH IF THE ARTICLE USED IS IN ENGLISH.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Orientative: I will add more articles throughout the course)