

University of Pennsylvania
Center for Latin American and Latinx Studies
SPAN 3731/LALS 3731/GSWS 3731
Course Syllabus

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Reading as a Feminist: An Encounter with Latin American Literature.



Course overview: In this course we will learn how to read contemporary Latin American literature as feminists. We will navigate the stories that have accompanied or defied different “tides” of feminism in the region and illuminate the ways in which these pieces can be read through the lenses of social and gender justice. We will broaden our knowledge of Latin American contemporary literature, at the same time as we reflect on some classic and urgent topics of local feminisms. The class will include short stories and poems by feminized, cis woman, lesbian, non-binary, and queer authors. Expanding our knowledge about these issues can be both a reflective and urgent matter.

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This course will be conducted in Spanish. It is an intermediate seminar designed for students who are comfortable reading, and speaking about topics in Spanish and who seek in-depth engagement with Latin American cultures. We will develop these skills in the course, with a particular focus in writing.

Our course is divided into five modules, each of them devoted to different **themes**. Our journey will begin in the household, since that was the traditional place assigned to women, and look into the appropriation and subversion of this narrative by different authors. We will move into disruptive narratives that challenged the duties of women in relation to their house and partners and continue with texts that directly address problems and themes of present-day feminist struggles across Latin America, among which we can find gender violence, economic dependence, child abuse and abortion. Although these works will be studied within their historical context, this course aims at providing a framework that will allow the student to analyze them in a comparative fashion in terms of the themes presented in each work. In order to work on the narrative elements of these works, during our time in class and at home we will study the necessary concepts that will allow us to successfully analyze and discuss our texts. **This course has as its main goal to improve and develop your writing and analytical skills as well as offering you ample opportunities to put into practice your Spanish through active discussion during class. With that in mind, all of our sessions will be discussion-based with a strong element of group work and written analysis.**

Course Objectives and Methodology:

Some of the specific skills I hope you will obtain in this course are listed below. Being a critical reader is important; all of these activities will help you become one, and it is my hope that you will use the skills in your daily life, within and outside of your Spanish practice and learning.

- We will **learn basic knowledge about the literature of Latin America** through the readings and discussion in class and refer to them in their essays, homework and participation in class.
- We **will learn the basic analytical elements for literary texts through the theoretical readings** assigned for each text and **use them in all homework and assignments.**
- We will **identify and actively discuss central themes of the assigned texts through the correct and consistent use** during class and in all assignments and **of the analytical tools for literary texts.**
- We will work on **distinguishing and analyzing the different elements of a text** and the ways in which these different elements interrelate.
- Given the necessary work at home, discussions with me during office hours, workshops and peer review sessions, we will work on **synthesizing our ideas in the form of weekly *reseñas* and later as thesis statements, outlines, and essay drafts** where we will develop our own ideas and arguable analyses using correct grammar and analytical tools.
- Through the rewriting of the assigned drafts and sustained consultation during office hours, **we will develop a coherent work in the form of two papers in which we will argue and support debatable readings of one of the assigned texts through textual evidence and the use of analytical elements.**

Assignments & Grading

Participation (10%)

In class participation is critical in this course. You are expected to complete the reading assignments for each class, to read carefully, being attentive to thematic content as well as language and style, and to come to class having reflected on the assigned materials and ready to contribute to the discussion. I recognize that participation takes many forms, and it is important to me that every student has the resources to participate, so please let me know if you need special accommodations or support. In addition to sharing your ideas, you are expected to listen actively, engage constructively with the comments made by other students, and take ownership over the success of small group activities. As a member of this class, you have the responsibility to engage respectfully with the ideas of your classmates and to help create an atmosphere of friendly but rigorous critical engagement with our course material.

Discussion Questions (20%)

Short written assignments (of 200-300 words) will be assigned on a weekly basis (**due date TBD, 10-12 in total**). Prompts will be provided on Canvas (at least 48 hours in advance), and you must submit your response (also on Canvas) before class time on the day the assignment is due. Your responses will be graded for completion. These assignments are designed to stimulate and inform our class discussion and will not be accepted late. (Students will be given the opportunity to make up one missed response paper).

Essays (35%)

You are required to write two short essays for this class. These essays should be written in Spanish, typed, proofread, double-spaced, and turned in over Canvas on the dates **TBD**

Essay 1 (2 pages) 15%

You will be asked to write a short analysis of an assigned passage from a text we have read together and discussed in class. You should answer the question posed in the prompt by way of close reading, citing evidence from the passage provided and from other places in the text if appropriate. You are expected to address the form as well as the content of the passage in your analysis.

Essay 2 (3 pages) 20%

This time you will choose one of the fictional texts we have read and analyze how it addresses social and gender justice issues. Most of the texts we will see in this class do not simply deliver a message or call to action, and even those that do contain an explicit message do not stop there. Your job will be to analyze specific passages from your chosen text in order to show how form and content work together to engage in feminist concerns.

Final Project: (length and format will vary) 35%

Due **TBD**

You will choose a real feminist issue affecting Latin America and, inspired by one or more of the texts we have encountered in this class, produce a short creative piece (writing, film, audio recording, visual art, story map, artifact, etc.) that addresses it. In a 10-15-minute presentation on the last day of class, you will present your project to the class and explain how and why you made the decisions you did while crafting it.

Grading Scale

A+ 100	A 94 -9	A- 90-93
B+ 88-89	B 84-87	B- 80-83
C+ 78-79	C 74-77	C- 70-73
D+ 68-69	D 60-67	F 0-59

Note: there is no final exam for this course.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is extremely important in this course. More than two unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. Excused absences include those due to illness*, family crisis, religious observation, etc. There will be no penalty for the first two unexcused absences, but every unexcused absence beyond that will lower your participation grade by 1/3 of a grade (e.g from an A to an A-) Five or more unexcused absences will result in failure of this course. For absences you believe should count as excused, please fill out a Course Absence Report or email me.

- Be on time. Class begins promptly. Persistent lateness will lower your participation grade.
- Inform me of planned absences by email. If your commitment to an athletic team, musical group, campus organization, etc. requires you to miss multiple classes, you must bring a written schedule showing any scheduling conflicts you might have within the first two weeks.
- When absent, it is your responsibility to bring yourself up to speed. Check in with a classmate about the material that was covered, announcements made, homework assigned, etc. Go on Canvas to get any materials you may have missed and complete the homework for the next class meeting. If you have any questions or doubts, do not hesitate to email me.

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you may also be required to miss class if you test positive for COVID or if you have been exposed to someone who has, even if you are not experiencing symptoms. Such absences will not be counted against you (they will be recorded as excused absences due to illness). For the protection of our entire community, please do not come to class unless you have a green PennOpen Pass.

Resources and Policies for Written Work

Unless otherwise specified, written work must be completed in Spanish. Errors in grammar and word choice will not be counted against you provided they do not significantly impede your ability to communicate your ideas. You are encouraged, nevertheless, to proofread your work carefully.

You are encouraged to use dictionaries as well as the spelling and grammar check functions on your word processing software. You are not permitted to use translation software.

Penn's Language Center provides tutoring help with writing assignments.
<http://plc.sas.upenn.edu/languagedirectfrequentlyaskedquestions>

Recommended monolingual Spanish dictionary: Diccionario de la Real Academia Española
<http://www.rae.es/>

Recommended Spanish-English dictionary: Collins
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-spanish>

Late work will be penalized 1/3 a letter grade for every day it is late*. Canvas discussion question responses will not be accepted late.

*Because we are living through a global pandemic, exceptions will be made for serious illness and life-disrupting events. Please let me know ahead of time if you require an extension.

Academic Integrity

As a member of the University community it is your responsibility to inform yourself of Penn's Code on Academic Integrity, which applies to this course. Cases of plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment. Please, do not hesitate to consult with me if you have any questions.

Dealing with Difficult Material

This class is going to challenge you with difficult readings and concepts. You do not need to understand 100% of what we read and discuss in order to succeed in this course (that said, I am always happy to answer comprehension questions, whether on the level of vocabulary or concept, so do not be shy about asking). Your willingness to tax yourself intellectually, grapple with difficult questions, and to allow yourself to be frustrated and take risks with this material is more important than achieving mastery over it. Some of our readings may even provoke discomfort, which I encourage you to explore as best you can. If you find some of the material distressing, let me know. I'm happy to flag any content you might find upsetting in advance or to discuss any issues you might be having in office hours.

Campus Resources

Students with Disabilities

University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and been approved by the Office of Student Disabilities Services (SDS). If you have not yet contacted SDS and would like to request accommodations or have questions, you can make an

appointment by calling SDS at 215-573-9235. The office is located in the Weingarten Learning Resources Center at Stouffer Commons 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300. All services are confidential.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides professional psychological and psychiatric services to students who need support in fulfilling their academic, social and personal objectives. CAPS directly supports student mental health through counseling, crisis management, consultation, education and outreach, and training. CAPS has a satellite office in Huntsman Hall, and students with urgent concerns can talk with a CAPS clinician 24/7 at 215-898-7021 (press 1) or visits CAPS' main office at 3624 Market Street during business hours.

Required Readings

Readings will be available to you on Canvas.

Introduction to feminist concepts and vocabulary

Las tretas del débil (Respuesta a Sor Filotea) - Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Prólogo Lecturas Feministas

Module 1 - Domésticas

Lección de cocina - Rosario Castellanos (México)

Guiando la hiedra - Hebe Uhart (Argentina)

La fiesta ajena - Liliana Hecker (Argentina)

Antieros - Tununa Mercado (México)

La sangre florida - Susy Delgado (Paraguay)

Module 2 - Rupturistas

Mujer - Alaide Foppa (Guatemala)

Inmovil sol secreto –

Maria Luisa Puga (México)

Barlovento - Marvel Moreno, (Colombia)

Module 3 – Fantásticas

Reunión - Gilda Host (Ecuador)

Conejo - Agustina Bazterrica (Argentina)

Una perfecta desconocida - Mercedes Gordillo (Guatemala)

Desaparecida - Ivone Recinos (Guatemala)

Module 4 – Desaparecidas

Pelea de Gallos - Maria Fernanda Ampuero (Ecuador)

Las Chicas de la Yogurtería - Pilar Dughi (Perú)

Por qué grita esa mujer - Susana Thénon (Argentina)

Dos de Noviembre - Stella Diaz Varin (Chile)

Module 5 – Soberanas

Ella y la noche - Mimi Diaz (Honduras)

Guayacán de Marzo - Bertolicia Peralta (Panamá)

Linea Peluda - Proyecto Colectivo de Dibujantes por el Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito.

La loba - Alfonsina Storni (Argentina)

Otro modo de ser - Rosario Castellanos (México)