

## **Course Prospectus**

**Spring 2023**

SPAN 3730-401

Stories about Photos and Photos that Tell Stories: Photography and Literature in Latin America.

Professor Ashley Brock

### Course Description:

This course explores points of contact between literature and photography in Latin America. Beyond serving as illustrations in literary, ethnographic, and journalistic texts, photographs have long inspired authors. Some write about photographers or depict scenes of photography. Others collaborate with photographers or pick up the camera themselves, practicing photography in conjunction with (or as a separate, parallel endeavor to) their writing. Others still set out to imitate photography's descriptive capacity in their prose or to reveal aspects of reality that the camera cannot hope to capture. As we read such literary texts closely, alongside photographs and critical essays on photography, we will ask: What kinds of storytelling do literature and photography make possible, separately and together? What is each medium uniquely equipped to show us? How do they speak to each other in unexpected ways?

This course will be conducted in Spanish. It is an advanced seminar designed for students who are comfortable reading, writing, and speaking about complex topics in Spanish and who seek in-depth engagement with Latin American cultures. Prerequisites: Spanish 1800 (formerly 219) or 1900 (formerly 223).

In addition to being a course in Latin American literature and culture, this is a course in critical thinking and textual analysis. Its aims are to train students to:

- identify common social functions of photography in Latin America from the nineteenth century to the present.
- identify and analyze photographic tropes in literary texts.
- understand the points of overlap as well as the fundamental differences between literary and photographic languages.
- read texts (written and visual) from a wide variety of genres and media closely and critically and present their analyses and interpretations of these texts in oral and written form.

## Class Structure

- In-Person Sessions Planned. This class will be offered fully in-person so long as the University and local health officials deem it safe to do so.
- We will meet twice a week (T, Th), for a total of three hours of class time per week.
- This course is designed as a seminar (as opposed to a lecture), and every student is expected to participate in class discussions and take part in group activities.
- Out-of-class Activities
  - Reading or viewing assignments (up to 50 pages of reading or up to 2 hours of viewing material) must be completed before each class meeting.
  - Informal writing assignments (response papers, discussion questions, etc.) of up to 1 page will be required on a weekly basis. These will be submitted on Canvas and graded for completion.
- Assignments
  - In-class presentation of 10-15 minutes to be given on a date selected by the student (sign-up sheet to be circulated in class during Week 1) (10% of final grade).
  - Close reading paper of 3-4 pages due on February 9 (15% of final grade).
  - Creative Project (a series of photographs accompanied by 1-2 pages of text) due on March 23 (15% of final grade)
  - A Final Paper of 6 pages due on May 1 (25% of final grade)
- Other Areas of Assessment
  - Participation (15% of total grade)
  - Weekly discussion questions (15% of total grade)
  - In-class writing and quizzes (5% of total grade)

**There is no final exam for this course.**

## Course Policies and Materials

- Attendance: Attendance is extremely important in this course. More than two unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. Excused absences include those due to severe 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-).
- Required Materials
  - The following book is required: Mario Bellatín, *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción*  
ISBN: 978-9500720175 (approximate purchase price: \$7-\$16)
  - Other assigned readings will be made available on our Canvas course page.
  - Students will also be required to view several films. Whenever possible, these films will be made available for streaming through Canvas. In some cases, rights

to these films are held by third-party streaming services, and you will be asked to rent these films online or watch the DVD on hold at Van Pelt library (maximum total cost estimated at less than \$10).

- Any student may consult with [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.