

Course Prospectus

Fall 2024

SPAN 3806-401

Representations of Dictatorship in Latin American Literature

Professor Ashley Brock

Course Description:

In this class, we will examine Latin American texts from a wide range of genres and media (including graphic novels, films, and the visual arts) created in or about dictatorships. We will ask how experiences of oppression, violence, and censorship shape the daily life, consciousness, and memory of those living under repressive regimes. What possibilities and limitations does literature (and art more generally) present as a means of expressing trauma and resisting tyranny? Though we will focus primarily on representations of the dictatorships in the Southern Cone in the second half of the twentieth century, we will draw on texts from a variety of national traditions and historical periods to better understand the continuities and differences among the forms that state repression and violence has taken in Latin America as well as the range of responses available to writers and artists. Course requirements include short written assignments, quizzes, an oral presentation, and a final research project.

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 or 1900.

In addition to being a course in Latin American literature and culture, this is a course in critical thinking and textual analysis. Upon completing it successfully students will:

- be familiar with the history of military dictatorships in the Southern Cone in the latter half of the twentieth century and the fraught relationship between these regimes and literature and art.
- be able to identify and analyze common tropes and challenges in literature written in and about Latin American dictatorships, as well as the literary and rhetorical strategies with which writers, artists, and filmmakers might respond to these challenges.
- be able to read texts 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

- 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).
 - Short analytical paper of 2-3 pages due on October 15 (15% of final grade).
 - Final Research paper or project of 6-8 pages due on December 9. A project proposal must be turned in for approval on November 21 (30% of final grade).
- Other Areas of Assessment
 - Participation (20% of total grade)
 - Weekly Canvas assignments (15% of total grade)
 - In-class writing and quizzes (10% 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 books are required (approximate purchase price: \$11-\$16 each)

- Ariel Dorfman, *La muerte y la doncella*
Penguin/ Random House, ISBN 9781583220788

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 \$15).

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.