ALBA Study Abroad Barcelona

Contemporary Spanish Film and Literature: A Historical Perspective (1936-Today)
(INTL 399)

Course hours: 50 hours
Credits 5-quarter credits
Type of Course: SOC/INTL/MEDIA/HIS
Term: Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer
Language: English
Instructor: Dr. Carles Murillo
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course aims to initiate students to the history and culture of 20th and 21st Century Spain through the filmic and literary perspective conferred by Spanish filmmakers and novelists to the socio-historical events that took place from 1936 to the post global financial crisis age. This course offers the possibility of exploring how cinema and literature can be a lucrative method of learning Spanish contemporary history, politics, culture and society, a key factor for a successful integration to the host culture while studying abroad. Therefore, while this course invites to experience and interpret films and novels produced under the Franco’s censorship and during the democracy, it also offers an astonishing space to value Franco’s overall impact on Spanish society, both during the totalitarian regime (1939-1975) and since the restoration of the democracy. Finally, this course also pays a close attention to the transformation of Spanish culture after the 2008 crisis by analyzing the Golden Age of Spanish TV Shows, when we will address topics related with the dichotomy between global firms and national governments, the idea of liberty in a consumer society, the moral and ethical choices in business and political parties as well as the concept of the crisis of democracy.

Meetings will combine short lectures with seminars and this implies that the participation of the student is highly needed. Students are not required to watch a selection of the listed movies.

A previous knowledge of film and literary theory is not required. However, the course will provide students with concepts in order to enhance their familiarity with notions of film and literary theory envisaged to develop analytical and critical skills.
The movies and novels will all be available in its original version, with subtitles and translation in English.

**COURSE GOALS**

—Value cinema and literature as artistic expressions capable of providing critical insights into Spanish political history

—Applying critical thinking skills within one essay by using movies and novels as a means to critically analyze and interpret Spanish culture and society since 1936

—Demonstrate an understanding of the political, social, cultural and economic consequences of Franco’s dictatorship in contemporary Spanish culture

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

—To develop the ability to critically analyze a film in regards to its socio historical framework

—To be aware of how media texts can produce historical and cultural discourses by which the abroad student gains an intercultural insight of his/hers experience in Barcelona

—To acquire an understanding of the cultural characteristics and consequences of living under a fascist dictatorship as well under the dynamics of the so-called age of late capitalist societies

**Films**

Bardem, Juan Antonio. *La muerte de un ciclista* (1955)  
Bollaín, Iciar *Living in a foreign land* (2014)  
Coixet, Isabel, *La vida secreta de las palabras* (2005)  
Luna, Bigas. *Jamón Jamón* (1992)
Vermut, Carlos *Magical Girl* (2014)

**Novels (selected fragments)**

**TV Series**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**UNIT 1. The impossibility of mourning. The aftermath of the war and its trauma: a wounded nation.**

The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) plays a crucial role in this filmic, literary and historical course. The works of Victor Erice *The Spirit of the Beehive* (1973) and Carlos Saura *The Hunt* (1966) offer a crucial insight on this conflict as itself as well as how psychologically affected Spanish society once the Dictatorship started. Ideas of mourning, trauma and fear will be key concepts to frame this unit.

**UNIT 2. Postwar Spain. Selling Otherness: Folklore, Propaganda and the Values of Franco’s society and culture.**

This unit explores the role of folklore during the second half of Franco’s dictatorship through Luis García Berlanga’s *Bienvenido Mr. Marshall* (1953) and Juan Antonio Bardem’s *La muerte de un ciclista* (1955). This unit also discuss the role the US played in the economic history of Franco’s dictatorship. Therefore, this unit carries strong sense of interculturalism as well as addresses the international dimension of Franco’s dictatorship by analyzing how Western countries approved the existence of his regime.

Carmen Laforet Nada (1944) offers a unique opportunity to understand the feeling of oppression and despair suffered by Spanish women. Carmen Laforet, a writer from Barcelona, confers to her novel with a sense of entrapment and vacuity that will be analyzed in order to capture the meaning of living without freedom and being subjected to extreme patriarchal power. In order to understand the role that Franco conferred to strict gender roles, this unit will also introduce students to the analysis of the surrealist aesthetics of Luis Buñuel in Viridiana (1961).

UNIT 4. Democratic Spain and Dictatorship’s cultural aftermath. Political daydreams, cultural nightmares and the performances of revolutionary bodies.

Francisco Franco died on the 20th of November of 1975 and from that date onwards Spain started its process of transition from a harsh dictatorship to the consolidation of its democracy. This unit invites to learn the transformation that this political process meant from the point of view of culture, sociology, gender and the Butler’s idea of performance: Manuel Vázquez Montalbán The Southern Seas (1979) and the films of Pedro Almodovar Pepi, Luci and Boom (1980) and What have I done to deserve this! (1984).

UNIT 5. Interrogating Spanish myths: political corruption, machismo and bullfighting in Bigas Luna’s The Golden Balls & Jamón Jamón.

This unit steps on the year 1992, when the Olympic Games took place in Barcelona. This is a crucial year to understand the evolution of Spanish society and culture as it signifies the stabilization of its democracy but also the take off the political corruption. Bigas Luna’s movies explore the value and meaning of long established Spanish myths, such as machismo and bullfighting and presents an interpretation on how these were related with political corruption.

This unit aims to present an overview of the main characteristics of the so called culture of postmodernism from the point of view of two Spanish novelists, Ray Loriga and Quim Monzó as well as the film director Alejandro Amenábar and Isabel Coixet.

UNIT 7. The aftermath of the 2008 crisis: ethical concerns, dignity, exile and desperate decisions.

This unit critically interrogates the aftermath of the economic crisis by analyzing the humanitarian crisis and the desperate lives of the main characters present in Carlos Vemut’s Magical Girl as well as in Iciar Bollain’s Living in a foreign land (2014).

UNIT 8. The Golden Age of Spanish TV Shows.

This unit considers the re-birth of Spanish TV Shows and presents an overview of the main thematic issues addressed by directors such as Cesc Gay (Félix, 2018), Alberto Rodriguez Librero (La peste, 2018), Mar Coll, (Matar al padre, 2018) or the brothers Sánchez Cabezudo in La zona (2018)

Grading Policy

- Research Essay: 20%
- Oral Presentation: 25%
- Class Participation: 15%
- Midterm and Final Exam: 40% (20% each)

Classroom Protocol

Attendance is compulsory for all courses. Unexcused absences can decrease your final grade according to the Alba Academic Policies. Participation is encouraged and will be graded in every course. Punctuality is required. Late arrivals are expected to join the calls causing minimal
disruption and should discuss their reason with the professor at the end of the session. Continuous late arrivals might count as an absence. Students must observe the Alba Code of Conducts and respect the professor’s instructions.

Sample Bibliography


Faulkner, Sally: ‘Ageing and Coming of Age in Carlos Saura’s La caza’. MLN, Volume 120, Number 2, March 2005 (Hispanic Issue), pp. 457-484.


Vernon, Kathleen M. ‘Melodrama against itself: Pedro Almdovar’s What have I done to deserve this?’ Film Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 28-40.