

**Department:** SPAN

**Course No:** 1010

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Contemp. Span. Culture & Society through Film

**Contact:** Norma Bouchard

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Diversity:** CA4 International

**Catalog Copy:** SPAN 1010. Contemporary Spanish Culture and Society through Film Either semester. Three credits. Prerequisite: None. No Spanish required. Taught in English. Critical approaches to Spanish culture and society since the pre-Civil War to our days as portrayed in Spanish film. Introduction to filmic textual analysis and film history. Discussion of topics such as the avant-garde, social art, revolutionary movements, civil war, exile, Francoism, democratic transition, peripheral nationalisms, immigration, cultural diversity, postmodernity, globalization.

**Course Information:**

a. This course is a survey of Spanish Culture and Society of the 20th Century through the means of filmic representation. The objective of the course is to familiarize students both with the filmic cultural production of Spain and with the most important aspects of its contemporary history and culture.

b. Students are required to write a weekly page in their diaries about the film or short films screened every week. 3-4 of these entries will be randomly selected to be corrected for grade.

Pop quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions and/or very brief answer questions about the assigned reading(s) of the week.

Midterm and Final exams will consist of multiple-choice questions, definitions of concepts, and short essays. Exams will include factual information and historical background from readings and class lectures and discussions, as well as interpretative material discussed in class.

c. Some of the major topics that will be covered are film aesthetics, avant-garde and social art, the Spanish II Republic and Civil War, revolutionary movements in Spain, fascism and falangism, Franco's dictatorship, exile, peripheral nationalisms, diversity and multiculturalism, terrorism, immigration, gender roles and gender violence, social and individual memory and trauma.

d. N/A

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:**

This course will introduce students to basic tools of filmic textual analysis, thus helping them to become more articulate in their interpretation of film as a cultural product in which historical, political, and social aspects are portrayed in an artistic fashion. This deeper understanding of filmic language and the cultural and social realm will help them acquire intellectual breadth and versatility, and will enable them

to develop their capacity for critical thinking and to produce their own critical judgment not only on topics of specific interest in contemporary Spanish culture, but also on issues of broader general concern that affect directly their era and society (e.g. nationalism, diversity, migration, political violence). Some of the topics that will be presented in this course include the political revolutionary movements of the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War (considered a prelude to WWII), the experience of exile, Franco's dictatorship, the Spanish transition to democracy, and the problem of nationalist terrorism, all of which demand a necessary reflection and reaction on moral and political values as related to ideological discourse. Finally, the course will discuss the multicultural nature of Spain, formed by distinct, yet somewhat unified, peoples with considerable cultural and linguistic differences, such as the Basque, Catalanian, Galician, Valencian, Balear, and others, all of it greatly enriched (and complicated) by the strong immigration from Latin America, Eastern Europe and Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa that took place during the last two decades of the 20th Century. The discussion of these issues will increase students' awareness of cultural diversity.

#### CA1 Criteria:

CA1 - Arts and Humanities: This course proposes a historical/critical analysis of contemporary Spanish culture and society through the means of filmic representation. I consider both aspects -the formal and aesthetic, and the historical and cultural- equally important and I will focus my teaching on both. Thus, many of the topics that will be analyzed and discussed will interweave great doses of aesthetic theory on one hand, and social and political theory on the other, all of it contextualized in its specific historical moment. That is the case of topics such as the avant-garde of the 1920s versus the social art of the 1930s, where formal and aesthetic theories necessarily entail a reflection on the social role of the artist and the function of art as an agent of social change. An extreme example of this will be discussed when we analyze the propagandistic cinema produced by both sides during the Spanish Civil War and the early years of Franco's dictatorship. In sum, this course combines a very attractive mixture of historical analysis and aesthetic and political commentary, through the study and comprehension of filmic texts and their symbolic representations.

#### CA4 Criteria:

CA4 - Diversity and Multiculturalism: This course is appropriate for inclusion in group IV because it is directly involved in the analysis of the problems and benefits of cultural diversity by studying the specific case of a multicultural nation like Spain. Spain, divided in 17 Autonomous Regions and 2 Autonomous Cities, is nowadays the most decentralized nation in Europe, and there are at least four recognized co-official languages spoken in it (Castilian, Catalanian/Balear/Valencian, Basque, and Galician). The emergence of peripheral nationalist movements in Spain at the end of the 19th century in regions like the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and others, was followed during the 20th century by the creation of political organizations that range from moderate regionalist movements to radical independentist organizations like ETA (included in the list of terrorist organizations by the EU, the USA, and the UN). The course will also explore the issue of cultural and political diversity within these regions, where nationalists coexist with non-nationalists, and the problems and benefits derived from this situation. Another important aspect is the very strong presence of Gypsy communities throughout Spain,

especially in the southern region of Andalucía, and the cultural and social tensions and affinities elicited by the differences between the Spanish mainstream and the Gypsy 'way of life.' Finally, the course will explore the political impact of the great immigration occurred in Spain during the last two decades (mostly from Latin America, Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe), and the way in which it has reshaped the country both socially and culturally.

Added 4/15/09: Perspectives from within the diverse groups in Spain will be taught through films that negotiate and problematize their differences and similarities and the way in which those differences have been socially and politically articulated. Examples of documentary and fiction films are *El Lobo*, *GAL*, *Asesinato en Febrero*, *Yoyes*, *Días Contados*, *Trece entre mil*, *La Muerte de Mikel*, *La pelota Vasca*, and many more. The course will also focus on the processes of integration and disintegration of the Spanish national identity and the philosophical and ideological principles that sustained the creation of new peripheral identities at the end of the 19th century, at a time of general crisis in Spain.

Awareness of these diverse groups will be assessed through quizzes, diaries, midterm, and final. Students will be expected to recognize the main different cultural groups in Spain, their languages and cultural backgrounds, the main ways in which they have organized themselves to gain political recognition and autonomy, as well as those groups from within their own communities who have organized themselves to defend their Spanish identities against those who fight for autonomy or independence from Spain, which underscores the importance of power relations and of notions of hegemony and subalternity both at the national level and within the minority groups. Students are expected to think and consider critically the positive and negative aspects of these identitarian struggles, the considerable amounts of people that get caught in between, the problematic issues arising from areas where there is a real divide between diverse senses of belonging among the same people, which in turn requires a reflection on interactions and negotiations between our personal identities and our group or social identities.

**International** The course focuses on issues of diversity and multiculturalism in Spain, as well as on the different forms of political repression and articulation of this cultural variety within one state throughout the 20th century.