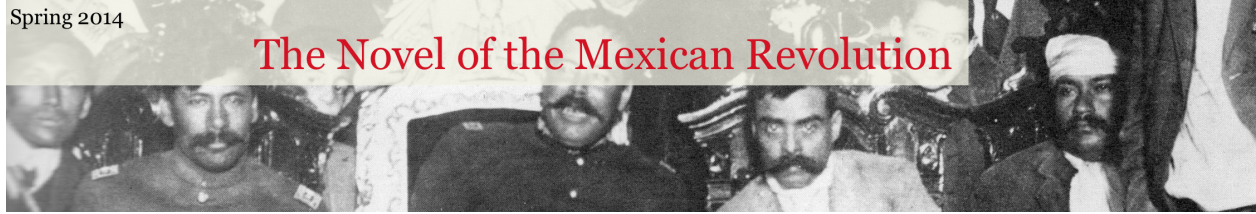


Spring 2014

The Novel of the Mexican Revolution



SPAN 373/473: The Novel of the Mexican Revolution (CRN 17704/17709)

SPRING SEMESTER 2014

SUNY-Geneseo Department of Languages and Literatures

MW 4:00 5:15pm in Welles 117

Kyle James Matthews
matthewsk@geneseo.edu
Welles 209B
x4252

Office Hours:
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11:30 12:30
and by appointment

Final exam: Friday, May 9, 3:30 6:30 in Welles 117

COURSE DESCRIPTION

By the middle of the period of violence that we know as the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), a new literary genre emerged in Mexico. This new genre, which has come to be known as the Novel of the Mexican Revolution, includes many of the most celebrated Latin American novels of the 20th century, and is commonly regarded as one of the most important genres to emerge from Latin America. A century after the outbreak of the revolution, the Revolution remains a potent cultural signifier, and new literature that proposes to interpret its meaning and importance in new ways continues to appear on the market, and is being consumed, along with the classics of the genre, by Mexican readers in record numbers. The broad objectives of this course are to untangle the myriad ways the Revolution was and is bound up in Mexican life, to gain an enduring knowledge of the different phases of the Revolution and its aftermath, and to read and discuss the canonic (and some non-canonic) works in the genre.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this class we will read eight novels (and a small selection of short stories) of the Mexican Revolution, whose date of publication range from 1915 to 1989. Though each novel will be read and discussed for its own literary merits, we will always link the discussion back to the broad course objectives.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Read, write, and speak knowledgeably, with a broad understanding sufficient to authoritatively discuss the explosion of literary production that came out of the Mexican Revolution;
2. Discuss the different phases of the Mexican Revolution with a deep knowledge of the complex forces that sparked the revolt and provided its momentum throughout ten years of violence, followed by nearly a hundred years of invocation in different contexts;

3. Understand the different phases in the interpretation of the Mexican Revolution, citing specific examples of literary production written during those phases, with an eye to the contemporary political or socio-cultural concerns of their authors.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Azuela, Mariano. *Los de abajo* (9681603206) 1915
- Campobello, Nellie. *Cartucho* (9789684114555) 1931
- Fuentes, Carlos. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (8437613930) 1962
. *Gringo viejo* (970580012X) 1985
- Ibargüengoitia, Jorge. *Los relámpagos de agosto* (9682703751) 1963
- Rulfo, Juan. *El llano en llamas* (8437605121) 1953
. *Pedro Páramo* (8437604184) 1955

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

This course is fundamentally designed to get you reading, writing, and speaking about the literature of the Mexican Revolution in its specific contexts. Your success in the course will be evaluated in terms of those goals. The following assignments are intended to stimulate your thinking, structure in-class conversations, and mark your progress over the course of the semester.

DAILY EXPECTATIONS — PARTICIPATION AND PREPARATION (15%)

Attendance: Daily attendance is essential for succeeding in this course. We cannot effectively build a coherent narrative of the novel of the Mexican Revolution if there are holes in our story! You are allowed two absences on non-evaluation days during the semester with no penalty; each additional absence will reduce your final participation grade by 1 point.

Preparation: You are responsible for thorough preparation of daily assignments (as indicated on the calendar) **before** class. Good preparation includes reading and making an effort to understand the texts in a way that will enable you to participate actively in class discussions. Most importantly, class can be more fun if you are well-prepared!

Participation: You are not expected to be a scholar of Spanish American literature — if you were, you would not be taking this course! You will, however, be asked to think in new ways about texts whose historical and political contexts and motivations may be unfamiliar to you, and whose aesthetic qualities may strike you as confusing or complicated. **Your participation grade will depend both on your willingness to take risks and speak up, ask questions, participate in classroom activities, treat your own ideas and those of your classmates seriously and with respect, and speak exclusively in Spanish.** Remember that there is no dialogue unless we are capable and willing to consider, qualify, and build on one another's thoughts. **The best ideas and most striking insights often result from the synthesis of multiple unfinished thoughts and observations.** Please refer to the document of class participation for a variety of valid options for contributing to class discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (15%)

While I will provide analytical questions for *Los de abajo* as models, you will be responsible for posting an analytical question on the course forum for each class session about the

three subsequent novels. You will also be responsible for responding to at least one question posted by me or one of your peers for all four novels. Questions must be posted by 9:00pm the day before class; responses by 8:00am the day of class. Your thoughtful questions and answers help me structure class around the aspects of the texts that jump out at and interest you, and ensure that you come to class with something to contribute to the conversation! Your questions and responses will be graded as follows and factored into your final participation grade:

- √+ analytical question, thoughtful response, posted on time
- √ analytical question posted late, cursory or late response
- √- comprehension question or no question, cursory or absent response

REACTION PAPERS (15%)

You will be responsible for turning in one 1-2 page (250-500 word) double-spaced reaction paper in Spanish each week on the text we are currently reading. You may turn this paper in on Monday or Wednesday. These reaction papers may include a reflection on your immediate reactions, any aspect(s) of the texts that you find particularly important or confusing, or anything that strikes you as interesting. You may also respond to topics or questions I will distribute to guide you in your readings, dig deeper into any of the analytical questions submitted by you or your classmates, or respond to our in-class discussion. Your reaction paper should be **analytical in nature** and **not** simply provide a synopsis of the reading, restate a classroom discussion, or discuss whether you liked the novel or not.

I encourage you to take the time to write these reflections *before* the class in which we discuss the texts in question. Thoughtful reflection prior to class will help you articulate your thoughts more clearly during class discussions!

Your reaction paper may take the form of a traditional, 1-2 page written paper, though I encourage the exploration of other media, such as audio and video.

MIDTERM (20%)

There will be an written take-home midterm exam, which will include identifications, short responses, and short essays on topics we have discussed in class. A portion of this exam will be closed-book, while the rest will be open-book, open-note. You may be asked to analyze the novels that we have read on their own merits, compare multiple novels, or connect the novels with the time period they discuss or in the context of the socio-political climate in which they were produced. The specifics of the exam will be covered as the midterm approaches.

FINAL PAPER (25%)

The final paper will consist of a 6-8 page analytical paper on an original topic analyzing any novel of the Mexican Revolution discussed during the second half of the course, or any other novel of the Mexican Revolution from the list of primary sources at the end of this syllabus.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS (10%)

During our final exam session, each student will give a 10-minute oral presentation, in the style of an academic conference presentation, on his or her final paper topic.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

GRADED WORK

All work listed on the calendar is due on the day for which it is listed. Late work will be penalized a full letter grade per day late. Be sure to read and follow instructions, proofread your work carefully, and rigorously attribute when you cite the ideas of others.

MAKE-UP WORK

Because attendance is required and thorough preparation essential, students are responsible for all course work. For this reason the calendar is detailed. If you have any doubts about what you might have missed, contact a classmate or your instructor. Work delayed because of an unexcused absence will not be rescheduled.

DICTIONARIES

I am not a dictionary! If you'd like to look words up during class, please bring a dictionary (or a smartphone with access to a dictionary).

CELL PHONES

Please make certain that your cell phone won't ring or vibrate during class, especially if you will be using a smartphone to access online dictionaries. Respect the energy and preparation of your classmates. Rings, vibrations, and texting will not be tolerated in class.

CONTACTING ME

The best way to communicate with me is by email. I will do my best to respond promptly, but please be patient after 5:00pm and on weekends and holidays.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

We will observe the Academic Honesty Policy and its related process as stated in the 2013-2014 *Undergraduate Bulletin* and in the *Student Handbook*.

The Department of Languages and Literatures takes cheating and plagiarism very seriously! Do not jeopardize your success in this course – if you have *any* questions about either of these offenses, please come and talk to me.

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES MAKE-UP EXAMINATION POLICY

The Department of Languages and Literatures authorizes make-up examinations **only** for **documented reasons** involving personal medical or family emergencies or due to participation in College team sports or legitimate academic events (e.g., Model United Nations, scholarly conferences). If such documentation is provided, it is up to the instructor's discretion to grant a make-up exam or to excuse the student from taking the exam without penalty. If the instructor approves a make-up exam, its content may significantly differ in format from the scheduled exam. If the student's performance in the course up to the date of the missed exam makes it impossible to pass the course, even if taking a make-up and scoring 100%, no make-up or special arrangements will be offered. The Department considers make-up exams a **privilege**, not a right.

ACCOMODATIONS

SUNY Geneseo will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented physical (including pregnancy), emotional or learning disabilities. Students must contact the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Dr. Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin) and their faculty to discuss needed accommodations as early as possible in the semester.

A FINAL NOTE

My goal is not only for you to succeed in this course, but to enjoy it enough that your interest in the language extends beyond the bounds of the classroom. Every group of students is different; **if you feel that any aspect of the course is not working for you, I encourage you to share your concerns with me, and even help think of possible solutions.**

Likewise, if you are having difficulty with the material, the workload, class discussions, or any other aspect of the course, please do let me know so we can ensure that you get the most out of the time you put in!

If you are struggling in this class or are concerned about your grade, you should meet with me during office hours immediately. Problems addressed early in the semester can often be solved by adjusting study/work habits!

FINAL GRADE BREAKDOWN

	A	94-100	A-	90-93	
B+	87-89	B	84-86	B-	80-83
C+	77-79	C	74-76	C-	70-73
	D	60-69			
	E	0-59			

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mariano Azuela. *Los de abajo* (1915, 1920)

Martín Luis Guzmán. *El águila y la serpiente*

Martín Luis Guzmán. *Memorias de Pancho Villa*

Martín Luis Guzmán. *La sombra del Caudillo*

Rafael F. Muñoz. *¡Vámonos con Pancho Villa!* (cuentos cortos)

Juan Rulfo. *El llano en llamas* (cuentos cortos)

Juan Rulfo. *Pedro Páramo*

Carlos Fuentes. *Gringo Viejo*

Carlos Fuentes. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

Jorge Ibarguengoitia. *¡Maten al León!*

Jorge Ibarguengoitia. *Relámpagos de agosto*

Jorge Ibarguengoitia. *El atentado* (teatro)

Nellie Campobello. *Cartucho*

Agustín Yáñez. *A filo del agua*