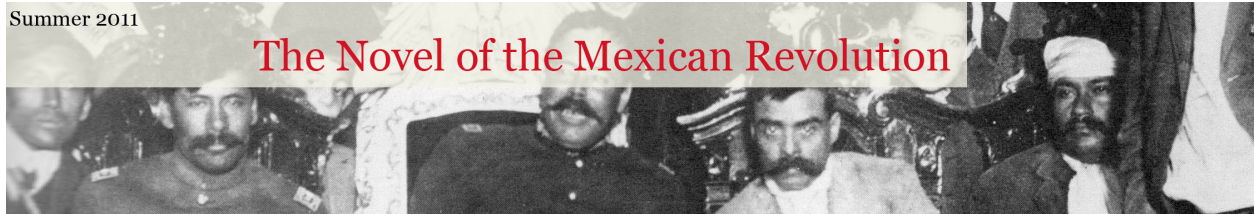


Summer 2011

## The Novel of the Mexican Revolution



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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

By the middle of the period of violence that we know as the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), a new literary genre emerged. This new genre, which came 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 ever emerge from Latin America. Even as Mexico celebrates the Centennial of the outbreak of the revolution, new literature that proposes to interpret the meaning and importance of the Mexican Revolution 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.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

In this class we will read eight novels (and one collection 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, students should 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*

Campobello, Nellie. *Cartucho*

Fuentes, Carlos. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

. *Gringo viejo*

Guzmán, Martín Luis. *La sombra del caudillo*

Ibargüengoitia, Jorge. *Los relámpagos de agosto*

Rulfo, Juan. *El llano en llamas*

. *Pedro Páramo*

Solares, Ignacio. *Madero, el otro*

## 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.

### **Participation & Meeting Daily Expectations (15%)**

You are expected to come to class having completed the scheduled readings or other out-of-class assignments for that class meeting. You are also expected to participate in the discussion portion of the class with relevant, thoughtful comments and thought-provoking questions that engender lively (but cordial!) discussion. My hope is that you will find this literature interesting enough that you will arrive enthusiastic and ready to debate!

### **Discussion Questions (15%)**

You should also prepare 1-2 analytical questions that you would like to discuss in class; questions should reflect your own thoughts on the reading and/or raise issues you would like to discuss in class. You will not be expected to *answer* the questions – the best questions are often open-ended – but you should be prepared to share them with the class, to elaborate briefly on why the question interests you, and your thoughts on working out an answer or solution. Questions will be evaluated solely based on two properties: whether they are done on time and whether it is a discussion question (i.e. not a comprehension question).

### **Reaction Papers (15%)**

A brief reaction paper will be due each Friday on the novel discussed during class that week. The reaction paper should not discuss whether you liked the novel or not, nor should it be a plot summary; rather, you should select one aspect of the novel that you found particularly interesting, exciting, or relevant, and analyze that element as best you can. Your reaction paper can address one of the analytical questions you brought to class, but do not have to. 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.

### **Oral Presentations (10%)**

As one crucial component of our course will be to piece together a narrative of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath, you will be expected to deliver one 20-minute presentation on a portion of that narrative. Topics and dates will be assigned by me, and a sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.

### **Midterm (20%)**

The open book, take-home midterm will be a series of open-ended essay questions on the novels we will have read thus far in the course. You may be asked to analyze the novels 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. It will be assigned on the Friday of the 3rd week of class, and due on Monday of week 4.

### **Final Paper (25%)**

The final paper will consist of a 12-15 page paper on an original topic analyzing any of the novels we have read in class. You will be asked to turn in a brief topic proposal of no more than one page during week 6.

## **CLASSROOM POLICIES**

This class will be given in Spanish. You should feel free to read any edition of the texts you wish, but should be aware that during in-class discussions we will make reference to the page numbers of the recommended editions. The final paper may be written in English or in Spanish; in either case, please cite from the Spanish editions.

Due to our limited time, you are expected to attend all class sessions. You are allowed two “free” absences, which can be used at your discretion, for any reason.

You will also be expected to participate actively in lively debate and discussion in class. Literature is historically a social activity, and I will strive to make our classroom an environment in which you feel free to speak up and voice your opinions about what we read!

*Please turn off your cell phones upon entering the classroom!* Respect the energy and preparation of your classmates. Rings, vibrations, and texting will not be tolerated in class.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Academic achievement is ordinarily evaluated on the basis of work that a student produces independently. Students who submit academic work that uses others’ ideas, words, research, or images without proper attribution and documentation are in violation of the academic code. Infringement of the academic code entails penalties ranging from reprimand to suspension, dismissal, or expulsion from the University. Please consult the Academic Code, which can be found online at:

[http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean\\_of\\_the\\_College/curriculum/academic\\_code.php](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/academic_code.php)

If you have *any* doubts or questions about plagiarism or other aspects of the Academic Code, please *do not hesitate to contact me!*

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1: *Los de abajo*

Monday, June 20: Introductions, Class Policies. Broad overview of the Mexican Revolution.

Wednesday, June 22: Pre-conditions for the Mexican Revolution. *Los de abajo*

Friday, June 24: Porfirio Díaz and Francisco Madero. *Los de abajo*

### Week 2: *El llano en llamas; Cartucho*

Monday, June 27: Madero's downfall. *El llano en llamas*

Wednesday, June 29: The aftermath of Madero's downfall. *El llano en llamas*

Friday, July 1: Heroes of the Mexican Revolution: Emiliano Zapata. *Cartucho*

### Week 3: *Pedro Páramo*

Monday, July 4: *No class!*

Wednesday, July 6: Heroes of the Mexican Revolution: Pancho Villa. *Pedro Páramo*

Friday, July 8: Taking of Mexico City. *Pedro Páramo*

### Week 4: *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

Monday, July 11: Venustiano Carranza. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

Wednesday, July 13: The Constitution of 1917. *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

Friday, July 15: Aftermath of the Constitution (1917-1920). *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*

### Week 5: *La sombra del caudillo; Los relámpagos de agosto*

Monday, July 18: Cessation of Revolutionary Violence (1920). *La sombra del caudillo*

Wednesday, July 20: Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924). *La sombra del caudillo*

Friday, July 22: Outbreak of the Guerra Cristera (1926-1929). *Los relámpagos de agosto*

### Week 6: *Los relámpagos de agosto; Madero, el otro*

Monday, July 25: Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-1928) and the *Maximato* (1928-1934). *Los relámpagos de agosto*

Wednesday, July 27: Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). *Madero, el otro*

Friday, July 29: Children of the Revolution: The PRI. *Madero, el otro*

### Week 7: *Gringo viejo*

Monday, August 1: Children of the Revolution: The PRI (cont'd). *Gringo viejo*

Wednesday, August 3: The Fall of the PRI. *Gringo viejo*

Friday, August 5: The Mexican Revolution in the 21st century. *Gringo viejo* (film)

## A FINAL NOTE

My goal is not only for you to succeed in this course, but for you to enjoy it enough that your interest in the literature 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 help me think of possible solutions. Likewise, if you are having difficulty with the reading, the workload, or class discussions, please do let me know so we can ensure that you get the most out of the time you put in!

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I hope this course will spark your thinking about the literature of the Mexican Revolution, and even inspire you to continue reading. This bibliography is primarily intended as a good starting point for researching your final paper, but also for pursuing interests in the subject that extend beyond the end of class.

### **Primary Sources: Novels of the Mexican Revolution**

### **Secondary Sources**