

SPAN 353: Wonder in Colonial Spanish-American Literature (CRN 17397)

FALL SEMESTER 2012

SUNY-Geneseo Department of Languages and Literatures

MWF 10:30 11:20 Welles 131

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Office Hours:
Monday 3:00 4:00pm
Wednesday 3:00 5:00pm
and by appointment

Final exam: December 14th, 8:00 11:00am

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The works of Spanish America from the initial bewilderment of discovery through the long and often chaotic period of independence from Spain are characterized by their shifting attitude toward the concept of wonder. In this course, we will trace the development and variation in this attitude beginning with Christopher Columbus's *Diario de a bordo* and through the Renaissance in the 16th century, and follow its repercussions in the 17th-century New World Baroque. Broadly speaking, we will approach the concept of wonder from three distinct perspectives:

- First, as a philosophical stance with which Europe sought to categorize, understand, and neutralize the New World as part of its unified world-view;
- Second, as a convenient method for undermining restrictions on speech and writing in the colonial New World, and to fabricate or embellish the narratives transmitted back to Spain (often by omitting uncomfortable details);
- Third and finally, as label for creole and indigenous writers to seize upon and appropriate in the service of Latin American proto-nationalism.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and productively examine major trends in colonial Spanish American literature, especially as they relate to the narrative of wonder.
- Distinguish between the Renaissance and the Baroque in colonial literature, based on their varied attitude toward wonder as an ontological and epistemological category.
- Critically evaluate the truth claims implicit in New World (and later) narratives, claims often made with unspoken, problematic ulterior motives.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

- *Antología de la literatura hispanoamericana*. Ed. Luis Sainz de Medrano Arce. Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 2001. Print.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

DAILY CLASS EXPECTATIONS — PARTICIPATION AND PREPARATION (20%)

Preparation: You are responsible for thorough preparation of daily assignments (as indicated on the calendar) **before** class. Good preparation includes reading and thinking about 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 colonial literature — if you were, you would not need to take this course! You will, however, be asked to think in new ways about texts whose purpose and aesthetic qualities may have little in common with the “literature” that you are used to. **Your participation grade will depend both on your willingness to take risks and speak up (regardless of how fully formed your thoughts are or how unusual they seem), and on the seriousness and respect with which you treat the ideas of your classmates.** 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.**

Analytical Questions: For each new text we read, you will be responsible for posting an analytical question on the course forum, and for responding to at least one question posted by one of your peers. Questions must be posted by 9:00pm the day before class; responses by 8:00am the day of class. Your thoughtful questions 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

We will discuss the difference between analytical and comprehension questions in class.

READING JOURNAL (20%)

You will keep a reading journal which includes a 1-2 page (250-500 word) double-spaced reflection in Spanish on each of the texts we read. These reflections may include 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, sketch out your preliminary thoughts on any of the analytical questions submitted by you or your classmates, or respond to our in-class discussion. I will collect all of your journal entries at the midterm, and again the final exam.

While you may write these journal entries at any time, I encourage you to do so *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!

WRITTEN MIDTERM EXAM (20%)

There will be an in-class written midterm exam, which will include identifications, short responses, and short essays on topics we have discussed in class. The specifics of the exam will be covered as the midterm approaches.

FINAL WRITTEN PAPER (30%)

In lieu of a final written exam, you will write an 8-10 page research paper in Spanish on a topic of your choice (discussed with me by November 19th). Your final paper will be graded based on the quality of your analysis and the correctness of your Spanish.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS (10%)

During our final exam period, each student will give a 10-minute oral presentation on his or her final paper topic. The presentations will be given in Spanish without notes – prior preparation is essential!

CLASSROOM POLICIES

REGULAR ATTENDANCE

This course meets three times a week. Our discussions will regularly span more than one class session and our texts build on one another. Missing a class will often affect your understanding of the narrative we'll build over the course of the semester. It is in your best interest – and the best interests of your classmates – to miss as few classes as possible.

ABSENCES AND TARDINESS

After the first week of classes, any student who accumulates **three (3) absences** from class without an official excuse must meet with the professor to discuss the situation. More than 3 late arrivals to class constitute one absence.

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! Respect the energy and preparation of your classmates. Rings, vibrations, and texting will not be tolerated in class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

We will observe the Academic Honesty Policy and its related process as stated in the 2012 2013 *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 a make-up exam is approved by the instructor, its content may 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 accomodations for persons with documented physical, emotional, or learning disabilities. Students should contact the Director in the Office of Disability Services (Dr. Tabitha Buggie-Hunt, 105D Erwin) and their faculty to discuss needed accomodations as early as possible.

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	95-100	A-	90-94
B+	B	84-86	B-	80-83
C+	C	74-76	C-	70-73
	D	60-69		
	E	0-59		