Spanish 4324 / LABS 4301 011: Literature of Mexico

Professor: Dr. Sara Potter
Class: TR 3:00-4:20pm, Cotton Memorial Building 201
Office: Graham Hall 303A
Campus Mailbox: Liberal Arts 137* (likely to change soon as we relocate to Graham Hall)
Phone: 915.747.7039 (email is best)*
Email: sapotter@utep.edu
Office Hours: TR 4:30-6:00pm or by appointment. May be in-person or virtual.

Texts: Some texts must be purchased or obtained from the library (i.e. novels), while others (articles, films, short stories) will be posted on Blackboard or otherwise made available online. It is your responsibility to obtain these texts and to read them carefully before each class. If there are any problems finding a text, or with the format, please let me know immediately. Showing up to class and informing me that the text could not be found is not acceptable. Texts include:

- *Los de abajo*, Mariano Azuela
- “La fiesta de las balas”, Martín Luis Guzmán
- *Cartucho*, Nellie Campobello
- ¡*Que viva México!*!, dir. Sergei Eisenstein
- *Sleep Dealer*, dir. Alex Rivera
- *Señales que precederán al fin del mundo*, Yuri Herrera
- *El invencible verano de Lilianna*, Cristina Rivera Garza

*If you have not done so already, please make sure you can access online books and journal articles from the UTEP library (lib.utep.edu). Normally it is as simple as signing in with your UTEP username and password, but should you experience any issues, you can find troubleshooting tips and library support here: [https://libanswers.utep.edu/faq/387517](https://libanswers.utep.edu/faq/387517)

Class description: This course focuses on the roles that revolutions, migrations, and borders have played in the history and cultural production of Mexico from 1910 to the present, as reflected in short stories, novels, films, plays, and graphic novels. Students will examine canonical discourses of national identity and history alongside non-canonical texts that question and interrogate these idealized constructions, with a continuing focus on representations of race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, and disability. Authors to be read include but are not limited to: Nellie Campobello, Mariano Azuela, Arqueles Vela, Xavier Villaurrutia, Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz, Elena Garro, Elena Poniatowska, Inés Arredondo, Ámparo Dávila, Alex Rivera*, Cristina Rivera Garza, Yuri Herrera, and Edgar Clément.

Course objectives: Students will familiarize themselves with major literary, philosophical, and theoretical currents and conversations in 20th-21st c. Mexican history and literature and engage in critical verbal and written analysis of each text in written and spoken Spanish, all the while considering the historical, social, and political context in which each text was produced. Various aspects and representations of gender, race, and class will be considered constantly over the course of the semester.

Students will develop the skills of critical and analytical reading and writing of the narratives addressed in this course, with particular emphasis given to the processes of close reading and academic writing. In all cases, but most particularly for those who are Spanish majors and minors, the essays and in-class presentations will evaluate the student’s ability to do the following:

- The student must demonstrate evidence of a careful and attentive reading through the analysis and/or synthesis of assigned texts.
• The student must consider the text in terms of its historical, cultural, political, and social context and be able to explain how it fits into the greater intellectual conversation (how it agrees/disagrees with previous texts or ideas, if and how it expands upon other ideas or critiques them, etc.)
• The student should be able to identify connections between and across texts and historical events (how different texts address similar themes over the years, for example).
• The student will be able to present their ideas in a well-organized manner, with a clear thesis statement or central argument and supporting paragraphs with good transitions and a conclusion. This will be done in clear, academic Spanish.

Course Outcomes:
Students will produce written texts and oral presentations that demonstrate ever-increasing mastery of the above objectives. Students will also have a solid working knowledge of critical theory as it relates to Mexican literature and the development of lo mexicano and mexicanidad as social and political constructs and have a broad critical vocabulary for discussing audiovisual media as well as textual analysis.

Attendance and Participation:
Attendance is extremely important in a class of this nature, as is punctuality. For these sixteen weeks, we are forming a community of readers, writers, and thinkers, and as such it is vitally important to be mentally and physically (or virtually) present, involved, and engaged. Part of this attendance grade involves a short and informal one-on-one meeting with me during the first three weeks of class (that is, by Friday, September 15, 2023). This is for all students, even if you have taken a class with me before. I am happy to work with your schedules to make this possible, as these meetings are a place for you to tell me about yourself, your studies and interests, your expectations, hopes, and/or concerns for the class, and anything else that is important for me to know.

When possible, these meetings will be in my office (Graham 303A). However, since the office is on the third floor of a building that does not have any elevators, it may not be accessible to all students. In that case, I am more than happy to meet in a different location or to hold the interview virtually (over Zoom, Teams, etc.).

Participation means that you are awake, pay attention to the lecture/discussion, and contribute to class discussion by coming prepared (with your texts and with the homework/reading complete), asking relevant and productive questions about the readings, engaging with and thoughtfully responding to other students, and participating actively in small group work and/or discussion boards. It is important to me to create an environment in which we are ‘comfortable being uncomfortable,’ that is, in which it is safe to take intellectual risks and to explore new or difficult or uncomfortable ideas.

On assignments and late work: All assignments have deadlines, though some will be more flexible than others depending on the nature of the work. For example, deadlines for first drafts of essays are very firm because we will be doing peer editing that day in class and that process is much more productive and helpful if everyone has a complete first draft in hand. For individual essay revisions, however, it is not the end of the world if you need an extra day. The course calendar will indicate the type of deadline for each assignment. If you know you will require more time on a deadline, please let me know in advance so that we can discuss solutions.

Absences: Student evaluations, project outcomes, and studies have all shown that students have a more positive and productive experience in face-to-face classes when attendance rates are high. The class is a mixture of individual, small group, and full-class work, discussions, and debates and every person present contributes significantly to the dynamic and the pacing of the class. It also helps students to feel more supported – for example, it is very helpful to have contact information for at least a few of your
classmates so that you can ask questions, share notes, etc. At the same time, I do not want anyone to feel that they need to come to class when they are sick. In an attempt to find a happy medium, we will do the following:

1. If you must be absent, there is no need to say why—that is your life and your business. HOWEVER, I do expect you to contact me as soon as you know you will need to be absent and to follow up shortly afterward to catch up on what you missed. Historically, students have a more difficult time in the class after a significant number of absences (four consecutive absences or six sporadic ones). If this becomes the case, we will need to meet to discuss solutions and strategies.

2. It is most important to be present for peer review dates, exams, and presentations, as these are all very time-sensitive assignments.
   a. If you miss a peer review date, you must make arrangements with a classmate (ideally in advance) so that both of you can participate in the peer review process. (This is another good reason to have contact information for at least 2-3 classmates.)
   b. If you know in advance that you will be absent on the day of an exam, you must arrange a makeup date ahead of time. If there is an emergency on the day of the exam, it must be made up within a week for full credit.
   c. Presentations are directly related to the assigned readings and themes for that day and are the most disruptive days to be absent. If you know ahead of time that you will be unable to attend, please let me know as soon as possible. Solutions may include switching presentation dates with a classmate, submitting a video presentation ahead of time to show in class, submitting presentation materials to distribute and work on in class, or presenting via Zoom. If none of this is possible, you will be expected to present on the day you return for full credit.

3. Course notes or a video from each class will be posted on Blackboard within 24 hours along with a short quiz or reflection questions and will remain up for one week. Students who miss a class are expected to submit the quiz or reflection questions from that class before the week is up.

The goal is for students to remain engaged with the professor, with the coursework, and with each other so that everyone feels supported and no one feels lost or falls between the cracks. Communication is essential for this to happen. During week 9, we will reassess to see what has worked and what may need to change.

**Fall 2023 Calendar:** [https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Academic%20Calendars/academic-calendar.html](https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Academic%20Calendars/academic-calendar.html)

**Important dates to keep in mind include:**
- **Wednesday, September 13:** Fall Census Day
- **Friday, November 3:** Course Drop Deadline (W/D). Please note: Student-initiated drops are permitted after this date, but the student is not guaranteed a grade of W. The faculty member of record will issue a grade of either W or F.
- **Thursday, November 23:** No class (Thanksgiving)
- **Thursday, December 14, 4pm-6:45pm:** Final Exam

**Final Exam Schedule:** [https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Scheduling/Final%20Exam%20Schedule%20Fall%202023.pdf](https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/Scheduling/Final%20Exam%20Schedule%20Fall%202023.pdf)

**On Technology in Class:**
Personal computers, iPads, tablets, etc., must be used for class-related activities (reviewing texts, taking notes, researching writers/concepts, etc.). Please turn off or silence all cell phones, beepers, or anything else that goes off, beeps, or otherwise makes noise.

**Grading Scale:**

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<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>F</td>
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**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP). It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents another persons’ words or ideas as ones’ own. This most frequently happens when someone quotes part of a text written by someone else, either verbatim or paraphrased, without proper citation. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. The complete University policy on academic dishonesty is in the HOOP (linked above). You may also consult with Dr. Catie McCorry-Andalis, the Assistant Dean of Students, by calling 915-747-5648 or emailing cmandalis@utep.edu.

**On Chat GPT:** I do not recommend using it for reasons that we will discuss in class. If you do choose to use it, however, you will need to cite it as you would any other source. You will also need to include a separate paragraph to explain to me how you used it and how it was useful (or not) as part of the assignment. *Please do not use it as a search engine or as a citation generator.* The AI will make up books, articles, and citations that do not exist. (Apologies if this seems self-evident, but I have heard and read reports of students doing this and becoming very frustrated.)

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) located in the Student Union Building East, Room 106. They may be reached by phone (915-747-5148) or e-mail (cass@utep.edu). If you have a condition that may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or that may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with me and/or the CASS. It is important to me to do whatever I can to support you, both in-person and online.

**Composition of Grade:**

- **Participation:** 15%
- **Midterm:** 20%
- **Essays:** 25% (2 with rewrites; 10% and 15%)
- **Presentation:** 20%
- **Final Exam:** 20%

**Calendario del curso**

Este calendario podría cambiar según las realidades del semestre. Anunciaré cualquier cambio en clase, por email y en Blackboard.

**Semana 1: Introducciones a la clase y a los conceptos principales**
martes 29 agosto: Introducción a la clase, revisión del prontuario, actividades de conocimiento

jueves 31 agosto: Orientación en la biblioteca

Semana 2:
martes 5 de septiembre
- Roger Bartra, “Prólogo”, 11-21
- Preparar/reflexionar sobre las preguntas de lectura, con enfoque particular en los conceptos del nacionalismo y lo mexicano (y cómo estos conceptos dialogan entre sí)

jueves 7 de septiembre:
- Benedict Anderson, Introducción, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 48-59
- Preparar/reflexionar sobre las preguntas de lectura, con enfoque particular en los conceptos del nacionalismo. Anderson NO escribe sobre México, pero ¿qué aspectos de su definición del nacionalismo y de las comunidades imaginadas son pertinentes para aplicar a nuestra lectura de ‘lo mexicano’ y de Bartra?

Semana 3: Orientaciones bibliotecarias e históricas; la Revolución y *Los de abajo*
martes 12 septiembre
- *Los de abajo*, Mariano Azuela, 1a parte, pp. 2-34 (I-XXI)
- Preparar respuestas a las preguntas de lectura

jueves 14 septiembre:
- *Los de abajo*, 2a parte, pp. 35-59 (I-XIII)
- Preparar respuestas a las preguntas de lectura
- **Hablar sobre el Ensayo 1**

Semana 4:
martes 19 septiembre
- Terminar *Los de abajo*, 3a parte, pp. 60-67 (I-VI)
- Preguntas

jueves 21 septiembre:
- Revisar la novela completa de Azuela
- Leer “La novela de la Revolución Mexicana”, Juan Bruce-Novoa, pp. 36-44
- Preguntas para pensar sobre la novela de la Revolución Mexicana como un género, el propósito de estas novelas y cómo *Los de abajo* cumple (o se opone a) las pautas del género

Semana 5: Villa lloró: Otras representaciones, otras perspectivas
martes 26 septiembre:
- *Cartucho*, Nellie Campobello, pp. 45-84 (Parte I + Parte II hasta e incluso “El general Rueda”)
- Preguntas (A considerar: ¿Cómo cumple esta novela (o no) con las normas de la novela de la Revolución según Bruce-Novoa? ¿Qué semejanzas y diferencias notables observan entre este texto y *Los de abajo*?)
- Presentación: TBA

jueves 28 septiembre:
Semana 5: Atando cabos + Ensayo 1

martes 21 septiembre:
• Terminar Cartucho pp. 125-161
• Preguntas (A pensar: ¿Cómo se organiza el texto en el sentido narrativo? Es decir, ¿quién cuenta las historias y desde qué punto(s) de vista? ¿Qué recursos son empleados para cobrar autoridad textual y narrativo?)

jueves 23 septiembre:
**Taller de escritura** – traer dos (2) copias impresas del borrador completo del Ensayo 1 (Fecha firme.)