

This manual seeks to assist those who are teaching Latin American Humanities for the first time. Its intention is to state the aims and goals of the course, provide a model syllabus, and review administrative matters--writing assignments, oral presentations, grades and bibliography.

In this manual, you will find a model syllabus, and a week-by-week guide of readings to help you prepare for your classes. All of the readings contained in the manual are considered fundamental to the study of a particular author, idea, or historical, social, political or cultural event. In addition to the week-by-week guide, we have provided sample paper topics to give to your classes and a final examination. You will want to prepare any media ahead of time: video, music, slides, etc. This manual is accompanied by a separate reader that contains the abridged or selected required texts for the students. While the components of the grade may vary somewhat according to instructor, it is important to remember that a seminar presupposes that a student will write a fair amount, that unlike the case of graduate courses, students need feedback early on in the semester that tells them how they are progressing in the course. Consequently, it is essential that you spell out concretely how you will arrive at their final grade, and that you provide a number of means of evaluation during the course of the semester.

Many reference books have been purchased for this course. Presently, they are located in Prof. Félix Martínez-Bonati's office on the third floor of the Casa Hispánica. There is also a collection of videos in the drawer of the file cabinet in that office. Instructors (but not students) may consult the works there, or borrow them by informing Patrick McMorrow in the Main Office that you wish to sign out a particular book or books.

Tips for grading: students often complain that there appears to be no structure to the way in which oral presentations are graded. Be clear about how much time you expect each student to take, and don't let a student ramble on past the allotted time, or valuable class time will be lost. Students appreciate it if they receive concrete feedback on their presentations, including on their actual style of presentation, clarity, interest, amount of information, etc.

Students also complain that writing exercises, while important, do not give them the opportunity either to polish their work or correct their mistakes. I have found useful, when teaching Literature Humanities, the model of grading 60/40 (you can decide on your own percentages, but years of experience have led me to the one above). Students know that their papers will be graded rigorously, with corrections of grammar and organization of ideas provided, and suggestions for expanding a point, eliminating unnecessary material, or other suggestions of content revision. This "first draft" counts for 60% of the grade; the revised paper counts for 40%. I have found, first of all, that when I offer first drafts that are not graded, I have the pleasure of literally writing thirty student papers, for they are not as careful as they should be. The onus needs to be on them to turn in a fine piece of work from the start, but they also need to be encouraged that re-writing and revision will earn them a better grade.

Although it is a seminar, not all information is best given or received in the form of discussion. While you should not lecture constantly, the well-prepared introductory lecture does have an important role in the course. Unlike Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilizations, the courses on which Latin American Humanities is most closely modelled, we expect the students not only to focus on the primary text, but to have contextualized them as well, historically and culturally. Consequently, you are an important source of information, and you also need to make sure they are doing the historical readings found in the assigned history books.

You are also encouraged to require short writing assignments. Successful strategies for

making sure the students are keeping up with the reading are: ask them to submit in writing the questions they have or topics they would particularly like to see discussed in the class before you move on to another topic. It is best to require the submission of their ideas on the first class of the week, so you can look them over for the next class. This is also a useful way to draw some of the non-speakers into the class discussion. For example, you could refer to a question or comment that a student had made in the written submission and ask for elaboration or some other remark that would break the ice for that student.

Another possibility, tried and true in many Lit Hum classes, is to have them keep a journal of their reactions to the writings. Usually, I have them keep a folder with sheets of paper, so that I do not have to carry 25 notebooks, and they can submit their one or two-page remarks every first class of the week. Some of the advantages of the above pertain: you can refer to particularly interesting remarks by students, participants and non-participants alike. You can check to make sure they are reading the materials. What you want to avoid is that they recount the plot to you, which can also happen. One time, mid-year in Lit Hum, I said that we would stop the journal since they complained about it so much, and they all groaned collectively, because, in fact, it gave those students who took it seriously to have an outlet for a pensive reaction to the materials we were reading.