

Culture Course Spanish 446

400 level course for Spanish majors – Spanish Culture from the cavemen till the 21 century

In this course there is a midterm test and a final test and both are based on a routine understanding.

The four papers that the students have to write are – in my opinion – based on a deeper understanding.

These assignments consist in linking a document (a movie, a text) to its specific sociohistorical/cultural context. I grade these assignments with a rubric (see rubric)

- The first assignment consists of a short paper in which the students have to explain how a movie that we watch in class (*Lázaro de Tormes*, based on a picaresque novel) provides a particular vision of the Spanish society of the 16th century. Students have to revise their notes and the readings concerning that period and observe what elements are present in the movie. This assignment was not considered to be particularly difficult by last year's students.
- The second assignment consists of a satiric column from a 19th century newspaper (1898) in which the author comments on the Spanish-American war ("El Desastre"). Based on their knowledge of the period, students write a commentary/interpretation. Students complain about this assignment as a very difficult one.
- The third assignment is based on two movies. Both deal with the sixties in Spain under Franco's dictatorship. The first movie, *El cochecito*, is a movie from the period that we watch in class. It contains a lot of covered criticism. The second movie that the students see outside of class is from the 90s (when Spain is a democracy), *Secrets of the Hearts*, and is much "sweeter". Based on these two movies and on a series of readings the students have to reconstruct how life must have been in the 60s in Spain. I was delighted with the results of the students' papers.
- The last assignment consisted last year of two articles from 2 different newspapers with different ideological views regarding an outbreak of racism in El Ejido, Spain, a few years ago. Students had to compare the two points of view and link them to the immigration problem in Spain. I want to change this assignment this year for a task on the more recent introduction of the gay marriage in Spain, last year.