

## Curso FS-08 **MUSIC AND SOCIETY: THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FLAMENCO**

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**This course is taught in English and is open to students with any level of Spanish.**

### **Objectives**

Broadly defined, Flamenco is a complex performative art which includes song (*cante*), dance (*baile*) and guitar music (*toque*), originally embedded in a particular lifestyle and world view. Tracing its origins to approximately the mid-nineteenth century, Flamenco has been associated with Spanish Gypsies (*gitanos*), a community instrumental in its development and who represent the majority of its practitioners, and with the culture of Andalusia in Southern Spain. The exoticization of Spain during the 19<sup>th</sup> century stimulated Flamenco's broader development and popularity until it eventually grew to become a powerful national icon, while it continues to be regarded as a quintessential expression of Spanish culture.

Our emphasis is on acquiring an aural, visual, and theoretical understanding of Flamenco, of the streams of culture which created it, and of its role within Spanish culture, and on using the study of Flamenco as a vehicle to explore the relationship between art and culture, music and society, and the ways in which we think, talk and learn about Flamenco.

The intention of the practical part of the Course, the Flamenco dance class, is not to train future Flamenco dancers, although I have had many students go on to further study. Rather, it is designed to give students an understanding of the mechanics, aesthetics, and basic canons of an art form that is so often described as being purely spontaneous and free. The dance class centers on learning the basic postures and steps of the Flamenco vocabulary and the techniques of footwork. We also study the "compás" (rhythmic cycle) and learn to play "palmas" (rhythmic handclapping). Above all, we try to understand how Flamenco dance is structured and the essential relationship that links dancer, guitarist and singer.

At the end of the Course, students will perform the simple choreography they have learned, accompanied by a professional singer and guitarist. This tends to give them an entirely new appreciation of the complexity of both the dance form and the culture in which it is embedded.

Evaluation in this part of the class sessions is based on attendance, effort and improvement, each student performing at his or her own level; ability or prior dance training is not necessary.

Requirements: The pre-requisites for this Course are an interest in Cultural Studies and a love of music and/or dance.

### **Methodology**

The class meets twice a week. Each class is divided approximately into one half dedicated to lecture time and the other half to the dance class, although this may vary from session to session. Video screenings, listening sessions, and live performances are an important complement to the theoretical studies offered. Students' personal responses to these sessions are an important part of developing an understanding of the art form.

The basic text material to be used during the Course is drawn from a variety of sources, ranging from the Romantic travel writers to the biography of the great Gypsy flamenco dancer, Carmen Amaya, whose career spanned most of the modern history of Flamenco and intersected with all the important figures of the time. Students will also

choose one out of three short books written about an individual's personal experiences in the Flamenco world of the 1950s and 1960s, and will be expected to present a "book report" on his or her chosen text.

## Syllabus

### UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION: What is Flamenco?

Video: *Flamenco*, by Carlos Saura, class discussion.

ASSIGNMENT: Write a critique of the video concerned; try to define what **you** think Flamenco is.

Resources; What do we know and how do we know it?

ASSIGNMENT: *El Cante*, Paul Shalmy.

### UNIT 2 The Flamenco Repertory –

*El cante*.

ASSIGNMENT: listening online; [www.pflamenca.es](http://www.pflamenca.es) (Flamenco *cantes*) Write down what you listened to (*palo, cantaor, etc.*) and any comments or questions you might have.

*El toque*.

ASSIGNMENT: *Flamenco: An Overview*, Brook Zern.

**LECTURE DEMONSTRATION** of guitar and *cante*.

*El baile – Videos*.

### UNIT 3 Pre-flamenco

Spanish folk music, *seguidillas, fandangos* and *romances*.

ASSIGNMENT: excerpts from Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing*, and Bernard Leblon, *Gypsies and Flamenco*

### UNIT 4 The Gypsies

Gypsies of the world; Gypsies of Spain.

ASSIGNMENT: Volland, *Bulerías: Form and Context of a Gitano Music-Dance Genre*, pages 152-155.

The Flamenco Fiesta – **Videos**.

ASSIGNMENT: Mitchell, *Travellers in Spain*, Ch. IV and V.

### UNIT 5 The Beginnings of Flamenco

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers: the Foreign eye and the Romantic aesthetic.

ASSIGNMENT: Excerpts: *From Gautier to Hurok; The International Public and Notions of Authenticity in Flamenco* (paper presented by Meira Goldberg at the *II Flamenco History Conference*, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque 1998)

*bailes de candil, tavernas, salones, academias*.

### UNIT 6 Flamenco's "Golden Age"

*Cafés Cantantes*

ASSIGNMENT: *Queen of the Gypsies*, Paco Sevilla, p.18-24, *Lives and Legends of Flamenco*, D.E. Pohren, pp.210-215.

The *cuadro flamenco*; development of a format and a repertory – **Videos**.

ASSIGNMENT: Ortega y Gasset, *Invertebrate Spain* Ch. IV, "A Theory of

Andalusia”.

## **VISIT TO A TABLAO 1**

### **UNIT 7 Intellectuals and Flamenco**

The Generation of 1936, Antiflamencoismo,

ASSIGNMENT: Lorca, *Play and Theory of the Duende*.

Lorca, Falla and the Concurso / Competition of 1922.

ASSIGNMENT: *Queen of the Gypsies*, Paco Sevilla, Ch. 7 “America”.

### **UNIT 8 Flamenco in the Theater**

The Opera Flamenca, “Spanish Ballets”, and the beginnings of theatrical Flamenco.

ASSIGNMENT: *Queen of the Gypsies*, Paco Sevilla, Ch. 8 pp. 262-267.

Development of theatrical Flamenco and Flamenco styles abroad – **Videos**.

ASSIGNMENT: *Lives and Legends of Flamenco*, D.E. Pohren, pp. 141-146, “Antonio Mairena”.

### **UNIT 9 The Flamenco Renaissance**

Antonio Mairena and the New Purism.

ASSIGNMENT: excerpts from *Queen of the Gypsies*, Paco Sevilla.

The Tablao Flamenco.

The “Boom” and Tourism in Spain.

Franco and the Marketing of Spain.

ASSIGNMENT: [www.flamencoproject.com](http://www.flamencoproject.com) Examine photos, read whatever you wish of the writings offered.

### **UNIT 10 Modern Flamenco**

Andalucía 1950 - 1970; “Rock Andaluz”, Morón de la Frontera, etc.

#### **VISIT TO A TABLAO 2**

ASSIGNMENT: Comparison of tablaos.

The roots of today’s dance.

New theatrical concepts; Mario Maya and Antonio Gades. Videos.

ASSIGNMENT: *The New Spaniards*, John Hooper pp. 29-44.

The Transition; Paco de Lucía, Camarón de la Isla.

*Baile Gitano, cante gitano*; Flamenco as a marker of Gypsy identity.

#### **VISIT TO THEATER PERFORMANCE (depending on availability)**

New training grounds; Flamenco de Tablao, Flamenco de Academia – **Videos**.

Stretching the limits; Flamenco Fusion.

ASSIGNMENT: Washabaugh, *Flamenco; Passion, Politics and Popular Culture*, preface, pp. vii-x.

### **UNIT 11 The New Flamencology**

#### **FINAL PERFORMANCE**



## **Bibliography**

Course reader (selected readings from a range of sources)

Choice of one out of three:

1. Gerald HOWSON. *The Flamencos of Cadiz Bay* (Cádiz in the 1950s).
2. Paul HECHT. *The Wind Cried* (Granada in the 1960s).
3. Donn POHREN. *A Way of Life* (Morón de la Frontera in the 1970s).

## **Assessment**

Weekly readings, short written assignments;

1. Written Assignment: Your personal opinion (1-2 pages) on *Flamenco*. Movie by Carlos Saura.
2. Book report on a title chosen from among three (see above).
3. Written commentary on visits to Flamenco tablaos and theatrical performances.
4. Mid-term exam ("test" on flamenco repertory and terminology).
5. Final paper; 3-5 pages. Essay on a specific topic of particular interest to each student.
6. Final exam

Evaluation:

Attendance and class participation (in both academic and dance sessions) 20 %

Written assignments 15%

Mid-term exam 15%

Final paper 20%

Final exam 30%

(The final exam grade will also take into account students' participation in the final performances within the dance class.)