

Literature as a Mirror of Social Change in Argentina

Universidad de Belgrano, 45 contact hours / 3 semester credits

This course is taught in English. No pre-requisites.

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I. Course description

This course tries mostly to suit students' interests and/or needs. However, in order for them to fully understand their object of study, the course has been designed based on four mandatory and key texts that allow thinking and discussing the main issues of Argentine culture and literature. They should be seen as readings that help foreign students to approach the central issues of XIXth and XXth century Argentina.

After a thorough discussion of the historical, social and cultural context of these texts, students may choose a topic of their interest. In this particular case, the topics under discussion will be the influence of the ideals of Illustration in the XIXth Century and the impact of immigration in the development of Argentina and the building up of violence in the sixties and seventies and how it affected both politics and culture up to our days.

Evaluation

It is based on a written, mid-term exam and an analytic paper as well as in-class participation and attendance. Promotion of the course is based on a final essay on the chosen topic written and discussed with the instructor.

II. General Purposes & Objectives

Students are expected to

- develop an understanding of the close links between history, politics and literature in Argentina
- get to know basic facts in Argentine history political processes and social changes in Argentina .
- develop their own ideas on the different concepts and topics dealt by the books to be read and discussed.
- Get a general picture of the historical and cultural contexts in which these books were written.
- **Readings**

All students are expected to read all the required material for every session, in order to be able to take an active part in it.

The following books will be discussed in class:

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento: *Facundo, Civilization and Barbarism*

Facundo, an epic novel founder of Argentine literature

The blending of different techniques that conform the great tradition in Argentine novels

Roberto Arlt: *Seven Madmen*

Arlt as creator of existentialism before Sartre and introductory of *le mal de vivre* in Argentine cultural scenario.

Seven Madmen as a literary vision of latent violence in Argentine society and the brutal impact of immigration in the course of the nation.

Seven Madmen anticipating terrorism.

Anticipating historic feats (Uriburu's revolution, Second World War, Spanish Civil War).

Civilization and barbarism mirroring each other.

Luisa Valenzuela: *The Lizard's Tail*

A fiction that deals with identity, violence and history in Argentina, and rings a bell about certain characters in *The Seven Madmen* and how they would have evolved during the seventies, when in power.

Tomás Eloy Martínez: *Santa Evita*

Building of the historical subject

History as a literary gender

Additional Bibliography: Félix Luna, "A Short History of the Argentinians" Planeta, 2000.

III. Course Requirements & Evaluation

It is based on a written, mid-term analytic paper, and an exposé as well as in-class participation and attendance. Promotion of the course is based on a final essay on the chosen topic written and discussed with the instructor.

For regular courses, the weight given to each task is as follows

BASIS OF GRADE	SHARE
Oral Presentation	15%
In-class participation and attendance	15%
Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Exam	45%
Total	100%

- **Syllabus**

Unit 1- The epic period running from 1810 to 1880. Three main issues that produce the transition between the traditional Argentina and the modern one.

1. Education
2. Immigration
3. Economic policy and the final conquest of the desert

Required reading: Felix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, Planeta, 2000 (Ch.3, 4, 5, 6,7)

Unit 2- Facundo.

Unit 3- The Seven Madmen

Unit 4- The Lizard's Tail

Unit 5- Santa Evita

V. Class Schedule and Readings

1. The 1810 revolution and its aftermath.
Required Reading: Félix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, (Ch. 3)
2. The search for a political formula.
Required reading: Félix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, (Ch. 4)
3. Towards a national design.
Required reading: Félix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, (Ch. 5)
4. The shaping of institutions
Required reading: Félix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, (Ch. 6)
5. The shaping of modern Argentina
Required reading: Félix Luna, A Short History of the Argentinians, (Ch. 7)
6. **Domingo Faustino Sarmiento.** His life. Facundo and the foundation of Argentine national identity. Founder of Argentine literature.
7. European influences in the writing of Facundo.
8. Sarmiento's intentions on writing Facundo.
9. Physical contents of the Republic. Originality and peculiarities of the people.
Required reading: Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo (chapter 1, 2)
10. Association. Pastoral society, The Gaucho's Knife, The country Commandant, The Montonera
Required reading: Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo (chapter 3)
11. The Revolution of 1810. Life of Facundo Quiroga. La Rioja. Social life.
Required reading: Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo (chapter 4, 5, 6, 7)
12. Experiments. Civil war. Tablada. Social war. Barranca Yaco.
Requested reading: Domingo F. Sarmiento, Facundo (chapters 8,9,10,11,12,13)
13. **Roberto Arlt.** His life. Immigration and Social Fragmentation at the turn of the twentieth Century in Argentina. Trials of early industrial life. Literature as Mirror

- of Social Change. Arlt as a pre-figuration of Jean Paul Sartre's and Albert Camus' existentialism. Influence of anarchism in Arlt's literature.
14. **The Seven Madmen.** Topics of the novel: Madness, sex, love, terrorism, crime, the idea of God, religion, innocence, exploitation, revolution, existential anguish, invisibility. Identifying these topics throughout *The Seven Madmen*.
 15. Requested reading: Roberto Arlt, *The Seven Madmen* (Chapters 1,2)
 16. **The Seven Madmen.** The novel of the Astrologer. Feminism and the crippled's theory about women.
Requested reading: Roberto Arlt, *The Seven Madmen* (Chapter 3)
 17. **The Lizard's Tail.** Peronism and the subsequent military governments. Peron's return to Argentina in 1973. José López Rega. Creation of the paramilitary association AAA.
Requested reading: Luisa Valenzuela, *The Lizard's Tail*, (Chapter 1,2)
 18. **The Lizard's tail.** The Myth-making process. The Peronist Myth. A bewitched nation. The Sorcerer López Rega. The Dictatorship 1976-1983. Magic realism and politics. Prophecy of the river of blood and the twenty years of peace.
Requested reading: Luisa Valenzuela. *The Lizard's Tail* (Chapter 3)
 19. **Santa Evita.** The history of Peronism. Evita's growth into a political leader. The "Revolución Libertadora".
Requested reading: Tomás Eloy Martínez, *Santa Evita*
Video: "Evita: Vida, pasión y muerte", english subtitles.
 20. **Santa Evita.** History as a literary gender. Building of the historical character. History and fiction.
Requested reading: Tomás Eloy Martínez, *Santa Evita*.
Video: "El misterio del cadáver de Evita". (The Mystery of Evita's Body).