Literatura de Hispanoamérica
(Part I)

Course Description

Literatura de Hispanoamérica (Part I) is a blended course designed for third and fourth year university students. As such, part of the work will be done mainly by consulting library and online sources, part of it in the classroom with the aid of a well-prepared teaching staff. The role of each participant—student and staff—is described below.

Course Goals

The subject of this course is colonial Spanish American literature. However, the most important objectives it strives to achieve will not only be essential for success in this course, but will also be indispensable for success in other courses at the university and in the professional world beyond. The goals alluded to here are:
- To learn the art of doing focused in-depth research on any subject designated.
- To read texts of any nature with the deepest possible understanding.
- To discover the relationships between the text chosen and the circumstances—public and private—which helped bring it to life.
- To organize research findings and personal insights in a focused and logical manner.
- To convey acquired knowledge clearly, correctly, and elegantly in oral as well as written form.

Students

Success in this course will depend on the student's level of achievement in the following:
- Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking Spanish.
- Skill in doing effective research. (1)
- Ability to organize and write reports based on research findings and personal perceptions. (2)
- Competence at planning and presenting oral reports.
- Facility in participating meaningfully in group discussions on selected topics.

Notes

(1) Doing effective research depends on:
- Understanding the aim of the research task.
- Focusing on the subject in question.
- Searching for relevant high quality sources.
- Confirming the accuracy of the information acquired from sources already found.

(2) Producing a first class report depends on:
- Selecting the most relevant information on the subject.
- Sorting the selected material in logical order.
- Writing a rough draft based on the selected material.
- Carefully editing the draft for logic, length, and correctness of expression.

Keys to Excellent Research and Report Writing

Excellent research and report writing can be achieved with the help of a set of tools called "The 5 Ws and an H." The "5 Ws and an H" are questions that help us in our search for information on a given topic and in writing up our findings. These questions are:

- **Who?**
- **What?**
- **When?**
- **Where?**
- **Why?** and
- **How?**

Which question to ask first depends on the subject we're exploring. For example, in our study of Columbus, we're asked to write a maximum of 300 words on: "**Cristóbal Colón y por qué fue importante su *Diario*.**"

The question itself suggests that our answer should provide two types of information: facts about Colón and details about his *Diario*.

If we start by asking **Who** was Colón, our next question might be **Where** would we find the most reliable information about him—details such as **When** and **Where** he lived, **What** he did and **Why** he did it. Once we learn what he did, we might well ask **Who** else was involved and **How**? Of course, one source of information would not be sufficient. Confirmation from other reliable sources would put us on a firmer footing.

Finding information about Colón would help us prepare our report, but that's not all we have to discuss. We also have to focus on Colón's *Diario* and **Why** it was important. In order to answer this question, it would be wise to find out **What** this *Diario* was, **When** and **Where** it was written, and **Who** would read it. The latter details might guide us to answer the key question: **Why** was it important?

It's quite possible that reference books or internet sites might not have the answer to this last question. Therefore, we'll have to do some thinking and, based on what we know and what we can surmise, come up with some our own insights.

After all this preparation, we'll have to decide how to organize the data that we've discovered and how much of that information is worth including in our essay.

Teaching Staff

Student success will depend to a large extent on the ability of instructors to plan and conduct each class, as well as to coach students and evaluate their contributions. To this end, Staff should:

- Prepare a focused lesson plan for each class session.
- Utilize authorized course materials as well as the specially designed addenda supplied to instructors to enhance the value and enjoyment of classroom activities.
- Vary the nature of work in class.
- Utilize instructional resources in such a way as to facilitate the success of specific activities. For example, movable chairs equipped with a writing arm are a most valuable resource for achieving successful classroom discussions.
- Evaluate homework and classroom exercises in a manner best designed to contribute to the student's success.

Addenda

In order to assist instructors in the planning and execution of classroom work, a set of additional exercises on each author will be supplied before the course begins. The addenda consist of four types of exercise:

- A set of True-False questions based on information found in the "Introducción," details likely to be found in general research on the author, and data provided in the "Texto," "Preguntas," "Vocabulario," "Descripción," and "Ensayo."
- A dictation related to the readings, the purpose of which is to assess the ability of students to understand and spell Spanish when the language is spoken. Computers, tablets, and smartphones should not be used for this exercise.
- A series of words which must be defined in Spanish.
- Two topics worthy of being discussed orally by a single student, utilized as a subject of debate by two students, or discussed by the class as a whole.

The exercises concerning Colón should be given during the second meeting of the class in order to establish a baseline of student proficiency. During the remainder of the semester, in-class exercises will be most effective when given during the second class meeting on the selected authors.

Feedback from the instructor must be:

- Provided in a timely manner.
- Specific.
- Clear.
- Focused on helping students improve their competence at doing research, understanding the written and spoken language, enhancing their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar, and expressing their thoughts logically and lucidly both in writing and orally.

Grading

In order to insure fairness, grading must be standardized and students should be made aware of the system from the beginning of the course. The following is a suggested system of grading for the various types of work that students do.

Online (100 points)

    1. Infórmese (35)   **Points**

	Points	
Number of significant points made	= 10	
Organization	= 10	
Quality of expression	= 10	
Number and quality of sources used	= 5	
	35	35

    2. Preguntas (10)

Correctness of answers	= 30	
Quality of expression	= 20	
	50 ÷ 5 = 10	

    3. Vocabulario (5)   = 5   5

    4. Descripción (20)

Quality of information	= 10	
Quality of expression	= 10	
	20	20

    5. Ensayo (30)

Number of significant points made	= 10	
Organization	= 10	
Quality of expression	= 10	
	30	30
		100

Work in class (50 points)

1. Verdad-Falso [repeat twice = 5 minutes]	= 5	
2. Dictado [repeat 3 times = 10 minutes]	= 10	
3. Vocabulario [Students alone = 5 minutes]	= 5	
4. Discusión [Work guided by prof. = 30 minutes]	= 30	
	50	50
	Total	150