

## Contemplative Practices and Literary Creation in Spain

Spanish 375/675 (Special Topics)

Fall 2003

This course fulfills the Peninsular Literature Requirement for majors. It also counts as an elective for majors and minors.

Info about the course (meeting days and place)

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Office hours:

This course was developed as the result of a 2002-2003 Contemplative Practice Fellowship, sponsored by the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Fetzer Institute, administered by the American Council of Learned Societies. This fellowship is designed to foster scholarship and innovative course research that will “restore and renew the critical contribution that contemplative practices can make to the life of the mind.” The Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society believes that “a fully democratic society requires a system of higher education which trains students in reflective insight as well as critical thinking” and that “the cultivation of silence amid the busyness of contemporary life can open up the possibility of developing new wisdom through introspection.”

**A critical component.** This course will have a traditional “critical” component. It is an introduction to *Lectio divina*, the contemplative reading of sacred texts practiced in western monastic tradition. We will explore how this practice developed in the Middle Ages and influenced intellectual life and non-religious literary creation until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a focus on Spain. The theme of *pilgrimage* will be the guiding thread. We will also explore the images of the *castle*, or *inner city*, and the *garden*. The essay, presentations, and final exam will cover this component.

**A contemplative component.** This course will have a “contemplative” component as well. We will expand our reading strategies beyond critical reading and practice “contemplative reading:” the intimate encounter with the text, the moment of being touched or awakened. Another goal is to identify some of the ways in which the practice of contemplation may be of practical value to contemporary readers from any tradition. Our theme is “allowing yourself to be spoken to.” We will practice *lectio divina* and discuss how this method of reading the scriptures applies to literary reading by extension. Please note Prof. McEntyre’s caveat that “the idea here is not to elevate literature to the status of scripture or sacred text, but to recognize a fundamental relationship between the nourishment or enlightenment we seek from literature and other arts and what we seek in the realm of the sacred.” As part of *lectio*, you will be expected to memorize short sections of poetry in Spanish. Class participation, memorization, and journals will cover this component.

**A translation component.** As many secondary sources are in English, we will learn the appropriate vocabulary to summarize and discuss them in Spanish.

Our final goal for this course—I’m paraphrasing J. O. Freedman as quoted in the NYT (June 2, 02)—will be to preserve our individuality against the tyranny of noise and instant communication; to emphasize a form of humane education that helps us to establish a rich interior life and an enduring openness of mind; to develop a sturdy, private self where moral self-examination can occur.

**Grading will be determined as follows:**

Journal	30%
Memorization	10%
1 critical paper	15%
Active, engaged class participation	10%
Short presentations	15%
Final exam	20%

**Required readings.**

All the texts listed in the schedule of classes.

Note: We will read modernized versions of medieval texts.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Abbreviations:

*crit*=critical reading, scheduled student presentations.

*cont*=contemplative practice in class to develop in student journals.

1. Introduction
2. Bateson's *Peripheral Visions* ("Longitudinal Epiphanies," an essay on boredom). Van Gennepe's *Rites of Passage* as reparation for watching John Ford's *Stagecoach*.
3. Gennepe's *Rites of Passage* as reparation for watching John Ford's *Stagecoach*.  
*Stagecoach* (to be scheduled out of class).
4. Class discussion of *Stagecoach* as rite of passage and pilgrimage.
5. Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (lecture).
6. Frey's *Pilgrim Stories On and Off the Road to Santiago* (selections)
7. *Lectio divina* and pilgrimage (Casey's *Sacred Reading* and Leclercq *Love of Learning*).
8. *Lectio divina* and pilgrimage (Casey's *Sacred Reading* and Leclercq *Love of Learning*)
9. Practice (*Song of Songs*) *Cont.* Music: Gregorian Chants.
10. Medieval practice: Bernard of Clairvaux's *On the Song of Songs*. Music: Gregorian Chants.
11. *Lectio* as craft (Carruthers's 7-44, 60-69, 72-87). Bateson's *Peripheral Visions* ("Turning into a Toad").
12. *Lectio* as craft (Carruthers's 7-44, 60-69, 72-87) and "Turning into a Toad."
13. Berceo. *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, introduction. *crit.*
14. Berceo. *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, introduction. *cont.*
15. Lateran Reforms. Marian piety. Berceo's "La imagen respetada." *Crit.*
16. Berceo's "La imagen" and altarpiece. *Cont.*
17. Berceo's "El romero de Santiago." *Cont.*
18. Arcipreste de Hita's *Libro de buen amor*. *Crit.*
19. Arcipreste de Hita's *Libro de buen amor*. *Cont.*
20. Arcipreste de Hita's *Libro de buen amor*. *Cont.*
21. Jorge Manrique's *Coplas*. *Crit.*
22. Jorge Manrique's *Coplas*. *Cont.*
23. Jorge Manrique's *Coplas*. *Cont.*
24. Late-medieval piety. New York Exhibition "A time to hope".
25. Contemplating an altarpiece. Music: Tomás Luis de Victoria.
26. Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*. *Crit.*
27. Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*. *Cont.*

28. Individual conferences regarding your paper to be scheduled on Monday and Tuesday. No class but a complete first draft due at the time of class.
29. Teresa de Jesús's *Las moradas*. (lecture) Team work on papers (out of class).
30. Teresa de Jesús's *Las moradas*. *Cont.* Team work on papers (out of class).
31. John of the Cross. (lecture) Team work on papers (out of class).
32. John of the Cross. *Cont.*
33. John of the Cross. *Cont.* Contemplating a painting (El Greco).
34. John of the Cross. *Cont.* Contemplating a painting (El Greco). Final version of the paper due in class.
35. Nature as space for meditation. The book of God and the music of the universe. Luis de León. *Crit.*
36. Luis de León. *Cont.*
37. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. *Crit.*
38. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. *Cont.*
39. Antonio Machado. *Crit.*
40. Antonio Machado. *Cont.*
41. Final recitations and guidelines for the final exam. Journals due.

**FINAL Take-home Exam:** due on ...