

# Spanish Program Decemeber 2020 Report

## Spanish – Data Based Decisions 2020

Based on our review of the program over the last couple years, we have seen a need to increase "community" among our majors and faculty. For example, early in 2020 (and fall 2019) we tried to do the following:

- Do more activities for majors (soccer watching night, a senior majors dinner. Though with Covid-19 this couldn't happen in 2020)
- More presence at College's Light on the Hill event.
- Marketing upcoming classes with flyers for our majors and minors to help get the word out.
- We created the "Tertulia" Spanish students research/poster day

The pandemic has made some of our efforts more challenging , but we are continuing to work on activities that build community and give our students more informal opportunities to practice their Spanish.

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## Summary of previous Spanish Program Data-based decisions

**Creation of Spanish 3300 (Introduction to Hispanic Literature).** A large portion of the assessments conducted over the last five years have centered on the evaluation of student writing. As a result of paper exchanges and evaluation, the assessment committee determined that student writing was not where it needed to be in the 3000-level literature survey courses (and above). Discussions then ensued regarding the creation of an introduction to Hispanic literary studies course, which would meet the needs of student instruction concerning writing skills. Several meetings were held to address the goals and proposed outcomes for such a course, in addition to textbook selection, syllabus creation, and faculty assignments to teach the course. After submitting the necessary paperwork, the new course, Spanish 3300 (Introduction to Hispanic Literature), was first offered in the Fall of 2013 and has seen high enrollments in multiple sections each semester. Initial assessment of this course (along with the subsequent survey courses) is that 3300 is, in fact, enabling our students to improve their writing skills and be more successful writers at the survey and advanced levels.

## **Minor application changes**

Since the 2012 review of assessment material, the Spanish Section opted to create an application process for Spanish Minors. The objective in doing this was to reduce the excessively high numbers of students in the minor and, hopefully, encourage students to select different minors if we could successfully determine that they would be unsuccessful in the more advanced Spanish courses. The initial idea was to shave off the bottom 10-15% of applicants, thus ensuring a healthy number of minors, while also protecting the integrity of the program by maintaining high quality instruction and successful completion of courses by our students. When initial conversations started regarding the application process we had approximately 300 minors. Based on the following application criteria, we are currently at about 135 minors: students must complete Spanish 3300 or 3060 and maintain a 3.0 GPA in Spanish courses; students must have a 3.0 overall (USU) GPA; and students must perform adequately on a writing exercise. Applications are evaluated by Spanish Section faculty on a rotation basis. We are still evaluating how the process is administered, as well as how we can best manage our number of minors. Ideally we would like to be in the 160-200 range and we are currently a bit low.

## **Rebranding of Existing Advanced-Level Coursework in Spanish and Additional Advanced-Level Coursework in Spanish**

The 2009 assessment concluded that:

“A number of students expressed a desire for studying cultural phenomena using texts other than literary, and they indicated some frustration with the lack of transparency in course descriptions...”

“Rather than limiting literary study to the chronological study of periods, authors, and genres, the faculty may want to explore theme-based or topics courses which would follow trends in cultural studies at other universities and may be more relevant to undergraduate students.”

The first affirmation does not wholly reflect the true nature of our 4000-level coursework. Indeed, professors in the Hispanic American sub-discipline have taught SPAN4910 as a “Topics” course focusing on more than just literature for many years, and well before this assessment evaluation was carried out.. Indeed, the general focus has been towards highlighting “cultural production,” not necessarily just literary production, a subset of the former, but also music, art, photography, and cinema. The second affirmation, however, has frequently been the norm, with a few exceptions: the Survey courses that make up the 3000-level surveys have focused on period studies, highlighting literary movements, authors, and genres. This content focus has not been changed in general, as these courses provide a basis for understanding the literary production of the Spanish-speaking world. In the Hispanic American survey courses, however, other forms of cultural production are taught as part of the overall cultural production related to the time periods in question.

To both reflect the actual content of certain courses and to meet the expectations of the 2009 assessment, certain course titles and course descriptions were changed, however. First and foremost, the former “Latin American” moniker was changed on all courses

teaching content on non-U.S. Hispanic America, to reflect the distinction between “Latin America” (including Brazil), and non-U.S. Hispanic America (only Spanish-language speaking nations, with the exclusion of the United States). This includes the surveys related to Hispanic American literature (SPAN3620 and SPAN3630), and Hispanic American Culture and Civilization (SPAN3570). In addition, a hire in Spanish was made—as suggested in the 2009 assessment evaluation—to expand Spanish-program course options. The hire was made in U.S. Latino/a Studies, and the professor in that sub-discipline has created course work appropriate to the field of study: SPAN3560 (Introduction to U.S. Latino/a Culture), SPAN3640 (Introduction to U.S. Latino/a Literature), and SPAN4930 (Topics of U.S. Latino/a Literature and Culture).

With respect to the “capstone” courses in the Spanish program, the course title and description for the former “Topics in Latin American Literature” course—SPAN4910—were changed in AY 2013-2014. This course is now titled “Topics of Hispanic American Cultural Production,” and is now described as including “[s]elect topics of Hispanic American cultural production, such as literature, art, cinema, or music.”