

PRELIMINARY READING FOR SPANISH

Dear student,

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you to Somerville in October! I am writing with some information about the first-year course in Spanish, including a list of set texts, as well as some suggestions for further reading. Please read it carefully and don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions.

Literature

The first-year course in Spanish includes two literature papers (modules), one focused on narrative, the other on theatre and poetry. The earliest of the set texts is from medieval Iberia and the course extends to twentieth-century Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This span means you will get a good grounding in a range of genres, periods, and texts from all over the Spanish-speaking world, so that by the end of your first year you will be ready to make informed decisions for the rest of your degree.

Before the beginning of October, you will need to read a play by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *El médico de su honra*, a short story by Miguel de Cervantes, 'Rinconete y Cortadillo', and the set ballads from the *Romancero viejo* (see below). It is crucial that you do the reading for each term in advance, because terms are busy and intense and don't leave time for primary reading!

Read these texts carefully, looking up as much vocabulary as you can and keeping a note of it for future reference. **When you have finished the play and the short story, write a brief summary of each text (about 500 words), making reference to its key themes, characters, and any other features that strike you as significant (structure, style, point of view, ending, etc.). I would like to see these summaries when you arrive, but they are mostly for your reference.** The critical editions have excellent introductions and notes to help you with unusual words or turns of phrase, as well as providing useful contextual information. You may find it helpful to refer to translations, especially bilingual editions, but reading in translation should obviously **never** be a substitute for reading the original text.

If you are doing Spanish sole, you will take three additional papers over the course of the year: Introduction to Hispanic Film Studies; Introduction to Spanish Medieval Studies; and Short Fiction in Spanish. The texts or films for each paper are listed below, but you are not required to do any additional preparatory work for the first term.

Language and translation

As well as studying literature, you'll do plenty of language work, including translation from Spanish into English and vice versa, grammar, essay writing, and oral skills. It is important that over the summer, you revise the language work you've done at school carefully, especially tenses and the subjunctive, to give yourself the best start when you arrive.

I would strongly recommend that, if possible, you purchase *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* by John Butt, Carmen Benjamin and Antonia Moreira Rodríguez (6th edition, Routledge 2019), along with the complementary workbook *Practising Spanish Grammar* by Angela Howkins, Christopher Pountain and Teresa de Carlos (4th edition, Routledge 2019). Other useful books are *Speed up your Spanish: Strategies to Avoid Common Errors*, by Javier Muñoz-Basols, Marianne David, and Olga Núñez Piñeiro (Routledge, 2010), and *Using Spanish Vocabulary* by R.E. Batchelor and Miguel Ángel San José (Cambridge University Press, 2003). You will find copies of all these books in the college library.

Translation into English is an exercise that bridges the literary and language parts of your course, so to help you think about it as a craft you might be interested to read David Bellos's *Is*

that a Fish in your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything (Faber and Faber, 2011) or Edith Grossman's *Why Translation Matters* (Yale University Press, 2010).

Further reading

Literature always has to be studied in context, so it will be increasingly useful over the course of your degree to have a good understanding of the history of Spain and Latin America. For now, two good titles to have on your bookshelf are William Phillips and Carla Phillips's *A Concise History of Spain* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), and Edwin Williamson's *The Penguin History of Latin America* (Penguin, 2009).

Buying books

It is useful to have your own copies of set texts, so that you can write notes in them and refer to them as much as you need to. You should find that the editions listed below are easily available online, though the anthology of sonnets will be provided to you separately. When you get here, you will also find that the libraries are well stocked.

Happy reading and best wishes,

Hannie Lawlor

Fellow and Tutor in Spanish at LMH and Lecturer at Somerville College.

Michaelmas Term (Oct-Dec 2026)

We will study three texts this term, as follows:

1. *El romancero viejo*, ed. Mercedes Díaz Roig (Cátedra, 1997).

A *romancero* is a collection of ballads, or *romances*, and this *romancero viejo* takes us back to the oral tradition of the Middle Ages, when stories were anonymously composed, sung by minstrels or *juglares*, and passed on collectively down the generations. Divided broadly along historical and imaginative lines, with porous boundaries between the two, these often fragmentary texts tell the stories of epic heroes and disgraced kings, adulterous relationships and frontier battles, through the eyes and voices of women and men, Muslims and Christians from the 14th and 15th centuries. If you'd like to begin to get to know some of the most prominent stories and characters in the ballads, see the introduction to C.C. Smith's *Spanish Ballads*, 2nd ed. (Bristol Classical Press, 1996). You can also find musical interpretations of some of the ballads on YouTube.

As you would expect, Spanish has changed over the course of several hundred years so you may find the language of the ballads unfamiliar or difficult in places, but the notes in the text should help you, and **you don't need to understand everything** at this point. The ballads we will focus on for study are as follows (the number in square brackets refers to the Díaz Roig edition):

1. Romance del cerco de Baeza [1]
2. De la salida del rey Chico de Granada y de Reduán [3]
3. Romance del moro de Antequera [5]
4. La mañana de San Juan [6]
5. Caballeros de Moclín [7]
6. Romance de Abenámar [8]
7. Romance de Álora la bien cercada [9]
8. Romance de la pérdida de Alhama [14]
9. Romance de Sayavedra [18]
10. Seducción de la Cava [38]
11. Visión del rey Rodrigo [40]
12. Por las riberas de Arlanza [44]
13. Doña Lambra con fantasía [50]
14. Pártese el moro Alicante [52]
15. Romance del Cid Ruy Díaz [54]
16. Romance del juramento que tomó el Cid al rey don Alfonso [66]
17. Romance del rey moro que perdió Valencia [68]
18. Lanzarote y el ciervo [72]
19. Cata Francia, Montesinos [76]
20. Romance de Valdovinos [86]
21. Romance de doña Alda [94]
22. Romance del prisionero [97 and 97a]
23. Romance de Fontefrida [99]
24. Romance de Espinelo [110]
25. Yo me era mora Moraima [111]
26. De Francia partió la niña [117]
27. Romance de blanca niña [121]
28. Romance de la gentil dama y el rústico pastor [125]
29. Romance del cautivo [127]
30. El Conde Arnaldos [128]

2. **Pedro Calderón de la Barca**, *El médico de su honra*, edited by D. W. Cruickshank (Clásicos Castalia).

First published in 1637, during the early modern period often known as Spain's 'Golden Age,' *El médico de su honra* is an example of the *drama de honor*, a version of tragedy in which the dramatic action revolves around a man's desperate attempts to protect or restore his honour. According to the conventions of the genre, 'honour' refers to a codified set of values and expectations strictly regulated by gender and social rank; a loss of honour signified a catastrophic loss of social and personal reputation, with potentially fatal consequences for women. Calderón's play, written during a period of extreme suspicion and intolerance in Spain, is a chilling exposition of what happens when dogma and paranoia take hold in a person's mind. You may want to consult the bilingual edition translated and edited by Dian Fox (Aris and Phillips 2007), especially the introduction.

3. **Miguel de Cervantes, 'Rinconete y Cortadillo,'** from vol. 1 of *Novelas ejemplares* (ed. H. Sieber, Cátedra, 1989).

First published in 1613, the *Novelas ejemplares* are a collection of clever, funny, and often enigmatic short stories by Spain's most canonical writer, Cervantes, credited with inventing the modern novel. Drawing on the conventions of the picaresque, 'Rinconete y Cortadillo' tells the story of two young boys who leave home to make their fortune on the road, only to be quickly absorbed into a criminal gang or 'brotherhood' in Seville. The title and prologue to the collection insist the stories are exemplary – but what lesson is it we're supposed to learn?

For Spanish sole only (Michaelmas):

Introduction to Hispanic Film Studies (NB there will be screenings of these films when you get here, so you don't need to watch them in advance):

Cría Cuervos (dir. Carlos Saura, 1976)

Dolor y gloria (dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2019)

Memorias del subdesarrollo (dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)

Camila (dir. María Luisa Bemberg, 1984)

Hilary Term (Jan-Mar 2026)

This term we will study four texts in total:

1. **The Sonnet in the Spanish Golden Age** (anthology to be provided).

The sonnet was one of the hallmark poetic forms of the early modern period. Its roots in Spanish lie in the Italianate Petrarchan tradition of love poems, but, over time, it expanded into an extraordinary range of other genres and themes. Reflecting the breadth and diversity of the tradition, this anthology features thirty sonnets by eleven authors (men and women, canonical and lesser-known, from Spain and the Americas). Subjects explored include romantic love, religious devotion, political ambition, imperial expansion, and urban life, all intertwined with reflection on the nature of writing itself and the possibilities—and challenges—of poetic expression.

2. **Nellie Campobello, *Cartucho: Relatos de la lucha en el Norte de México*** (ed. Josebe Martínez, Cátedra, 2019)

Campobello's *Cartucho* (1931, 1940) is a collection of narrative vignettes that focus on the armed phase of the Mexican Revolution between 1916 and 1920 in the northern state of Chihuahua. Narrated through the eyes of a child, the text incorporates a variety of voices, perspectives, and registers. From a thematic point of view, *Cartucho* offers an original introduction to the Mexican Revolution (of particular note is the characterisation

of historical figures such as Francisco ‘Pancho’ Villa), and to the study of the dynamics between history and fiction that lie at the core of much modern Spanish American literature.

3. **Federico García Lorca, *Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores*** (ed. Mario Hernández, Alianza, 2013).

One of Lorca’s last plays, *Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores* (1935) takes up some of the playwright’s core themes, especially the passage of time and the social restrictions placed on the lives of women. Set in the Andalusian town of Granada during three distinct time periods straddling the end of the nineteenth century, the play depicts the frustrated life and love of a woman of the provincial middle classes, who wilts like a *rosa mutabile* after she is abandoned by her lover. Linking the floral symbolism of the *carpe diem* theme with the nineteenth century’s ‘language of flowers’ and the horticultural traditions of Granada, Lorca explores the passage of one woman’s life in the context of a shift from one century to the next.

4. **Ana María Matute, *Primera memoria*** (1959) (Destino, 2010, or available in Matute’s trilogy *Los mercaderes*, Destino, 2017).

Primera memoria (1959) is a richly poetic work of prose fiction, a novel of the Spanish Civil War steeped in myth and biblical allusion that evokes a long history of conflict and division on the island of Mallorca. Ostensibly concerned with the narrator Matia’s coming of age and her anxieties about entering the adult world, this internal struggle is set against the much wider conflict of the civil war as it plays out almost secretly on the island, set in turn against the historical backdrop of the Inquisition’s persecution of the Jews in the seventeenth century. Through the novel you can explore the use of the first-person narrative voice, imagery, the use of intertexts, the novel’s interweaving of the historical, contemporary and mythical dimensions of violence and conflict, and its concern with questions of gender, class, and religious and ethnic difference. The context of the novel’s publication during Franco’s dictatorship will also be relevant to your understanding of its historical and cultural themes.

For Spanish sole only (Hilary):

Introduction to Spanish Medieval Studies:

Lírica española de tipo popular, ed. Margit Frenk (Cátedra, 2001)

Parte I: all of the ‘Primeros testimonios’ (Jarchas, cantigas d’amigo y otras canciones anteriores a 1450) and Parte II: from ‘Cantares de amor,’ numbers 68, 73, 74, 79, 81, 82, 86, 89, 91, 99, 101, 102–107, 110, 114, 118, 119, 122, 127, 159, 182, 196, 199–202, 267, 320, 334.

Sendebat, ed. María Jesús Lacarra (Cátedra, 2011).

Jorge Manrique, ‘Coplas a la muerte de su padre,’ in *Poesía*, ed. María Morrás (Castalia, 2003).

Diego de San Pedro, *Cárcel de amor*, ed. Keith Whinnom (Castalia, 1982).

Trinity Term (Apr–June 2026)

This term we will study the final two Prelims texts on the syllabus, before focusing on revision:

5. **César Vallejo, *Los heraldos negros*** (ed. René de Costa, Cátedra, 2004)

Peruvian César Vallejo is one of the most iconoclastic, intriguing and influential Spanish American poets of the twentieth century. Although most famed for his highly experimental

collection *Trilce* (1922), his first book, *Los heraldos negros* (1919), is a fascinating work in its own right, revealing an apprentice poet engaging critically and creatively with a number of inherited literary traditions, forms and styles in an attempt to forge a personal voice, and eventually striking out in radical new directions, both thematic and expressive. It is also remarkably varied, with meticulously crafted poems that hark back to the Symbolism of the previous century rubbing shoulders with bracingly contemporary, sometimes comically grotesque meditations on the place and purpose of human beings in a godless universe, and intimate, often tender pieces dedicated to family life. Vallejo was of Andean origin, and *Los heraldos negros* also features the only sustained attempt to explore and celebrate indigenous, pre-Hispanic culture and customs in his poetry.

6. **Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo*** (Austral, 2015)

El reino de este mundo (1949) follows the life of Ti Noel, an enslaved man who witnesses the events surrounding the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Meticulously told, Carpentier's text challenges official (European) accounts of the Revolution by offering another version of events that focalizes Black lives and culture. In this way, Carpentier situates the problem of race as fundamental to an understanding of Caribbean and Latin American narrative. Alongside the novel's thematic, linguistic, and stylistic experimentation, the prologue to *El reino de este mundo* features Carpentier's remarkable and complex proposal about America's inextricable connection to what he terms 'lo real maravilloso' (the marvellous real). Reading the prologue and the novel together, you will explore important ideas about Europe's historical, cultural, and linguistic relationship to the American hemisphere in the twentieth century and beyond.

For Spanish sole only (Trinity):

Introduction to Short Fiction in Spanish:

Benito Pérez Galdós, 'La novela en el tranvía', in *Cuentos fantásticos*, ed. Alan E. Smith (Madrid: Cátedra, 2004)

Miguel de Cervantes, 'Novela del celoso extremeño,' in *Novelas ejemplares*, vol. II, ed. Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce (Castalia, 1987)

María de Zayas y Sotomayor, 'El prevenido engañado,' in *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, ed. Julián Olivares (Cátedra, 2000)

Julio Cortázar, 'Continuidad de los parques,' 'Las babas del diablo,' 'La isla a mediodía,' in *Final del juego* (Santillana, 2009) and *Siete cuentos*, ed. Peter Beardsell (Manchester University Press, 1999)

Juan Rulfo, 'Nos han dado la tierra,' 'Es que somos muy pobres,' 'El hombre,' in *El Llano en llamas*, ed. Françoise Perus (Cátedra, 2016).