

**Course Title:** *Barcelona: The City and Its History*

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Professor:** Alexandre Coello de la Rosa (alex.coello@upf.edu)

**Schedule:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 16:00 to 18:00 h. (and Fridays, February 06 and 20; and Friday March 6, 2026).

**Meeting Rooms:**

**Group:** 1

**Professor's Contact and Office Hours:** By appointment.

**Course Contact Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credit:** 6 ECTS credits

**Course Prerequisites:** None

**Language Requirements:**

Recommended level in the European Framework B2 (or equivalent: Cambridge Certificate if the teaching language is English, DELE or 3 semesters in the case of Spanish).

**Course focus and approach:**

This is an interdisciplinary course that provides a general survey of the history of Barcelona from the Iberian to present times.

**Course Description:**

Once labeled by Newsweek magazine as the “coolest city in Europe,” Barcelona enjoys the reputation of a cosmopolitan city with a great international projection. Like all places, however, it is not void of peculiarities and contradictions. Behind a glossy and tourist-friendly façade, the city has a complex history. This course introduces the student to the city of Barcelona by studying its past and analyzing its present. This interdisciplinary course covers subject in history, geography, art, architecture, and urban planning. Materials include images, maps, academic and literary texts, videos, field studies, and documentaries. We will also discuss issues relevant to people living within the city of Barcelona today.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the course, the student:

- will have acquired a survey knowledge of the history of Barcelona from Roman times to the present.
- will have received an introduction to the basic elements of urban history with an emphasis on the transformation of the physical environment.
- will be versed in the historical origins of the challenges facing city residents in Barcelona today.

**Course Workload:**

The course is divided into lectures, oral presentations, and field studies. Students should be prepared to read between 50 to 150 pages per week.

**Teaching methodology:**

The course includes both face-to-face lectures and field studies. Two-hour class sessions are normally divided into one-hour lecture and one-hour seminar. During field studies, students are expected to take notes and treat field studies as a normal lecture class.

*At this moment, we can tell you that teaching is planned face-to-face as long as the health conditions allow it. But given the situation, we will keep you informed of any developments that may occur. We recommend that you consult the website: <https://www.upf.edu/web/focus/coronavirus> in order to follow the news.*

**Assessment criteria:**

Class Participation: 10 percent

Class Presentation: 20 percent

3 essays (two-pages) fieldtrips: 30 percent (10 percent each)

Final Exam: 40 percent

**BaPIS absence policy:**

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. The impact of absences on the final grade is as follows:

Absences	Penalization
Up to two (2) absences	No penalization.
Three (3) absences	1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Four (4) absences	2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)
Five (5) absences or more	The student receives an INCOMPLETE for the course

The BaPIS attendance policy does not make a distinction between justified and unjustified absences. All absences—whether due to common short-term illnesses or personal reasons—are counted toward the total amount and cannot be excused. Therefore, students are responsible for managing all their absences.

Only in cases of longer absences—such as hospitalization, prolonged illness, traumatic events, or other exceptional situations—will absences be considered for exceptions with appropriate documentation. The Academic Director will review these cases on an individual basis.

Students must inform the Instructor and the International Programs Office promptly via email if serious circumstances arise.

### **Classroom Norms:**

- No food or drink is permitted.
- No mobile phones, texting, internet surfing, chatting, etc.
- There will be a ten-minute break during the class.
- Students must come to class fully prepared.

### **Field Studies:**

Each semester, the professor will choose a select number of field studies (3) from the following list: City History Museum; Medieval Barcelona Walking Tour; Maritime Museum; World Exhibition of 1888 (Ciutadella Park); World Exhibition of 1929 (Montjuïc); Civil War Tour including bomb shelters; 22@ project and recent renovations.

### **Weekly Schedule:**

Please note that all readings can be found in the coursepack prepared by the professor.

**WEEK 1:** Introduction to Course. The Barcelona Model (I)

12 January (Room XXX): No reading.

14 January (Room 20.101): **Reading:** Mellissa Rossi, "The Barcelona Model," *Newsweek International* (2 February 2004); Lisa Abend, "Barcelona Warns Madrid: Pay Up or Catalonia Leaves Spain," *Time International* (11 September 2012); Raphael Minder, "Catalonia Calls Election in New Bid for Secession from Spain," *New York Times* (4 August 2015); and "Catalonia's New Leader Vows to Continue Secessionist Drive," *New York Times* (10 January 2016); Mari Paz Balibrea, "Urbanism, Culture, and the Post-Industrial city: Challenging the 'Barcelona Model,'" in *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 2, no. 2 (2001): 187-210; Ismael Blanco, "Does a Barcelona Model Really Exist? Periods, Territories and Actors in the Process of Urban Transformation," *Local Government Studies*, 35, no. 3 (2009): 355-369; and Mónica Degen and Marisol García, "The Transformation of the Barcelona Model: An Analysis of Culture, Urban Regeneration, and Governance," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 36.5 (2012): 1022-38.

**WEEK 2:** The Barcelona Model (II)

19 January (Room XXX): **Reading:** Robert Hughes: "The Color of a Dog Running Away," in *Barcelona*, 1-52; Antoni Luna-García, "Just another Coffee! Milking the

Barcelona Model, Marketing a Global Image, and the Restoration of Local Identities,” in *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City: Image, Memory, Spectacle*, pp. 143-160.

21 January (Room XXX): Reading: Paul H. Freedman. “Cowardice, Heroism, and the Legendary Origins of Catalonia,” *Past and Present* 121 (1988): 3-28.

WEEK 3: From the Iberian people to Roman Barcino.

26 January (Room XXX): Before Barcino.

28 January (Room XXX): The Foundation of Barcino. Readings: Robert Hughes: “The Domain of the Hairy Hero”, in *Barcelona*, pp. 55-73.

WEEK 4: Romanization, Islam, and the rise of Christianity.

2 February (Room XXX): **Field Study (1). Visit to the “Museu d’Història de la Ciutat of Barcelona”**. <http://www.museuhistoria.bcn.es>

4 February (Room XXX): Islam; Visigoths in Iberia. Readings: Robert Hughes: “The Domain of the Hairy Hero”, in *Barcelona*, pp. 73-104.

6 February (Room XXX): The Birth of the Catalan Counties (8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries). Reading: Robert Hughes: “If Not, not”, in *Barcelona*, 105-154.

WEEK 5: From the Medieval City to the Dis-covery of the New World.

09 February (Room XXX): Reading: J.H. Elliott, “Castile and Aragon” and “The Ordered Society,” in *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain, 1598-1640*, pp. 1-48.

11 February (Room XXX): Barcelona and the Hapsburg. The Revolt of the Catalans (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries). Reading: Robert Hughes: “If Not, not”, in *Barcelona*, 154-84.

WEEK 6: The Nova Planta Decree - Barcelona in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

16 February (Room XXX): The Nova Planta Decree. Reading: Hughes, *Under the Citadel*, pp. 185-208.

18 February (Room XXX): Barcelona in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Reading: Hughes, *Under the Citadel*, pp. 208-250.

20 February (Room XXX): **Field Study (2). Visit to the Mercat del Born**. <https://elbornculturaaimemoria.barcelona.cat>

WEEK 7: The Renaissance City and Ildefons Cerdà's Plan.

23 February (Room XXX): The Renaissance City. Reading: Robert Hughes, Selections from "Blind with a Love for a Language," in *Barcelona*, pp. 289-306.

25 February (Room XXX): Ildefons Cerdà's Plan.

WEEK 8: The Cosmopolitan City: the Mediterranean Paris / The Revolutionary City

02 March (Room XXX): Reading: Stephen Jacobson, "Interpreting Municipal Celebrations of Nation and Empire: The Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888," in *Nationalism and the Reshaping of Urban Communities in Europe*, 74-109;

04 March (Room XXX): Reading: Lawrence A. Herzog, "City of Architects': Public Space and the Resurgence of Barcelona" in *Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space, and City Building in the Global Era*, pp. 91-104; Colm Toibin, "City without Walls," "A Dream of Gaudí," "Picasso's Quarter," and "Miró in Barcelona," in *Homage to Barcelona*, 30-95.

06 March (Room XXX): The Revolutionary City. The II Republic (1931-36). Reading: Chris Ealham, "The Making of a Divided City" and "Mapping the Working-Class City" in *Class, Culture, and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898-1937*, 1-53.

WEEK 9:

09 March (Room XXX): **Field study (3). Bomb shelter Poble Sec.**

WEEK 10: The Civil War (1936-39).

16 March: The Civil War (1936-39). Reading: Temma Kaplan. *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, pp. 165-187 (Room XXX).

18 March: Final Exam

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**Required Readings:** The professor will assemble a course pack consisting of a selection of chapters from the following sources. They will be supplemented with topical readings from contemporary periodicals.

Balibrea, Mari Paz. 2001. "Urbanism, Culture, and the Post-Industrial city: Challenging the 'Barcelona Model,'" *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 2, no. 2, pp. 187-210.

Blanco, Ismael. 2009, "Does a Barcelona Model Really Exist? Periods, Territories and Actors in the Process of Urban Transformation," *Local Government Studies*, 35, no. 3, pp. 255-369.

Degen, Mónica and Marisol García. 2012. "The Transformation of the Barcelona Model: An Analysis of Culture, Urban Regeneration, and Governance," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 36.5, pp. 1022-138.

Ealham, Chris. 2005. *Class, Culture, and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898-1937*. London: Routledge.

Elliott, J.H. 1963. *The Revolt of the Catalans: A Study in the Decline of Spain, 1598-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freedman, Paul H. 1988. "Cowardice, Heroism, and the Legendary Origins of Catalonia," *Past and Present*, 121, pp. 3-28.

Herzog, Lawrence A. 2006. "'City of Architects': Public Spaces and the Resurgence of Barcelona," in *Culture, Public Space, and City Building in a Global Era*, pp. 4-14. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Hughes, Robert. 1992. *Barcelona*. New York: Vintage.

Jacobson, Stephen. 2011. "Interpreting Municipal Celebrations of Nation and Empire: The Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888," in *Nationalism and the Reshaping of Urban Communities in Europe, 1848-1914* (ed.) William Whyte and Oliver Zimmer, pp. 74-109. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Luna-Garcia, Antoni. 2007. "Just another Coffee! Milking the Barcelona Model, Marketing a Global Image, and the Restoration of Local Identities," in *Consuming the Entrepreneurial City: Image, Memory, Spectacle*, (ed.) Anne M. Cronin and Kevin Hetherington, pp. 143-160. London: Routledge.

Monter, William. 2003. *Frontiers of Heresy: The Spanish Inquisition from Basque Lands to Sicily*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nirenberg, David. 1996. *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Planas, Sílvia and Manuel Forcano. 2009. *A History of Jewish Catalonia: The Life and Death of Jewish Communities in Medieval Catalonia*. Girona: Ajuntament de Girona.

Rossi, Mellisa. "The Barcelona Model," *Newsweek International*, 2 February 2004.

Tóibin, Colm. 1990. *Homage to Barcelona*. London: Simon & Schuster.

### **Recommended bibliography:**

Students are encouraged to consult the following sources on their own.

Amelang, James S. 1986. *Honored Citizens of Barcelona. Patrician Culture and Class Relations (1490-1714)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bensch, Stephen P. 1995. *Barcelona and its Rulers, 1096-1291*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bisson, Thomas N. 1998. *Tormented Voices: Power, Crisis, and Humanity in Rural Catalonia, 1140-1200*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Corteguera, Luis. 2002. *For the Common Good: Popular Politics in Barcelona, 1580-1640*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Davidson, Robert A. 2009. *Jazz Age Barcelona*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fernández-Armesto, Felipe. 1991. *Barcelona. A Thousand Years of the City's Past*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.

Hernàndez, F. Xavier. 2007. *The History of Catalonia*. Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau.

Kaplan, Temma. 1993. *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

McDonogh, Gary W. 1989. *Good Families of Barcelona. A Social History of Power in the Industrial Era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McRoberts, Kenneth. 2001. *Catalonia: Nation Building without a State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Resina, Joan Ramon. 2008. *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of a Modern Image*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Smith, Angel (ed.). 2002. *Red Barcelona: Social Protest and Labour Mobilization in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge.

Thomson, J.K.J. 1992. *A Distinctive Industrialization: Cotton in Barcelona, 1728-1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VV.AA. 2002. *El refugi 307. La guerra civil i el Poble Sec*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona.

VV.AA. 1985. *A City in war: American views on Barcelona and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39*. James W. Cortada (ed.). Wilmington Scholarly Resources

Zapata-Barrero, Ricard. 2007. "Immigration, Self-Government and Management of Identity: The Catalan Case" in *The Long March to the West: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Migration in Europe and the Greater Mediterranean Area*, pp. 170-202. Ed. Michael Korinman and John Laughland. London: Vallentine, Mitchell and Co.

**Syllabus last updated, February, 2026.**