

**Course title:** Premodern Spain: Warriors, Women, and Diversity

**Language of instruction:** English

**Professor:** Michael Peters

**Professor's contact and office hours:** [michaelfrancis.petersjr@upf.edu](mailto:michaelfrancis.petersjr@upf.edu);

office hours by appointment.

**Course contact hours:** 45

**Recommended credit:** 6 ECTS credits

**Course prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course. Students will be provided with the necessary background information. Reading materials will be given in English alongside the original version in Spanish for those who wish to read in the original language. All class discussions and graded materials will be done in English.

**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 course is interdisciplinary, focusing on premodern Spain's literature and history. The contents intend to give a global idea as to the cultural and political ideas that impacted the literary and historical trajectory that helped to define modern Spain.

**Course description:**

This course will cover from 1000-1500 in premodern Spain. Through a selection of literary texts, chronicles, and legal works, students will have a chance to see the ideological and social development of the peninsula through the eyes of those who witnessed it. The texts have been carefully selected to demonstrate the depiction and role of women, Muslims, Jews, *conversos* (recent Jewish converts to Christianity), nobles, knights, and kings during the time period, giving a better insight into the way written media shaped the views and ideals of those who lived then, as well as our current understanding of the era. The aim of this approach is to better grasp the interplay between ideas and writing from multiple perspectives. Based on in-class commentary and analysis of primary sources and other pertinent materials, we shall focus on the following themes: heroes and villains; the description of women; marginalized groups (e.g., Muslims); and the power of entertainment as a moral, persuasive, and educational tool. Through these thematic axes, students will be able to better understand the development of history and ideas, as well as the diversity of perspectives and people from the Middle Ages.

### Learning objectives:

At the end of the course, the student will:

- Understand the general outline of premodern Spanish history;
- Learn to read and interpret primary literary, historical, and legal works that helped shaped ideology and thought;
- Be able to analyze the impact of a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multilingual community in shaping the era;
- Have the ability to contextualize the social and political challenges that were shaped by the most prominent texts and ideas;
- Gain insights into the social, religious, and ethical values that contributed to the diversity of thought.

### Course workload:

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

### Teaching methodology:

Students are expected to attend classes and actively participate, as well as read the required texts. Classes will be a blend of lectures and seminars. In addition, there are planned trips to have hands-on experience with premodern Spain.

### Assessment criteria:

Class Participation: 10%

Presentation: 10%

Short-Answer Essay (in class): 10%

Two short writing assignments (at home): 10% (5% each)

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

### BaPIS absence policy:

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student's final grade 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 ("NO PRESENTADO") 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 in class.
- Students will have a ten-minute break after the first hour of class.
- Students must come to class fully prepared.
- Mobile phones are not to be used.

**Weekly schedule:**

WEEK 1 (Jan. 12-16)

**Session 1:**

- Review syllabus
- Introduction to *The Lay of the Cid* (pg. vii-xiv); begin the *Cid* (pg. 1-29; read until completing “Cantar XLIV”)
- Read: O’Callaghan: “Chapter 8: Alfonso VI, the Taifas, and the Almoravids” (pg. 193-214)
- NB: If you wish to read the *Cid* in Spanish, the university library has several editions by: (1) Montaner Frutos and Rico, (2) Ian, and (3) Smith.
- Texts: *The Lay of the Cid*, 1919. Ed. and trans. by R. Selden Rose and Leonard Bacon (Berkeley, CA: Semicentennial Publications of the University of California).  
<https://archive.org/details/layofcidtranslatooorsel/page/n9/mode/2up>;  
O’Callaghan will be provided in PDF. From here forward, any text that does not include a link will be provided to students in PDF.

**Session 2:**

- Discussion of *The Cid* and the historical context
- Read: *The Cid* (pg. 30-63; stop at “Cantar XCVI”); Reilley: “Chapter 4: Christian Reconquista and African Empire, 1009-1157” (pg. 90-103)

WEEK 2 (Jan. 19-23)

**Session 3:**

- Discussion of *The Cid* and the historical context; discussion of the ballads
- Read: *The Cid* (pg. 63-130, complete work); Old Spanish Ballads in Wright (ed. and trans.): “Ximena’s Complaint” (pg. 64) and “Rodrigo and Fernando” (pg. 66).

**Session 4:**

- Discussion of the ballads and the historical context
- Read: MacKay: “Chapter 2: Society and the Frontier, c. 1000-1212” (pg. 36-57); ballads in Wright: “The Unhappy Wife” (pg. 2), “The Husband’s Return (I and II)” (pg. 35-36); “The Lady and the Shepherd” (pg. 23)
- Presentation topics will be assigned

WEEK 3 (Jan. 26-30)

**Session 5:**

- Student presentations. After these are completed, we shall discuss the field trip, including introductory information on medieval manuscripts.

**Session 6:**

- Field trip to the Biblioteca de Catalunya (in Barcelona) to look at and discuss medieval and Renaissance manuscripts. The session is meant to be informative and to give an opportunity to see original documents.

WEEK 4 (Feb. 2-6)

**Session 7:**

- Discussion about Alfonso X of Castile and the rise of the Spanish language
- Readings: O’Callaghan: “Chapter 14: The Great Reconquest” (pg. 333-357) and “Chapter 15: Alfonso X and the Lure of Empire” (pg. 358-381).
- The in class short-answer essay will be discussed.

**Session 8:**

- Discussion about Alfonso X and his legal text *Siete Partidas*
- Readings: Prologue to *Siete Partidas* and selected laws from Burns’ edition and translation; MacKay: “Chapter 5: Constitutional Developments: Kings and Cortes” (pg. 95-117)
- Short-Answer Essay: Students will be given a series of questions regarding the topics that we have discussed to date. Some of the questions will also give students two options from which to choose.

WEEK 5 (Feb. 9-13)

**Session 9:**

- Discussion about Don Juan Manuel and his *El conde Lucanor*
- Readings: “Translators’ Introduction” (pg. 8-41); “11. What Happened to a Dean of Santiago and Don Yllán, the Grand Master of Toledo” (pg. 67-71) and “35.

What Happened to a Young Man Who Married a Strong and Ill-tempered Woman” (pg. 137-141).

- Link to text: Don Juan Manuel, 1977. *The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio. A Translation of Don Juan Manuel's "El Conde Lucanor"* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press).  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1915809>
- NB: If anyone would like to read the text in Spanish, I can provide it in PDF. Students may also find in the library these editions: Alvar and Palanco (1990), Sotelo (1995), and Serés (2006).

#### Session 10:

- Discussion and review for the Midterm Exam. Examples will also be provided.

#### Session 11:

- Students do not have class. However, you are expected to watch the following film about *The Cid*: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7ug60v>
  - As part of this self-guided work, students will be given 3 short-answer questions. You must hand in your responses during the next class.  
**There will be one question about the movie included in the Midterm Exam.**

### WEEK 6 (Feb. 16-20)

#### Session 12:

- Midterm Exam

#### Session 13:

- Field trip to medieval locations and the Jewish quarters in Barcelona. Students will have the opportunity to see and learn about important sites.

### WEEK 7 (Feb. 23-27)

#### Session 14:

- Discussion about Jorge Manrique's *Verses on the Death of his Father*, the rise of the Renaissance, and the historical context
- Readings: O'Callaghan: "Chapter 22: The Hegemony of the Trastámaras" (pg. 549-577); Edwards: "Chapter 6. Christians, Jews, and Muslims" (pg. 194-240); Jorge Manrique: Read the "Introduction" to *Coplas por la muerte de su padre* and the opening verses of the text (I-XXV)
- Texts: O'Callaghan and Edwards will be provided in PDF; Manrique, Jorge, 2020. *Verses on the Death of His Father*, ed. and trans. by Alan Steinle.  
<https://classicalpoets.org/2020/08/02/verses-on-the-death-of-his-father-coplas-por-la-muerte-de-su-padre-by-jorge-manrique/>
- NB: The website includes both Spanish and English versions. Read whichever you prefer.

#### Session 15:

- Discussion about *Celestina* and the historical context.

- Readings: Introduction to *Celestina* (pg. xiii-xxvii) and Act One (pg. 5-39)
- Text: (provided in PDF) Rojas, Fernando de, 2009. *Celestina*, ed. by Roberto González Echevarría and trans. by Margaret Sayers Peden (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

**Session 16:**

- There will be no class. Students will choose **ONE** of the two essays provided to them on fifteenth-century Spain. Students are expected to write a short summary of its contents, as well as answer 2-3 questions regarding its contents. Further instructions will be given before this is assigned. Students must hand this in during the next class.

## WEEK 8 (Mar. 2-6)

**Session 17:**

- Discussion about *Celestina* and the historical context; a discussion about the two articles that were assigned in the previous class
- Readings: *Celestina* Acts 2-9 (pg. 40-139)

**Session 18:**

- Discussion of the *Celestina*
- Readings: *Celestina* Acts 10-15 (pg. 140-206); Snow: "Darkness, Death and Despair in 'Celestina'" (<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/5674537.pdf>)

## WEEK 9 (Mar. 9-13)

**Session 19:**

- Discussion about *Celestina* and the historical context
- Readings: *Celestina* Acts 16-21 (pg. 207-248); Elliot: "Ch. 1: The Union of Crowns"

**Session 20:**

- Complete discussion about *Celestina* and the historical context; review for the Final Exam

**Session 21:**

- The scheduled class time will be used to give students the opportunity to ask additional questions regarding the final exam. This is not mandatory, but simply an extra chance for students who wish to attend to review for the exam. Think of it as a study hall and last minute questions.

## WEEK 10 (Mar. 16-19)

**Session 22:**

- Final Exam.

**\*NB: The syllabus contents were last revised March 2025**

**Required readings:**

The readings will be provided by the professor and are listed above in the syllabus.

**Recommended bibliography:**

Students are encouraged to consult the following sources on their own, but these are not required readings. The books and articles may be of use to help clarify topics or learn more about them for this course or a future date.

- Alfonso X, 1555. *Las Siete Partidas*, 3 vols, ed. by Gregorio López (Salamanca: Andrea de Portonaris).  
[www.boe.es/biblioteca\\_juridica/publicacion.php?id=PUB-LH-2011-60&tipo=L&modo=2](http://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/publicacion.php?id=PUB-LH-2011-60&tipo=L&modo=2)
- 2001. *Las Siete Partidas*, ed. by Robert Burns and trans. by Samuel Parsons, 5 vols, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Alvar, Carlos, Fernández-Ordóñez, Inés, et al., 2002. “Alfonso X”, in *Diccionario filológico de literatura medieval española: textos y transmisión*, ed. by Carlos Alvar and José Manuel Lucía Megías (Madrid: Castalia), pp. 1-86.
- Bartlett, Robert, 1994. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (London: Penguin Books).
- Black, Anthony, 1992. *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Carrasco Manchado, Ana Isabel, 2006. *Isabel I de Castilla y la sombra de la ilegitimidad: propaganda y representación en el conflicto sucesorio (1474-1482)* (Madrid: Sílex).
- Catalán, Diego, 1963. “El taller historiográfico alfonsí. Métodos y problemas en el trabajo compilatorio”, *Romania* 84.335, pp. 354-375. DOI: 10.3406/roma.1963.2906
- Claussen, Samuel A., 2020. *Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Castile* (Woolbridge, UK: The Boydell Press).
- Colish, Marcia L., 1997. *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition: 400-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Craddock, Jerry R., 1986. “Dynasty in Dispute: Alfonso x el Sabio and the Succession to the Throne of Castile and León in History and Legend”, *Viator* 17, pp. 197-220. DOI: 10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.301410
- 1990. “The Legislative Works of Alfonso el Sabio”, in *Emperor of Culture*, ed. by Robert I. Burns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 182-197. DOI: 10.9783/9781512800951-015
- Di Camillo, Ottavio, 1988. “Humanism in Spain”, in *Renaissance Humanism. Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, II: Humanism beyond Italy*, ed. by Albert Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), pp. 55-108.  
[www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/humanism-in-spain/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/humanism-in-spain/)
- Edwards, John, 2000. *The Spain of the Catholic Monarchs: 1474-1520* (Oxford: Blackwell).



- Elliott, J.H., 1963. *Imperial Spain: 1469-1716* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers).
- Fernández-Ordóñez, Inés, 2000. "Evolución del pensamiento alfonsí y transformación de las obras jurídicas e históricas del Rey Sabio", *Cahiers d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales* 23, pp. 263-283. DOI: 0.3406/cehm.2000.922
- Hankins, James, 1996. "Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought", in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 118-141. DOI: 10.1017/CCOL0521430380
- Hillgarth, J.N., 1976. *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250-1516*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press). <hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.01516>
- Keen, Maurice, 1984. *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Lawrance, Jeremy, 1986. "On Fifteenth-Century Spanish Vernacular Humanism", in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Honour of Robert Brian Tate*, ed. by Ian Michael and Richard A. Cardwell (Oxford: Dolphin), pp. 63-79.  
[www.cervantesvirtual.com/downloadPdf/on-fifteenth-century-spanish-vernacular-humanism/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/downloadPdf/on-fifteenth-century-spanish-vernacular-humanism/)
- Linehan, Peter, 2008. *Spain, 1157-1300: A Partible Inheritance* (Oxford: Blackwell). DOI: 10.1002/9780470696538
- Lomax, Derek W., 1978. *The Reconquest of Spain* (London: Longman).
- MacKay, Angus, 1977. *Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500* (London: MacMillan).
- Martínez, H. Salvador, 2003. *Alfonso X, el Sabio. Una biografía* (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo).
- Netanyahu, B., 1995. *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (New York: Random House). (cited from *Los orígenes de la Inquisición en la España del siglo XV*, trans. by Ángel Alcalá Galve and Ciriaco Morón Arroyo (Barcelona: Crítica).
- Nieto Soria, José Manuel, 1988. *Fundamentos ideológicos del poder real en Castilla (siglos XIII-XVI)* (Madrid: Eudema).
- O'Callaghan, Joseph F., 2003. *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).
- Pérez, Joseph, 1988. *Isabel y Fernando: los Reyes Católicos*, trans. by Fernando Santos Fontenla (Madrid: Nerea).
- Peters, Michael F., Jr., 2024. "Deísmo y moralidad en la *Celestina*", *e-humanista* 57, pp. 458-470. [www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/volumes/57](http://www.ehumanista.ucsb.edu/volumes/57)
- Reilly, Bernard F., 1993. *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Ruiz, Teófilo F., 2011. *Spain's Centuries of Crisis: 1300-1474* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Snow, Joseph T., 2011. "Darkness, Death and Despair in 'Celestina': an Essay", *eHumanista: Journal of Iberian Studies* 19, pp. 317-327.  
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/download/articulo/5674537.pdf>
- Wacks, David A., 2019. *Medieval Iberian Crusade Fiction and the Mediterranean World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press). DOI: 10.3138/9781487531348