

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

www.mlcs.ca

2017/2018 SPAN 460 A1: Self-Portraits in Writing  
(Fall term)

Instructor: Russell Cobb

Time: 9:30-10:50

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Place: HC 2-25

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-4:00

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or by appointment

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**Course Prerequisite:** SPAN 320 and an additional \*3 in SPAN at the 300 level, excluding 300 or 306, or consent of department

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

No, not needed, no such projects involved

**Community Service Learning** component

None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

Exam registry – Students' Union

[http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services\\_and\\_businesses/services/infolink/exams](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services_and_businesses/services/infolink/exams)

See explanations below

Document distributed in class

Other (please specify)

X NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

Yes      X No

**Course Description and Objectives:**

What is the self? How does the process of writing transform one's identity? How much of life writing is a performance for an audience and how of much of it is an unvarnished confession? By examining conflicting self-portraits of iconic figures in 20th century Latin America (including Che Guevara, Jorge Luis Borges, and Frida Khalo), we will explore these and other questions. We will examine texts that inhabit spaces between fiction and nonfiction: testimonial writings, autobiography, memoirs, correspondence, and diaries. Part of the coursework will involve narrating your own self-portrait and writing a critical reflection on the process.

**Learning outcomes:** At the end of the course, students will be able to

- express themselves with greater written and oral fluency in Spanish
- craft a literary, first-person essay for publication if desired
- describe and discuss iconic figures in 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin America and demonstrate contextual knowledge of Latin American history, art, and politics
- work and critique in teams
- discern between primary and secondary texts; reputable and non-reputable sources
- apply their expanded knowledge of research methodologies in the humanities to develop their own course projects

**Texts (all required):**

All texts are available on eClass. Students are required to bring either a print-out copy of the reading or access to the reading on a tablet or laptop to class each day.

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

Oral presentation (various)	10%
Exam 1 (Oct. 19)	15%
Written participation (various)	10%
Physical participation	10%
<i>Lectura detallada</i> (Oct. 10)	15%
Autobiography (Nov. 21)	15%
Critical reflection on autobiography (Dec. 12)	15%
Follow-up exam 2 (Dec. 5)	10%

**Date of Deferred Final Exam (if applicable):**

*Recommended; please consult the following site:*

[http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6\(3\)](http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Regulations-and-Information/Academic-Regulation/23.5.html#23.5.6(3))

**Explanatory Notes on Assignments:**

1. **Oral presentation (10%)** will consist of a 20 minute contextualization of some event or concept, with 5 additional minutes built in for questions and discussion (in Spanish). Sign up during the second week of the course. Please present in pairs and **SUBMIT SLIDES WITH REFERENCES TO ME**. In addition, both students will receive the same grade. Specific guidelines will be posted on eClass.
2. **Exam 1 (15%)** will be held October 19 in class and will consist of short answers based on readings and class discussions. Please note that **ANYTHING**, including oral presentations and guest talks from writers, is fair game for the midterm.
3. **Lectura detallada (15%)** (October 10) This is a close-reading exercise.
4. **Written Participation (10%):** Entries should consist of 200-300 words (around one page) commenting on an aspect of the reading. Five will be evaluated over the course of the term. I will post one to three questions on the class Facebook page to which you must respond to at least one by the due date in the daily work schedule. The other option to reply to someone else’s comment and start a thread.

**Important notes about Facebook page:**

**There will be no credit for posts after class time on the due date.**

- There is zero tolerance for plagiarism here, as well as in the more formal writing assignments.
  - Please start conversations and debates. But flame-throwing and trolling will not be permitted.
  - The best sort of post will be original, engaged, brief and readable
5. **Autobiography.** A 4-5 page autobiography written around one particular episode in your life. Particulars about the assignment will be posted on our Google Drive folder and it will be due November 21. I will give you this back within a week and you will hand in the second part on December 12.
  6. **Critical reflection on autobiography** This will be a 3-page critical reflection what you wrote, testing and applying theories studied in class to your own life writing.
  7. **Physical class participation (10%):** Students are expected to come to class with reading and listening done before class and to engage with lectures and discussions. More than three unexcused absences will result in a 10% loss of the participation grade for each subsequent absence after three. Texting or emailing during class will lower your participation grade 10%. Class attendance is especially important to understand the music in its context. Students will evaluate *themselves* at the end of term. Participation will be evaluated holistically and based on class attendance and preparation. This segment of the grade will be evaluated with regard to 1. Attendance. 2. Preparation (doing the readings) 3. Active participation in group work.
  8. **Exam 2 (10%) Dec. 5.** Similar format as Exam #1, but content will only include material after first exam.

**Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.”

***Academic Integrity:***

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

***Academic Honesty:***

**All students** should consult the information provided by the [Student Conduct & Accountability Office](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

**Students involved in language courses and translation courses** should be aware that on-line “translation engines” produce very dubious and unreliable “translations.” **Students in languages courses** should be aware that, while seeking the advice of native or expert speakers is often helpful, **excessive editorial and creative help** in assignments is considered a form of “cheating” that violates the code of student conduct with dire consequences.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose.

***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar.

Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the participation component of this course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result. In this course, more than three

unexcused absences will result in an automatic lower letter grade for the class participation component for each absence above three.

If you are sick, let me know before class, otherwise it will count as an unexcused absence.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, assignments may be handed in one class-day after the stated deadline, with a 10%-per-class-day penalty assessed for each class-day of lateness. **There will be no make-ups or late credit for quizzes or blog entries. Let me put this in a very-straightforward way: there will be no extensions granted AFTER the deadline. Period.**

***Grading:***

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
<b>Excellent.</b> A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	<b>A+</b>	4.0	<b>97-100</b>
	<b>A</b>	4.0	<b>93-96</b>
	<b>A-</b>	3.7	<b>90-92</b>
<b>Good.</b> B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	<b>B+</b>	3.3	<b>87-89</b>
	<b>B</b>	3.0	<b>83-86</b>
	<b>B-</b>	2.7	<b>80-82</b>
<b>Satisfactory.</b> C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	<b>C+</b>	2.3	<b>77-79</b>
	<b>C</b>	2.0	<b>73-76</b>
	<b>C-</b>	1.7	<b>70-72</b>

<b>Poor/Minimal Pass.</b> D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	<b>D+</b>	1.3	<b>65-69</b>
	<b>D</b>	1.0	<b>60-64</b>
<b>Failure.</b>	<b>F</b>	0.0	<b>0-59</b>