

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2015-2016 SPAN 699 B3: Special Topics: Creative Non-Fiction in Latin America  
(Winter Term)

Instructor: Russell Cobb

Time: 9:00-9:50 MWF

Office: 409 C, Old Arts Bldg.

Place: HC 2-38

Telephone: 780-938-3183 Fax: 780-492-9106

Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00-4:00

E-mail: [rcobb@ualberta.ca](mailto:rcobb@ualberta.ca)

or by appointment

Personal Website: <http://www.mlcs.ualberta.ca/People/Faculty/CobbRussell.aspx>

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**Course Prerequisite:** Graduate Standing or consent of the department .

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

No, not needed, no such projects approved

**Community Service Learning** component

None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

Exam registry – Students' Union

<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>

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:**

The theme of this Special Topics course is True Stories: Narrative Nonfiction Storytelling in Latin America. Is truth really stranger than fiction? Where is the boundary between literature and factual reporting? What is The Truth anyway? In this course, we explore various genres of non-fiction storytelling in contemporary Latin America, including autobiography, memoir, podcasting, documentary film, *crónica* and *testimonio* in Latin America, all the while helping each other to produce a portfolio of authentic texts in Spanish to be distributed via blogs, podcasts, and other online media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)

**Learning outcomes:**

1. Understand the elements of storytelling in print, audio, and/or video formats
  2. Produce a work of depth that showcases your expertise in one aspect of Latin American narrative nonfiction
  3. Expand contextual knowledge of contemporary issues in Latin America (immigration, drug wars, indigenous rights, free trade, etc.)
  4. Enhance digital literacy skills (online content management).
  5. Develop robust research and reporting skills
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**Texts (all required) and available for free on Google Drive to be shared with students:**

Rigoberta Menchú, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*  
Roy Porter, *Rewriting the Self*  
*Narco Cultura* (film, 2013)  
Radio Ambulante (podcast, available at <http://radioambulante.org/>)  
Reinaldo Arenas, *Antes que anochezca*  
*Chile, La memoria obstinada* (film, 1997)  
*La Bestia* (film 2013)

**Supplemental Graduate student readings:**

Rodolfo Walsh, *Operación masacre*  
Gabriel García Márquez, *Noticias de un secuestrado*  
Octavio Paz, *Laberinto de la soledad*  
Miguel Barnet, *Biografía de un cimarrón*  
*Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, Elena Poniatowska  
*Noche de Tlateloco*, Elena Poniatowska  
*Autobiografía de un esclavo*, Francisco Manzano  
*Si me permiten hablar*, Domitila, Moema Vizzier

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):****Term work: 100%**

Class leadership 20% (various dates)  
Oral class participation: 10% (evaluated on group discussion days and in-class questions)  
Written class interaction: 20% (weekly one page written reactions.)  
Creative paper 20% Feb. 29  
Analysis paper 30% April 12

**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:**

#### Class leadership (20%)

Students will plan one fifty minute class around a topic of interest. They will receive mentorship and preparation from the professor.

Class oral participation (10%): Students should make the effort to attend class prepared, i.e. having done the readings (thoughtfully) and also be ready to engage in active participation in class discussions and in individual and group activities. Simply showing up to class does not constitute “active” participation. Facebooking or texting during class will lower your participation grade. Approximately every fourth class will be devoted to discussion and group work—i.e., no lecture. It is during these classes that I will assess your participation.

Written class interaction (20%): Approximately 10 one page reactions to the week’s readings (250-300 words). I will provide prompts, or students can write on any topic directly related to class material. This component will be informal writing and will be assessed based on use of Spanish language and engagement with the concepts. Due dates listed in daily class schedule.

Creative paper 20% (approximately 1600 words) Students will work together in pairs or groups of three to write or produce a work on nonfiction on a Latin American theme. Various media—including traditional print, online, video or podcasting can be used. Feb. 29

Analysis paper 30% (approximately 3000 words) Students will turn a critical eye to the work they produced and will individually write a critical essay on the issues in narrative non-fiction that come out of their work. April 12

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### **Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) 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 <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/en/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour.aspx> ) and avoid any behaviour which 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 safe and free of discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels this policy has been or is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern;
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that directs 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 student ombudservice (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>).

Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at

<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110> .

***Academic Honesty:***

**All students** should consult the information provided by the [Office of Judicial Affairs](#) 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 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 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. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written

consent from the instructor.

***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 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that more than two unexcused absences will result in a 10% reduction of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component of the course for each day missed. Late assignments will also be reduced by 10% for each working day they are late.

**In this course**, attendance is evaluated by your presence in the classroom, your active participation in classroom discussions, and presence in online forums. Sleeping, texting, facebooking, and eating in class will reduce your participation grade. See above for exact policies. Participation will also be assessed by preparation for discussion. Students should note, in writing, at least five words, phrases, proper nouns, or dates to discuss in class.

***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 just one time throughout the course with no penalty. Late excuses will not be accepted for any reason. Assignments handed in late will be deducted 10% per each working day they are handed in late.

***Student Accessibility Services:***

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca); Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB [www.ssds.ualberta.ca](http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca) ).

***Grading:***

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below (“**MLCS Graduate Grading Scale**”). The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

**“MLCS Graduate Grading Scale”**

A+	97-100	Excellent
A	93-96	Excellent
A-	90-92	Excellent
B+	87-89	Good
B	79-86	Good

B-	74-78	Satisfactory
C+	68-73	Satisfactory
C	63-67	Failure
C-	58-62	Failure
D+	54-57	Failure
D	50-53	Failure
F	00-49	Failure