FALL 2021

LAUGHTER & SOCIETY
IN RENAISSANCE SPAIN

TUE & THU 6:00-7:20 PM
CONKLIN HALL 352

Prof. Javier Castro
javi.castro@rutgers.edu
(973) 353-5498
Office Hours:
TUE & THU 2-3pm
Objectives:
Some of the most enduring cultural products of the Spanish Renaissance were comic: the picaresque novel (Lazarillo and its imitators), Cervantes’s revolutionary Don Quixote, or Lope de Vega’s modern formula for successful theatrical comedy. Spaniards loved a good laugh, and their laughter shaped (and un-shaped) their world. This class is an introduction to the culture and society of Renaissance Spain through the study of its humorous production and its culture of laughter. We will analyze major comic genres (comedy, satire and carnivalesque literature) while reading ancient and modern theoretical contributions to the study of laughter and humor. Understanding the humorous codes of a society gives us a privileged gateway into the understanding of that society, because what is laughable and what is not is almost always very specific to each culture: for instance, what a group finds laughable, others might find offensive. On the other hand, laughter is a universal phenomenon among humans, and what we learn about Renaissance humor will allow us to reconsider critically our own culture of laughter. We will see, for instance, how humor was sometimes used to establish rigid social hierarchies and boundaries, and sometimes to question or subvert them, which will give us the opportunity to think about the ways in which our own laughter constructs our social world.

The course is divided in four parts, each devoted to a particular kind of laughter and social class: satiric laughter (the moralizing laughter of the clergy and other moral authorities), witty laughter (the sophisticated laughter of courtiers and aristocrats), carnivalesque laughter (the subversive laughter associated to plebeians and certain festivities), and theatrical laughter (the new market-driven culture of laughter for everyone). In each section we will read at least one important texts of the time (from the first picaresque novel to a popular commercial play). Interspersed among those sources, we will also read about how Renaissance authors theorized about laughter and the comic in its different manifestations, as well as modern scholarship on humor that will allow us to better understand the aesthetic and social phenomenon of laughter throughout history.

At the end of the class you should be able:
• To identify and analyze different comic genres and codes: satire, comedy, and the carnivalesque.
• To understand and classify literary techniques of humor: irony, sarcasm, grotesque, inversion, etc.
• To describe the basic elements of social structure and dynamic in Renaissance Spain: rank, order, privilege, race, religion, courtly culture, mobility, contestation, etc.
• To apply that knowledge to the understanding of Spanish cultural production during the Renaissance.
• To apply that knowledge to the understanding of modern comic cultural production.
• To gain knowledge and appreciation of Spanish history and culture of the Renaissance.
• To gain the capacity of producing historical understanding, by being able to gain distance from your own historically-produced value-system and to appreciate different systems of judgment and morality.
• To grapple with historical and social dilemmas that require sensitive, careful critical commentary.

As a General Requirement, the course is also designed to help you develop the reading, writing, oral and critical analysis skills you will need for proceeding through the university.

Clear and effective writing: This course will help you to improve your ability to express yourself clearly on paper by paying attention to the organization and presentation of your ideas. In writing, you will work toward being able to use evidence appropriately in order to deal with and apply complex ideas accurately.

Conscious and critical reading: We will discuss effective reading strategies (to find “main arguments” or identify evidence, for example). We will explore a range of text types that you may encounter at the university level and your everyday life, and we will practice effective reading approaches to these various forms.

Critical thinking: In writing or speaking, you will learn to cite evidence appropriately, accurately represent and attribute complex ideas, and apply theoretical material to various situations.

Self-assessment: You will work on becoming conscious of the strengths and learning skills you already have, and you will set goals for improving your skills. At various points during the semester, you will evaluate your progress in improving your learning skills by reviewing the work you have completed thus far during the term.
REQUIRED TEXTS
There are two REQUIRED BOOKS for this class. There exist multiple editions of these texts: PLEASE USE THE SPECIFIED EDITIONS, available at the university bookstore (Barnes & Noble, 42 Halsey Street, Newark, NJ), or online at Amazon.com and other vendors.

- **La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas y adversidades.** Edited by Chad M. Gasta. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2013.
- **Lope de Vega. La dama boba.** Edited by Charles Patterson. Newark, DE: European Masterpieces, 2010.

All other readings are available as a COURSE PACKET available for purchase at Affordable Copies Center, 55 Halsey Street, Newark, NJ (across the street from the university bookstore).

You must bring the text assigned for the class in its physical format (see my policy on electronic devices)

You must acquire a copy of a physical Spanish DICTIONARY and/or an English-Spanish one, if you don’t possess one already. Physical (but not online) dictionaries will be allowed during the exams.

Good online dictionaries ([www.diccionarios.com](http://www.diccionarios.com), [http://dle.rae.es](http://dle.rae.es)) might also be useful.

Avoid automatic translators online at all costs!!!

**Evaluation**

- **Participation** 15%
- **Daily quizzes** 15%
- **Exams (2) and essays (2)** 70% (17.5% each)

**Participation** during class discussions will be evaluated according to the following scale: D: Passive participation (listening in silence). C: Low participation (very occasional remarks). B: Average participation: A: Good participation (systematic and insightful engagement).

There will be **daily quizzes** at the beginning of each class, using personalized Plickers (“paper clickers”). The quizzes are short series of multiple-choice questions that will cover the readings of the day, asking basic questions about them. They are designed to control that you have done the assigned readings. The final grade for quizzes will be evaluated according to the following scale: A: 85-100% of correct answers. B: 70-84%. C: 55-69%. D: 40-54%. F: below 39%.

The exams will cover the materials read in class and the explanations offered by the professor in the classroom. Each exam will cover half of the class. Each exam will consist of three sections: 1: short definitions (20%) 2: textual analysis (30%) 3: brief essay (30%). You must bring a blue book (see below) and your physical dictionary to the exam (no electronic devices will be allowed).

The essays will deal with one of the pieces of literature read in the class: Lazarillo de Tormes and La dama boba. You must prepare the essay in advance, but the essay itself will be produced in the classroom during our normal meeting hour. To the essay, you must bring a blue book (see below) and a dictionary. You might also bring a brief outline (bullet points) of your essay, and all physical material required (the book, the course packet, your class notes, and any piece of secondary bibliography you want to use, as long as it is printed: no electronic devices will be allowed).

All exams and essays will be produced in the classroom, although the essays must be prepared in advance. All must be written in letter-size blue books (available at the university bookstore) leaving the margins and a blank space between written lines that I can use for my own notes and corrections. You must buy the blue books before the exam. You will use the same blue book until filled, and you can use it to measure your improvement. You will have to buy more than one blue book for the entire class.

Evaluation of every written exercise (exams and essays) will take into account: a) the originality of the argument (better not to just repeat what we have already said in the classroom); b) its quality (structure, flow, conclusion); and c) the use of evidence to support your ideas (don’t just give an opinion: justify your position).

**Policy on electronic devices**
The use of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cellphones, etc.) will **not** be allowed during the course, unless expressly specified by the instructor.
Office hours
If you have questions or concerns about this class, come and talk to me during my office hours. Please do not send email inquiries related to your absence or class materials. It is your responsibility to find out about the subjects covered in your absence and study them.

Attendance and absences
Regular attendance is expected. Absences must be justified with proper documentation (a doctor’s note, for instance, or emergency notification from the dean of students or advisor). A personal email explaining the absence does not count as a justification. More than three unjustified absences will be penalized at the rate of 3% of the final grade per absence.

Persistent and significant lack of punctuality might eventually be penalized as absences.

If for any family or medical reason you find it absolutely necessary to miss an examination, you must contact me before the exam and have my consent to your absence. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the assignment. With the exception of extreme cases there will be no early or make-up exams! You must contact me in advance should an extreme emergency arise.

Food and drink
The only food allowed in class will be coffee, tea, soda, water, etc. and/or any kind of small pastry, NOT other kind of food.

University Senate Policies
“Please note that for undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an AVERAGE of three hours of learning effort per week (over a full semester) necessary for an AVERAGE student to achieve and AVERAGE grade in the course. For example, a student taking a three credit course that meets for three hours a week should expect to spend an additional six hours a week on course work outside the classroom. This should not be considered a maximum amount, but rather an average amount.”

According to the college-wide policy determined by the University’s Faculty Senate:

A achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
C achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
D achievement that is worth of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
F (or N) represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either
(1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or
(2) was not completed and there was not agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (incomplete).
IN (Incomplete) Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g. hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time.

Rutgers University-Newark Academic Policies

• Academic integrity: As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.
  • Academic integrity policy: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/
• Disability Services: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must complete an intake meeting, and submit appropriate documentation. If your request for reasonable accommodations is approved, you will receive a Letter of Accommodations (LOA), which you should present privatively to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations are not retroactive and are effective only upon submission of the LOA to the instructor. Please begin the process by completing and submitting the Registration Form, Applying for Services, which is available at the website below.
  • Applying for Services: http://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services
  • Documentation Guidelines: http://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines
  • Letter of Accommodations (LOA): http://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations
• Office of Disability Services (ODS)
  Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center
  (973) 353-5375
  odsnewark@rutgers.edu
Religious Holiday Policy: Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work of exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

Learning resources

- Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
  Room 140, Bradley Hall
  (973) 353-5608
  http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc

- Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops)
  Room 126, Conklin Hall
  (973) 353-5847
  nwc@newark.rutgers.edu
  https://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

Masks

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the Rutgers-Newark community, masks must be worn by all persons inside campus buildings when in the presence of others, and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks should securely cover the nose and mouth. Masks must be worn during class meetings. Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the My Campus Pass symptom checker self-screening app found at: myRutgers Portal.

Note

This syllabus is subject to amendment or change at the discretion of the instructor, and students will be notified of any changes.
1. Sep 2 (Th) **PRESENTACIÓN**

I. **LA RISA EClesiÁSTICA: LA SÁTIRA**

2. Sep 7 (Tu) **TEORÍA DE LA RISA (I): BERGSON**

3. Sep 9 (Th) **LA SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DEL RENACIMIENTO: EL LAZARILLO DE TORMES (I)**

4. Sep 14 (Tu) **TEORÍA DE LA RISA (II): HUMOR Y SOCIEDAD**

5. Sep 16 (Tu) **EL LAZARILLO DE TORMES (II)**

6. Sep 21 (Tu) **TEORÍA DE LA SÁTIRA**

7. Sep 23 (Th) **EL LAZARILLO DE TORMES (III)**
   - *Lazarillo*, 81-100 (tratado tercero).

8. Sep 28 (Tu) **EL LAZARILLO DE TORMES (IV)**

9. Sep 30 (Th) **ENSAYO 1**
   - Función(es) de la risa en el *Lazarillo*

10. Oct 5 (Tu) **ERASMO DE ROTTERDAM Y EL ELOGIO DE LA LOCURA (I)**

11. Oct 7 (Th) **ERASMO DE ROTTERDAM Y EL ELOGIO DE LA LOCURA (II)**

12. **II. LA RISA ARISTOCRÁTICA: LA AGUDEZA**

13. Oct 12 (Tu) **LA RISA DEL CORTESANO**

14. Oct 14 (Th) **LA RISA DEL BUFÓN**

15. Oct 19 (Tu) **LA SÁTIRA POLÍTICA Y PERSONAL**
    - Poemas satíricos contra Don Rodrigo Calderón, selección.

16. Oct 21 (Th) **PSICOLOGÍA DEL HUMOR**
17. Oct 26 (Tu) **MIDTERM EXAM** (in our regular class time and location)

**III. LA RISA COMERCIAL: EL TEATRO**

18. Oct 28 (Th) **LA SOCIEDAD DE LAS APARIENCIAS: LA DAMA BOBA (I)**

19. Nov 2 (Tu) **LA DAMA BOBA (II)**

20. Nov 4 (Th) **LA DAMA BOBA (III)**

21. Nov 9 (Tu) **EL PLACER DE APARENTAR**

22. Nov 11 (Th) **LA POLÉMICA CONTRA LAS COMEDIAS**
   - Fray José de Jesús María, *Primera parte de las excelencias de la castidad* (1601), libro IV, cap. 17: “Donde se ponen las razones que alegan en favor de las comedias, y se responde a ellas,” fragmento.

23. Nov 16 (Tu) **ENSAYO 2**
   - Técnicas del humor en *Don Gil de las Calzas Verdes*

**IV. LA RISA POPULAR: EL CARNAVAL**

24. Nov 18 (Th) **EL CARNAVAL: LAS TEORÍAS DE M. BAJTIN**

25. Nov 23 (Tu) **EL DEBATE SOBRE EL CARNAVAL: ¿SUBVERSIÓN O “VÁLVULA DE ESCAPE”?**

**THANKSGIVING RECESS**

26. Nov 30 (Tu) **LA SÁTIRA MENIPEA Y LA CULTURA CARNAVALESCA: EL COLOQUIO DE LOS PERROS (I)**

27. Dec 2 (Th) **EL COLOQUIO DE LOS PERROS (II)**

28. Dec 7 (Tu) **EL COLOQUIO DE LOS PERROS (III)**

29. Dec 9 (Th) **WRAP UP!**
   - Dec 21 (Tu) **FINAL EXAM** (6:20-9:20 pm, in our classroom)