Spanish/Latin American Studies Master's - Student Handbook

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SECTION I: THE SPANISH/LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES M.A.

A. Introduction.
This handbook was prepared by your faculty to give you basic information on the M.A. program in Spanish and Latin American Studies in the Department of World Languages and Cultures (WLC) at American University.

B. The M.A. program at a glance.

Our 33 credit-hour Master’s degree program focuses on the interdisciplinary study of historical and contemporary issues in Latin America. We pride ourselves for our commitment to fulfilling our students’ career goals in the wide array of courses we offer. Students take a minimum of 21 credit hours in Spanish in our program, and they are also allowed to take up to 12 credits in courses taught in English within other departments of the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Education, and the School of International Service. Please consult with your adviser, Professor Ana Serra, on the courses you may take in other departments or schools, and refer to the checklist at the end of this handbook for the requirements of the program.

You may also pursue a Certificate in Spanish Translation, with courses that may also count toward your MA degree. In addition, you may also take an internship for credit, in our Proyecto Internship Program.

There are several things that make this program unique
1. It is conducted by a dynamic faculty of outstanding scholars and teachers. Our faculty includes specialists in all geographical areas of Latin America, as well as experts in Language Pedagogy and Translation

2. It takes advantage of American University’s Washington location through internships, field trips, guest lecturers, visiting faculty, and the rich range of research facilities in the area

3. It combines a core of common courses based on central issues on the culture, history and politics of Latin America, and a field of concentration that students choose out of three options:

   (i) Interdisciplinary Studies (literature, history, culture, politics, economics, etc)
   (ii) Linguistics and Translation
   (iii) Spanish Language Teaching

4. It offers the choice of a Translation Certificate, with credits that may also count toward your M.A. degree
5. It offers the possibility of taking a service-learning internship (Proyecto Amistad) for credit toward your degree

C. Admission
The basic requirements are:

- B.A. in Spanish or related field from an accredited college or university
- Minimum of 3.2 GPA in the last 60 credit hours of undergraduate work
- Two letters of recommendation
- 5-10 page writing sample of academic work done in Spanish
- Statement of purpose
- Official GRE exam scores
- TOEFL scores for all international students whose first language is not English
- Proficiency in Spanish and familiarity with the culture

Entering M.A. students have majored in Spanish and/or Latin American Studies as undergraduates, although exceptions are possible. These exceptions include situations in which an applicant has lived in a Spanish-speaking country for an extended period of time, or has acquired extensive professional experience in the language, or in the area of study. Candidates must be fluent in Spanish and be able to carry out scholarly work in the language. The program reserves the right to interview candidates in Spanish.

For questions on the application please contact:

Office of Graduate Admissions
The American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20016
Ph: (202) 885-6100 Fax: (202) 885-1025

Ms. Isadora Vigier de Latour
(Administrative Assistant)
Department of World Languages and Cultures
Ph: 202-885-2381 Fax: 202-885-1076
delatour@american.edu
or wlc@american.edu

D. Degree requirements
The M.A. in Spanish and Latin American Studies consists of a total of 33 credit hours of graduate work with a grade point average of 3.20 (on a 4.00 scale). A minimum of 21 of these 33 hours must be in courses taught in the Spanish language.

Core Courses (21 credits)

- Three courses of the following: (9 credits)
  SPAN-701 Latin American Theatre and Politics
  SPAN-702 Latin American History and Politics from the Margins
SPAN-704 Central American Cultural Studies  
SPAN-705 Seminar in Spanish and Latin American Studies (3) (topics vary)  

- Four courses from the following (12 credits):  
  SPAN-553 Culture and Radical Politics in Latin America (3)  
  SPAN-554 Classics of Latin American Literature (3) (topics vary)  
  SPAN-555 Southern Cone Performance, Memory and Activism (3)  
  SPAN-556 Culture and Violence in Latin America (3)  
  SPAN-557 Afro-Latin American Culture, Literature and Music (3)  
  SPAN-558 Colombia and the Amazonia (3)  
  SPAN-559 Colloquium on Latin America (3) (topics vary)  
  SPAN-560 Latin American Caudillos, Caciques and Dictators (3)  

Students should cover at least four of five geographical areas (Mexico, Central American, the Caribbean, the Andean region, or the Southern Cone) in the courses they take.

**Field of Concentration (12 credit hours)**

Students construct a field of concentration, in consultation with an advisor, in one of the following areas:

- Interdisciplinary Studies (Culture and Literature, International Studies, History, Communications, Public Affairs)  
  Courses that students may take in this area include, but are not limited to:  
  GOVT-696 Political and Economic Inequality in Latin America  
  HIST-640 Latin American Studies (topics vary)  
  SIS-577 International Relations in the Americas  
  SIS-653 Topics in US Foreign Policy: Latin America  
  SIS-658 Financial Issues in Latin America  
  SIS-669 Human Rights in Latin America  
  SIS-676 Brazil: Politics, Economics and Society  

- Spanish Language Teaching  
  Courses that students may take in this area include, but are not limited to:  
  EDU-521 Foundations of Education  
  EDU-609 Effective Teaching for Diverse Learners  
  EDU-622 Language and Literacy Learning  
  SPAN-661 Introduction to Spanish Linguistics  

- Translation and Linguistics (students can simultaneously pursue a Graduate Certificate in Translation)  
  Courses that students may take in this area include, but are not limited to:
ANTH-537 Topics in Language and Culture  
SPAN-658 Introduction to Spanish Translation  
SPAN-659 Advanced Spanish Translation  
SPAN-661 Introduction to Spanish Linguistics

Internships are encouraged and are credited within the field of concentration. They are usually taken pass/fail and can be done either locally (through SPAN-691 Proyecto Amistad) or abroad. A maximum of 3 credit hours of internships can be applied to the degree.

E. Course load
Full-time students may take up to three courses per semester. At this rate, it is possible to complete the program in 2 years. It is also possible to enroll on a part-time basis, taking only 1-2 courses per semester and thus continuing other activities or employment. The University requires M.A. candidates to complete their degree work within 6 years.

Students who have received full assistantships or fellowships must maintain enrollment as a full-time student each semester, and take three courses in each of the first three semesters (this is the minimum course load to maintain full-time status).

F. Your faculty
Dr. Luis Cerezo-Ceballos, luis.cerezo@american.edu  
Dr. Henry (Chip) Gerfen, gerfen@american.edu  
Dr. Ludy Grandas, grandas@american.edu  
Dr. Consuelo Hernández, chdez@american.edu  
Dr. Juliana Martinez, jmartinez@american.edu  
Dr. Amy Oliver, aoliver@american.edu  
Carmen H. Ruzza, ruzza@american.edu  
Dr. Ana Serra, serra@american.edu  
Kristi Velleman (Proyecto Amistad), velleman@american.edu  
Dr. Nuria Vilanova, vilanova@american.edu  
Dr Brenda Werth, werth@american.edu

Adjunct faculty and part-time professors
Dr. Margarita Marín-Dale, margarita@american.edu  
Maria Tamayo, tamayo@american.edu  
Claudia Caicedo, caicedo@american.edu

G. Internships, "Proyecto Amistad", employment opportunities.
The nation's capital is the seat of numerous federal agencies, international organizations, and non-government organizations (NGOs) where you can find internships and relevant employment on a part-time or full-time basis during or after completion of your studies. We have a list of these relevant organizations, phone numbers, and contacts. Our Spanish language internship program goes by the name of "Proyecto Amistad", course 691. It requires 40 work hours per credit unit at an approved organization, as well as an
academic component and regular meetings during the semester. As its number indicates, Proyecto Amistad counts as a 600-level course. M.A. students are limited to 3 credit hours of internship. Please consult Professor Kristi Velleman Maloney, coordinator of Proyecto Amistad, Jack Child Hall, 201 velleman@american.edu

Other places to look for internship and employment leads are:
The Smithsonian Institution's Scholar's Guide to Washington: Latin American and Caribbean Studies. This publication has a listing of over 400 organizations, institutions, government offices and other entities, with addresses, phone numbers and points of contact.

- American University’s Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (4545 42nd St NW Suite 308-309 Washington, DC 20016 Tel: 202-885-6178 clals@american.edu)
- The School of International Service (SIS) posts internship and employment opportunities on its bulletin board and via its listserv: listserv@american.edu.
- The Washington Post and The Washington Times Sunday employment sections under the headings “International” and “Bilingual.”
- The Spanish Yellow Pages (Vega and Associates, 8301 Greensboro Dr., Suite 450, McLean, VA, 22102. Tel: 800-499-7828 or 516-773-2880).
- The Hispanic Yearbook (TIYM Publishing Co., 8370 Greensboro Dr., #1009, McLean, VA, 22102. Tel: 703-734-1632).
- Idealist.org is a good resource for NGO related jobs: http://www.idealist.org/

H. Research resources in Washington
The publications mentioned above contain a list of many organizations and offices that welcome qualified researchers. American University’s Bender library has a wealth of print and online resources on Latin America. In addition, you can contact the following Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) universities:

The Catholic University 202-319-5070
Gallaudet University 202-651-5217
George Mason University 703-993-2250
The George Washington University 202-994-6558
Marymount University 703-284-1533
The University of The District of Columbia (UDC) 202-274-6009
Trinity College 202-884-9350
University of Maryland 301-405-9178
Johns Hopkins University (410) 516-8335
The WRLC’s collection is catalogued on the Access to Library and Database Information
Network (ALADIN), the member on-line system.

SECTION II: GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Registration procedures
Please contact your adviser Prof. Ana Serra (885-2384) after you have consulted the
Registrar’s “Schedule of Classes” online. With your adviser, select courses for the
upcoming semester, and after your advisor clears you, you will be able to register online.
At this time, be sure to update your Program Checklist for your records. If you have any
questions about registration please refer to the graduate student representative in AU
Central, JJ Whitney, jwhit@american.edu

The Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area has a cross-
registration arrangement, which permits students enrolled in eligible degree programs at
one Consortium member institution to register for a course offered at another member
institution. Consult your advisor, Dr. Ana Serra, before registering at a consortium
university to be sure that the course you wish to take will be approved, since not all
courses meet AU requirements. One basic requirement is that the consortium course not
duplicate an existing course available at AU. Consult with your advisor, look at the
website or contact the member universities below for a current list of their individual
course offerings.

The Catholic University 202-319-5000
George Mason University 703-993-1000
The George Washington University 202-994-4949
Georgetown University 202-687-5055
Howard University 202-806-6100
University of Maryland at College Park 301-405-1000

B. Maintaining matriculation (099)
Students who have completed at least one course in a graduate degree program are
required by university regulations to register each fall and spring semester during the
regular registration period until completion of the degree requirements. Graduate students
not taking courses must register each fall and spring semester for a minimum of one
credit hour.

*Note that the Thesis Seminar may vary in value from 1-6 credits while Maintaining
Matriculation carries no credit. Those simply Maintaining Matriculation will be charged
the equivalent of one graduate credit hour.

C. Financial aid
We advise you to look into Federal Aid programs as well.
A limited number of assistantships are awarded each year by the department. Please be aware that our assistantships are extremely competitive, and they are based on undergraduate academic achievement. Assistantships provide up to 18 hours of tuition remission during the academic year (plus a stipend), and require a service commitment of up to 20 hours each week during each semester. This service involves assisting a faculty member in conducting research for his or her publishing, or for his or her teaching. Students interested in assistantships should apply to the office of Graduate no later than February 1st for the following fall semester.

The Spanish/Latin American Studies Restricted Fund
Thanks to our dear late colleague Jack Child, we have at our disposal a special fund to support our program. This fund pays for student part-time wages to support faculty research as well as a variety of student and faculty activities. In the past, this fund has also been used to pay for student membership in professional organizations such as the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) and its regional affiliate the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS) and the American Translators Association (ATA).

D. Graduation
It is absolutely imperative that candidates for a degree file an Application for Graduation form, which may be found in the Office of the Registrar or online at http://www.american.edu/provost/registrar/academicservices/application_grad.cfm no later than the beginning of the last semester of your program. It is only after this application has been filed that the Office of the Registrar can begin processing the information for final certification for graduation.

The following are recommended dates to file one’s Application for Graduation:

Spring: October -January
Summer: April-May
Fall: April-August

E. Important AU publications
AU Catalog (available in print and on-line) AU Schedule of Classes (available on line) at the Registrar
AU Guide to Graduate Study (available on line)
AU Academic Regulations (available on line)

F. Key telephone numbers (prefix 885-)
University Information and Emergency Closings x1000
Admissions and Financial Aid x8000
Graduate Affairs x3406 AFA@american.edu
Alumni Relations x5921
Anderson Computing Complex x2561
Campus Store x6300
Cashier x 3588
SECTION III: THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

A. General: purpose, requesting the exam
The purpose of the M.A. written comprehensive examination is to allow you to demonstrate the scope of the knowledge attained through your coursework and supplementary readings in literature, culture, history, politics, international relations of Latin America, and/or Translation theory and practice, and/or Language Pedagogy (as appropriate). A student who fails one or both parts of the exam must repeat the procedure within a period of six months. A second failure will eliminate the student from candidacy for the M.A.

The Spanish/Latin American Studies comprehensive exams in WLC are normally administered twice a year, on the first week of April and the first week of November. You should inform your advisor, Professor Ana Serra, at the beginning of the semester in which you intend to complete the M.A. comprehensive exams. Professor Serra will assist you in determining which of the courses taken you will need to review. At that time you fill out a form to register for the comprehensive exam and pay the corresponding fee ($25.00). On the form indicate that you are taking the Spanish Studies MA (SPAN 03).

For administrative purposes this counts as a single exam, but it consists of two parts. You would normally also submit the graduation clearance form at the same time (check the Schedule of Classes for the specific deadline). If you delay the comprehensive exam you must maintain Continuous Matriculation. (See “Maintaining Matriculation” above). We suggest that you form study groups with your peers to prepare for the comprehensive exam in the early part of your final semester.
B. Format
The Spanish/Latin American Studies Comprehensive is a four-hour exam in which you are presented with six essay questions that correspond to materials you have studied in your courses. You must choose any of those questions, for a total of four. Candidates will be expected to cite authors and relevant sources in their answers. Please do not limit your answer to what you have studied in that class; we want to see the connections you are able to draw between courses, and your ability to think in an interdisciplinary framework.

C. Suggested readings
Because of the scope of the various disciplines and courses involved, we suggest you consult course syllabi for each area of your comprehensive exam to compile your own reading list. We advise you to meet with each professor separately, in order to receive tips on how to review the courses on your list.

SECTION IV: REPRESENTATIVE RECENT COURSE OFFERINGS

A. Literature and Culture

ANTH-639 Culture, History, Power, Place
Examination of a particular culture area to provide insight into the conditions that produced distinctive cultures in certain geographical regions. Must be taken with a focus on Latin America.

SPAN-553 Culture and Radical Politics in Latin America
This course is devoted to analyzing different strands of radical political thought within some Latin American revolutionary movements, such as Shining Path (Peru), Sandinismo (Nicaragua), Montoneros and Peronismo (Argentina), and Zapatismo (Mexico), with particular emphasis on their close relationship with cultural production and local indigenous communities.

SPAN-554 Classics of Latin American Literature.
Recent offerings include: Andean Indigenism, Neruda and Paz, Film and Literature in Latin America, Latin American Short Story, XX Century Poetics and Poetry in Latin America, Dictatorships and Repression in Latin America.

SPAN-555 Southern Cone Performance, Memory, and Activism
Through examination of diverse performative phenomena (urban intervention, theater, demonstration, photography, and film) this course investigates the forceful engagement of performance in negotiation of memory politics, changing notions of citizenship, human rights activism, and the articulation of youth culture in contemporary Argentina and Chile.

SPAN-556 Culture and Violence in Latin America
This course examines representations of physical and psychological violence in literary texts, film and plastic arts that attempt to provide explanations for challenges that Latin
America faces. Special focus is placed on violence originating in gender inequality, the effect of globalization, environmental injustice, and urban blight.

SPAN-557 Afro-Latin American Culture, Literature, and Music
An interdisciplinary colloquium on African heritage in Latin America, using musical pieces, literature, and culture to study prominent Afro-Latin American rhythms, the cultural regions where they originated and the purposes music has served since slavery to present time.

SPAN-558 Colombia and the Amazonia
This interdisciplinary course explores the historical factors determining Colombian cultural regions and their contributions to national identity. Additionally, it studies cycles of violence in Colombia in the narco-guerrilla-paramilitary war, as well as the interrelation between political power and resistance in Colombia and the Amazonia.

SPAN-559 Colloquium on Latin America.
Post-Dictatorship Literature in Argentina, Cuba Today, Afro-Caribbean Culture and Music, Myth and Cultures of the Andes, Millenarian Discourse in Latin America, Gender Outlaws in Latin America

SPAN-560 Latin American Caudillos, Caciques, and Dictators
This course examines three key figures in the political and cultural structures of power in Latin America: the caudillo, the cacique, and the dictator. Through readings of short stories and novels informed by historical contexts and culture studies theory, students gain an understanding of the genesis of these figures and the influence they still bear on the power structures of present-day Latin America.

SPAN-656 Spanish Topics.
Recent offerings include: Colombia Past and Present, the Mexican-US Border, Culture and Politics in Latin America, Latin American History and Politics from the Margins, Southern Cone Icons and Identity, Spanish in the World.

SPAN-682 Postdictatorial Southern Cone Literature
Examines cultural responses to authoritarianism in postdictatorial Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. It analyzes discourses of memory, citizenship, and retroactive justice through discussion of works by Griselda Gambaro, Eduardo Pavlovsky, Roberto Rolando, Gabriel Peveroni, and Albertina Carri, in addition to a range of critical theoretical texts.

SPAN-683 Postdictatorial Southern Cone Icons and Identity
This course examines some of the most influential icons in Latin America through analysis of their representation in theatre, film, narrative, poetry, short story, and diverse media. Figures include Camila O’Gorman, Juan Moreira, Carlos Gardel, Pablo Neruda, Salvador Allende, Juan Domingo Peron, Eva Peron, Che Guevara, and Gabriela Mistral.

SPAN-701 Latin American Theatre and Politics
This course examines the intersection of theater with politics, culture and history at emblematic junctures in twentieth and twenty-first century Latin America. Class discussion is organized around major thematic focal points and discourses such as nation, gender, immigration, memory, and globalization, among others.

SPAN-702 Latin American History and Politics from the Margins
This course examines testimonials of individuals or groups of people whose stories do not normally get included in national histories. Stories include accounts of slavery, rural guerilla and student urban warfare, drug trafficking, and oppression due to sexual orientation. The course also looks at mainstream attempts to incorporate these marginal voices in the popular venues of their country of origin.

SPAN-704 Central American Cultural Studies
A study of literary works, films and documentaries, and secondary literature with a focus on indigenous cultures, the Panama Canal, the anti-Communist wars, and the presence and meaning of Afro-Antillean people in the region.

SPAN-705 Seminar in Spanish and Latin American Studies.
Recent offerings include: Latin American thought; language research, translation, and pedagogy technology; and Cuba in Latin America.

B. Linguistics, Translation, and Language Teaching

SPAN-656 Spanish Topics.
Recent offerings include: Latin American film, Mexican-US border, urban cultures in Latin America, indigenous people of Latin America, Hispanics in the United States, Caribbean cultures, and the Latin American short story.

SPAN-658 Introduction to Spanish Translation
An introduction to the methods, techniques, and problems involved in translating from Spanish to English. Emphasis is on translating general material, with some consideration of the translation of specialized material.

SPAN-659 Advanced Spanish Translation
Practice and critique of translations of a range of material (general, literary, business, diplomatic, social science, and technical).

SPAN-661 Introduction to Spanish Linguistics
Introduction to basic concepts of linguistics and their application to the Spanish language: phonology, morphology, syntax, etymology. Brief survey of the historical development of the Spanish language. Dialects of Spanish and other languages spoken in the Hispanic world.

SPAN-691 Proyecto Amistad (internship)
An internship program offering a wide variety of experiences in the Spanish-speaking community of Washington, DC. Placements are available in bilingual schools, legal and consumer agencies, and national and international organizations.

C. Interdisciplinary Studies (Latin American History, International Relations, Politics and Economics)

SIS-577 International Relations in the Americas
Recent and contemporary interstate relations in Latin America and the place of Latin America in the world affairs.

SIS-579 Selected Regional and Country Studies. Recent offerings include: Politics of NAFTA, Latin America in Comparative Perspective, Politics of Economic Regional Integration in Latin America

SIS-582 United States Policy towards Latin America
This course examines U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America by focusing on the factors that shape U.S. foreign policy. This course considers the extent to which U.S. policy is shaped by the nature of the U.S. impact on Latin America.