

LT334 From 'Modernismo' to the Present: Contemporary Latin American Literature in Short Fiction

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

It is often stated that Latin American Literature acquired a definite identity with its first original literary movement: 'El Modernismo', initiated by the Nicaraguan writer Rubén Darío (1867-1916). This course begins with that foundational moment and traces the development of the Latin American short story from the early 20th century to the present, setting out from these guiding questions: Is it possible to speak of Latin American literature as a whole? Is there a common trait among so many national literatures? What is the relation between Latin American Literature and Western (European, North American) Literature? Through the semester we will explore the evolution of the literary fields as well as the texts' themes and formal features from both an aesthetic and historical perspective. Beginning with precursors from the 19th century, we move to Rubén Darío's short fiction and that of other foundational authors, such as Horacio Quiroga (Uruguay, 1878-1937), Julio Garmendia (Venezuela, 1898-1977), Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina, 1899-1986) and Felisberto Hernández (Uruguay, 1902-1964). Then we will focus on mid-century figures, such as Julio Cortázar (Argentina, 1914-1984), Juan Rulfo (México, 1917-86), Clarice Lispector (Brazil, 1920-1977), Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925-1974), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, 1927-2014), followed by authors from the next generation, Cristina Peri Rossi (Uruguay, b. 1941), Ricardo Piglia (1941-2017), Ana Lydia Vega (Puerto Rico, b. 1946) and Roberto Bolaño (1953-2003). Finally, we will examine short stories from what could be considered a "new boom" of Latin American literature: a group of women writers that have been labeled as the "Latin American Neo Gothic", among them, Lina Meruane (Chile, b. 1970), Mariana Enríquez (Argentina, b. 1973), Samanta Schweblin (Argentina, b. 1978), and Mónica Ojeda (Ecuador, b. 1988).

Requirements

Class preparation

Preparing for class involves reading thoughtfully and engaging with the set text for each class. Students are expected to read those texts attentively, taking notes about difficult passages and cultural references. It is essential to pay close attention both to the plot as well as to the way it is verbally staged; attention to literary devices such as irony, word uses, humor, metaphors, etc. is paramount. It is through the interplay of those elements that the more complex and far-reaching meaning/sense of the texts is borne out.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

The assessment will be made based on two essays and class participation (See 'Grade Breakdown' and 'Essay Deadlines' below).

Writing Assignments

The deadlines for all writing assignments can be found under 'Essay deadlines.'

The midterm essay (2,000 words) should analyze and compare two short stories by authors discussed up to the fall break. It should demonstrate your ability to contextualize and analyze the literary meanings and procedures of the texts. A list of suggested topics can be provided by the instructor. The final essay (3,000–3,500 words) will consist of an analytical reading of two short stories by authors discussed in the second half of the course, adopting the same approach.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Classroom participation: 30%

Midterm Essay: 30%

Final Essay: 40%

Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction: Reading (and) the Short Story

Tues, 1 September: Introduction to the course, presentation of the syllabus, discussion

Readings: Selections of Short Stories (approaching reading techniques)

Week 2 – The Short Story in Latin America, Texts and Contexts

Tues, 8 September

Readings: Latin American Short Story Theorizations (Quiroga, Fernández, Bullrich, Cortázar, Piglia) and contexts

Week 3 – Two Foundational Figures of the 19th Century

Tues, 15 September:

Readings: Juana Manuela Gorriti (Perú, 1818-1892), Joaquim Machado de Assis (Brasil 1939-1908)

Additional reading: Estevan Echeverría (Argentina, 1805-1851)

Week 4 – Latin American Literature comes to Age

Tues, 22 September

Readings: Rubén Darío (Nicaragua, 1887-1916), Leopoldo Lugones (Argentina, 1874-1938), Horacio Quiroga (Uruguay, 1878-1937), Lima Barreto (Brasil, 1878-1937)

Week 5 – A “Local” Avant-Garde 1:

Tues, 29 September

Readings: Mario de Andrade (Brazil, 1893-1945), Julio Garmendia Venezuela, 1898-1977, Lydia Cabrera (Cuba, 1899-1991)

Week 6 – A “Local” Avant-Garde 2

Tues, 6 October

Readings: Roberto Arlt (Argentina, 1900-1942), Felisberto Hernández (Uruguay, 1902-1964), Silvina Ocampo (Argentina, 1903-1993)

Week 7 – A “Local” Avant-Garde 3

Tues, 13 October

Readings: João Guimarães Rosa (Brasil, 1908-1967), Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay, 1909-1994), Armonía Somers (Uruguay, 1914-1994),

FALL BREAK Monday, October 19th- Sunday, October 25th,

Week 8 – The Golden Age of LA Short Fiction 1

Tues, 27 October:

Readings: Guillermo Meneses (Venezuela, 1911-1978), Juan Rulfo (México, 1917-1986), Rosario Castellanos (México, 1925-1974)

Week 9 – The Golden Age of LA Short Fiction 2

Tues, 3 November:

Readings: Elena Garro (México, 1916-1998), Juan José Arreola (México, 1918-2001), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, 1927-2014)

Week 10 – The Golden Age of LA Short Fiction 3

Tues, 10 November:

Readings: José María Arguedas (Perú, 1911-1969), Clarice Lispector (Brazil, 1920-1977), Virgilio Piñera (Cuba, 1912-1979)

Week 11 – The Golden Age of LA Short Fiction 4

Tues, 17 November

Readings: Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina, 1899-1986), Julio Cortázar (Argentina, 1914-1984), Carlos Fuentes (México, 1928-2012)

Week 12 – Three “Turns” of the (Screw in) 21st Century

Tues, 24 November:

Readings: Ricardo Piglia (Argentina, 1941-2017), César Aira (Argentina, 1949), Roberto Bolaño (Chile, 1953-2003)

Week 13 – A (mostly) Women’s Literature

Tues, 1 December

Readings: Cristina Peri Rossi (Uruguay, 1941), Mario Bellatín (Perú, 1960), Cristina Rivera Garza (México, 1964), Liliana Lara (Venezuela, 1971)

Week 14 – Latin American Neo-Gothic: The Younger Women Writers’ Generation

Tues, 8 December

Readings: Lina Meruane (Chile, 1970), Mariana Enríquez (Argentina, 1973), Carolina Losada (Venezuela, 1974), María Fernanda Ampuero (Ecuador, 1976), Samanta Schweblin (Argentina, 1978), Mónica Ojeda (Colombia, 1988), Andrea Chapela (México, 1990)

Mon, December 14 – Fri, December 18th, 2025

Completion week

Essay Deadlines

Midterm essay (2000 words), due 23:59 Saturday, October 24.

Final essay (3000 words), due 23:59 Friday, December 18 (December 1, for graduating students).

Library Resources and Book Purchase Suggestions

Translated texts of the authors studied in the course are not always extant. Therefore, we will resort to the texts available and since many of them are scattered through different publications (magazines, anthologies, selections, etc.), all materials for the course will be made available on-line by the instructor.

Students who are interested in increasing their personal library *are encouraged* to purchase the following anthologies (although they include mainly authors of the canon of 20th century):

- Roberto González Echevarría (ed.). *The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Kathleen Ross, Yvette Miller (eds.). *Scents of Wood and Silence: Short Stories by Latin American Women Writers*. Pittsburg: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1991.

Additionally, the following companions and studies are important for the history and context of Latin American literature:

- Brígida M. Pastor, Lloyd Hughes Davies (eds.). *A Companion to Latin American Women Writers*. Rochester: Tamesis, 2012.
- Sara Castro-Klaren (ed.). *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

Finally, about Short Story theory:

- Viorica Patea (ed.). *Short Story Theories. A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*. New York: Rodopi, 2012.

All these books will be acquired by BCB Library and placed in reserve.