

Course: PHIL-476-M01 Spanish Philosophy  
Time: TR 12:30–13:45  
Professor: Welch  
Credits: 3  
Prerequisites: PHIL-105 and PHIL-205

## I. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The Spanish philosophical tradition is uneven; it has steep ups and downs, *sol* as well as *sombra*. Our objective in this course is to get some sun, that is, to retrieve some of the best moments in Spanish philosophy. If you successfully complete this course, you will have achieved these student learning outcomes:

- to integrate the Spanish philosophical tradition in an overview of western philosophy
- to correct a tendency to undervalue or ignore Spanish contributions to speculative thought
- to interpret some Spanish philosophy as attempts to “steer history” in Spain, Europe, and the Americas, and other Spanish philosophy as innovations in an international, intergenerational conversation among philosophers
- to critically evaluate Spanish philosophers’ views on how to endure bad fortune, the ethical limits of persuasion, the effects of biology on human personality, the right way to respond to religious disagreement, whether war can ever be just, and the legitimacy of political power.

## II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will proceed historically, working with the writings of the Spanish philosophers listed below. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Spanish philosophy developed primarily *as philosophy* and only secondarily as Spanish. Even when Spanish philosophers write in Spanish (which is not always the case), they are taking part in a dialogue with other philosophers, some of whom are Spanish and some are not. So, in order to understand what Spanish philosophers are saying, we will have to make frequent references to non-Spanish philosophers. Among them are Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Leibniz, Kierkegaard, and Dilthey.

### Roman Spain

The Stoicism of the younger Seneca (4 BC–65 AD), paying special attention to his view of philosophy as self-defense. Reading: excerpts from *Epistulae morales*.

The philosophical rhetoric of Quintilian (ca. 35–ca. 96), emphasizing his response to Plato’s critique of rhetoric. Reading: excerpts from *Institutio oratoria*.

### Visigothic Spain

The seminal encyclopedia of Isidore of Seville (ca. 562–636), particularly his discussions of the trivium, quadrivium, and law. Reading: excerpts from *Etymologiae*.

### The High Middle Ages

The Islamic scholasticism of Ibn Rushd (Averroës) (1126–1198), notably his defense of reason against religious fundamentalism. Reading: excerpts from *Faṣl al-Maqāl* (The Decisive Treatise Determining the Nature of the Connection between Religion and Philosophy).

The Jewish scholasticism of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), especially his handling of demonstrative argumentation concerning God's existence and the world's eternity. Reading: excerpts from *Dalālat al-Ha'irīn* (The Guide of the Perplexed).

The Ars Magna of Ramon Llull (1232?–1316), which included a combinatorial logic that spurred Leibniz and others in their search for a logic of discovery. Reading: excerpts from *Ars brevis*.

### The Renaissance

The Renaissance humanism of Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), stressing his theory of the passions and his empirical approach to psychology. Reading: excerpts from *De anima et vita*.

### The Age of Discovery

The just war theory of Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546), including his extension of the law of nations to the Americas. Reading: excerpts from *De Indis relectio posterior*.

The Christian humanism of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), focusing on his defense of the Indians against Spanish imperialism in the debate with Sepúlveda before the Spanish court. Reading: excerpts from *En defensa de los indios*.

### The Counter-Reformation

The political theory of Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), particularly his insistence, in the face of the divine right theory of monarchy, that power comes from the people. Reading: excerpts from *De legibus*.

### The Generation of '98

The quixotic ethics of Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936), who proposed that we act so as to merit immortality even if reason tells us there is no such thing. Reading: excerpts from *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida en los hombres y en los pueblos*.

### The School of Madrid

The existentialist ethics of José Ortega y Gasset (1863–1955), who emphasized (before Sartre) that we are condemned to be free, forced to compose the drama of our own lives. Reading: excerpts from *Historia como sistema*.

### III. TEXT AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS

The text for the course is *Other Voices: Readings in Spanish Philosophy*, ed. John R. Welch (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). It is required and available in the bookstore. Additional course materials can be found on the university's intranet, which can be accessed via the Blackboard Learn server.

### IV. GRADING SYSTEM AND ATTENDANCE

A university course is a collaborative effort among students and professor. A final grade should reflect the student's contribution to this effort throughout the entire course—not just exam and paper days. In this course, then, final grades are calculated as a weighted average of four scores: two exams, a paper, and participation. The scores are weighted as follows:

Midterm exam:	27%
Paper:	27%
Final exam:	27%
Participation:	19%

Exams and paper: The exams must be taken and the paper turned in on the dates assigned (see course calendar below). Violations of this policy will result in the loss of a grade point (from B to C, for example) in all but the most exceptional cases.

Participation: This component of your final grade is based on attendance, effort, oral and written exercises, and punctuality. Meaningful participation requires regular class attendance. Students with seven or more absences can expect that their final grade will be no higher than C+ and will probably be lower. Cell phones are to be switched **OFF** in class. Computers are to be used **SOLELY** for taking class notes. Students are expected not to interrupt class by leaving the room and returning during the class period.

Please note that, as a student in this course, you are required to adhere to the university's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating, falsification, and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is the intentional representation of someone else's thoughts or words as if they were one's own. Any violation of this policy will result in an F for the pertinent academic exercise.

### VIII. OFFICE HOURS

MWF 12:00-14:00 and by appointment (SIH 307).