



Course title

Asturias and the Dynamics of Social Transformation

Course taught by

Rubén Vega García

Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Oviedo, Rubén Vega's doctoral thesis examined industrial crisis and social unrest in Gijón (1975-1995). For the last twenty years Rubén Vega has been conducting research on the Franco years and the democratic transition, along with research on the not-for-profit milieu, the culture of work and workers' movements, social movements and the process of de-industrialization, taking a local and regional approach, resulting in several publications. From 1998 – 2003 he directed the Juan Muñiz Zapico Foundation, coordinating several research teams. Rubén Vega is a member of an international research group studying shipyards worldwide, and is also the director of the Oral Archives for the Social History of Asturias.

Purpose of the course

The purpose of the course is to provide a grasp of contemporary Spanish social, economic and political reality, in order to prepare students to participate more fully in local and national society, especially once they take up duties as full-time interns. Students will come to a broad understanding of Asturian social issues, groups and actors, and the challenges facing Asturian and Spanish society today. As an element in the IFE preparatory session in Asturias, the course – like all IFE preparatory courses - is intended for non-specialists as they prepare for integration and participation regardless of their subject of concentration. By the end of the course students will have acquired a coherent, analytical and practical view of life in Asturian society today and of Asturias within Spain. They will also be acquainted with the basic academic literature on the topics of the course.

Description of the course

The approach of this course is pluridisciplinary and thematic, highlighting important aspects of contemporary Spanish society, recent transformations, historical vestiges, and current debate on hot issues. The same approach is then employed to examine Asturian society, including the socio-economic context, as well as issues of identity and contemporary cultural creativity. The various facets examined then serve to illustrate and explain the Spanish particularity of autonomous communities within a nation-state, in the case of Asturias.

This course meets approximately 48 hours, including mandatory site visits.

Outcomes

1. In addition to the fundamental outcomes relative to the course subject matter per se, as listed in the rubric "Purpose of the Course" above, this course is designed to enable students to develop the following "applied outcomes":
 - become familiar with key aspects of Asturian society in order to integrate into and function within that society
 - become aware of local economic realities
 - become conversant with current events and their interpretation
 - develop skills of intercultural analysis: identifying and contextualizing values and value differences for comparative purposes (home/host culture)
 - be exposed to the Asturian language, popular culture and history
 - become familiar with Spanish including local news media
 - develop oral skills of presentation, debate and exchange, in Spanish
 - master the use of Spanish for the specific purpose of being able to engage professionally with the issues of the day and to produce useful texts in a work setting
 - learn the use of European methodology for structuring argumentation and marshaling relevant information.

2. Contribution to outcomes of an integrated program of study

The IFE semester is a fully integrated whole, academically. An important set of outcomes of this and every course comprising an IFE preparatory session is the repertory of skills and knowledge acquired in order to succeed in the next phase of the semester. Students as they enter the internship phase will know how – in Spanish – to make oral presentations, write essays, organize material according to a standard methodology, comprehend oral material, take notes in a meeting, discuss the issues of the day, understand the work of their host organization in its societal context, and so forth. The result is a student-intern's readiness to take fuller advantage of the field experience opportunity including as a research terrain thus enhancing the final academic exercise, the 30-page guided independent field research paper (qv), the keystone of the IFE integrated semester.

3. Outcomes in the context of a program of experiential learning

Outcomes are essentially seized learning opportunities. Experiential learning outcomes result from the opportunity to study a subject both *in situ* as well as in words and in theory. At IFE, cultural and linguistic otherness enhances both factors of the experiential education equation, yielding the final, fundamental intended outcomes of comparative knowledge strengthening a student's grasp on a particular subject and discipline, along with robust language skills, and the knowledge of the world and of oneself that comes from having learned to operate effectively with and in otherness.

Pedagogical methods

- 1.** Lecture-seminars whereby each two-hour class meeting is devoted to a specific theme, including lecture presentation of new material reinforced by in-class tools such as powerpoints, videos and readings (including some materials to be reviewed by students in preparation for class). Small class size allows for questions and some discussion.
- 2.** Discussion or "workshop" sessions (*tutorías*, a standard part of European university pedagogy), designed to assist students in assimilating the information and knowledge transmitted during the lecture-seminar sessions and applying it to current events and issues. Typical exercises include:
 - a review of national press on specific subjects linking course material with current events
 - short student oral presentations on selected subjects
 - a detailed draft outline as if for an essay on a topic of current debate.
- 3.** Site visits, encounters with civil society actors, and other activities; these may include, for example:
 - Visit to a local organic dairy farm and to a farm producing the distinctive local cider
 - Lecture-visit to the Ethnographic Museum of the Asturian People, in Gijón
 - Tour of the Sunday open-air market in Gijón.

Participation in these course-related visits and activities is mandatory. These activities are prepared in advance and debriefed and commented afterwards, in workshop sessions. Material presented during these activities is part of the body of material on which students may be tested.

Course outline

- 1** Asturias in Spain: Asturian identity, historical roots and current context.
- 2** Spain today: European belonging and separatist tensions.
European-ness, Hispanity, Spanish nationalism and peripheral nationalisms.
- 3** Social change: demographics, family, gender and generations.
- 4** Church and Religion(s): From the "Spiritual Reservoir of the West" to secularization.
- 5** The weight of the past: Debate and polemic over history and the role of memory concerning the Civil War, dictatorship and transition.
- 6** Migration: A country of emigration now Europe's southern boundary.
- 7** Crises: Welfare state under pressure, economic crisis, austerity
- 8** A geography of Asturias: Environment and anthropic pressure
- 9** Asturias in crisis: A long industrial decline
- 10** Labor in decline: Social conflicts in a post-industrial context
- 11** An aging society: Young retirees and youthful migration
- 12** Memories of an industrial past in Asturian society and culture

- 13** Cultural heritage / nature's paradise
- 14** Asturian language and culture at the beginning of the 21st century
- 15** Documentary cinema on Asturias today
- 16** Music in Asturias: A contemporary soundtrack

Suggested bibliography

- Alonso Poblacion, E. y Pemán Mariño, D., *Juventud urbana en Asturias*, Consejo de la Juventud, Oviedo, 2007.
- Álvarez Junco, J., *Dioses útiles. Naciones y nacionalismos*, Galaxia Gutemberg, Madrid, 2016.
- Fernández Pérez, A. (Ed.), *Historia de Asturias*, KRK, Oviedo, 2005.
- Foundation Alternativas, *Informe sobre el estado de la cultura en España 2016*, Catarata, Madrid, 2016.
- Foundation Alternativas, *Informe sobre la democracia en España 2015*, Catarata, Madrid, 2015.
- Foundation FOESSA, *VII Informe sobre exclusión y desarrollo social en España*, Caritas, Madrid, 2014.
- Rodríguez Muñoz, J., *Los asturianos. Raíces sociales y culturales de una identidad*, Prensa asturiana, Oviedo, 2005.
- Vega García, R., *Crisis industrial y conflicto social. Gijón 1975-1995*, Trea, Gijón, 1998.

Grading methods

There are two in-class written examinations:

- a one-hour examination mid-way through the preparatory session comprising multiple-choice and short-answer questions (20% of the final grade)
- a two-hour final examination taking the form of an essay in which the student – on the subject given for the examination – first constructs a specific question to be examined and then proceeds to do so in a formal, well-structured manner, drawing on and thereby demonstrating a certain master of course material (30% of final grade).

A sample examination subject for this course: *Distinguish Asturian society from Spanish society*.

Class preparation and participation in the lecture-seminar sessions are taken into account in assessing the grade for this part of the course.

Grades for the various exercises of the workshop section, taking into account active participation in all class sessions and course-related visits and activities, are averaged to assess a grade for these aspects of the course (50% of final grade).

A note on grading – IFE teachers use a standard grading system based on a scale of 10. The final grade is also transposed into an American letter grade according to a scale of equivalence, and both grades are displayed.

The grade assessed for written work reflects the degree of acquisition of the information and knowledge presented during the course as well as how well the extent to which the methodology is followed. Since the language of instruction and examination is not the student's own language, the quality of the written expression only enters into account in cases of noteworthy progress or, on the contrary, repeated and avoidable errors and carelessness.

Those who grade IFE students' work are guided by the principle that this course – in its several parts – is not intended to train specialists in Spanish sociology. Therefore, evaluation of student work pays particular attention to knowledge gained during the six weeks of the preparatory session, demonstrated curiosity and a student's motivation to apply this knowledge to their experience and to gaining new perspectives, including on their home culture and society.

Grading scale

A+	9 - 10	B+	7 - 7,5	C+	5 - 5,5
A	8 - 9	B	6,5 - 7	C	4,5 - 5,5
A-	7,5 - 8	B-	5,5 - 6,5	C-	4 - 4,5

Equivalent in American university course offerings

Sociology of Contemporary Spain, Modern Spanish Society (cultural studies).