



Notification of withdrawal of BA Spanish and Latin American Studies

Dear Student

Subject: completion of studies in BA degree in Spanish and Latin American studies

I am writing to you regarding the closure of the BA degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies and the options available to you in the remainder of your studies in this programme.

You may recall the correspondence to you (dated January 2010) from University of London International Programmes, providing notice of the withdrawal of the BA degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies from Birkbeck's portfolio of distance learning qualifications, in accordance with paragraph 1.9 of the General Regulations.

Please be assured that apart from a shorter period of registration, the withdrawal of the programme will not affect the quality, choice or nature of your studies in any way. Birkbeck, University of London, remains committed to the students studying Spanish and Latin American Studies and will continue to ensure the high academic quality in the delivery of this programme throughout the notice period.

I would encourage students to concentrate their efforts on completing their degree programme of studies in line with the final examinations that will take place in 2015.

Introduction of Intermediate Awards

Please note that we have introduced (in the 2010-11 Regulations) intermediate awards for students that are unable or do not wish to study towards the full degree. These are:

- a Certificate of Higher Education (for which students are eligible after the completion of the four level 1 units)

and

- a Diploma of Higher Education (after the completion of four level 1 units and four level 2 units (eight in total)).

Period of Registration

Students are reminded that their maximum period of registration may be shorter than the standard eight years given from the effective date of initial registration (General Regulations, paragraph 5.2 refers). Therefore, if your period of registration was due to expire *after* 2015, please note that this date has had to be brought forward - your registration will now expire on 31 August 2015. However, if your period of registration was due to expire *before* 2015, the date will remain the same.

Students should take this into account when planning the remainder of their studies.

Birkbeck, in its Lead College role will continue to assume its responsibilities throughout the notice period.

If you wish to discuss these options please contact either the Programme Director l.martins@bbk.ac.uk or the Programme Manager Tom Bunting, at Tom.Bunting@london.ac.uk

With kind regards

Registry Office

University of London International Academy

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Welcome to your 2012–2013 study year as an International Programmes student

This **Programme section** provides academic guidance along with practical information and advice that is specific to your studies as a BA Spanish and Latin American Studies student. We hope that we have covered everything that you need to know during your studies, but if you require any additional information or support, please do not hesitate to contact us. Contact details are provided on page G.3 of the General section in Part II of this *handbook*.

For practical information that applies to all of the programmes offered through the International Programmes, such as how to pay your fees, please refer to the **General section** in Part II of this *handbook*.

Please note, final examinations for the programme are taking place in 2015.

Therefore, you should bear this in mind when deciding on your study choices and the number of courses you wish to be examined in each year.

You will be notified directly of any changes likely to affect your study programme but you may also find it helpful to check our website

www.londoninternational.ac.uk

and Student Portal

<http://my.londoninternational.ac.uk>

which are regularly updated with the latest news.



Birkbeck College

The University, University of London International Programmes, Birkbeck College

The University of London: a centre of excellence

The University of London, which was established in 1836, is one of the oldest and largest universities in the United Kingdom. It is a federation of 18 colleges and 10 institutes. Some colleges are specialised (such as the School of Oriental and African Studies and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), while others are multi-faculty (such as University College London and Queen Mary, University of London). Specialist institutes include the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

University of London International Programmes

In 1858, Queen Victoria signed the University's fourth charter which permitted the University's degrees to be accessible to students who did not want or could not come to London to study. This groundbreaking initiative is one of the earliest examples of a university making its degrees accessible to students and established what has now become known as the University of London International Programmes.

International Programmes students register for a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and our students, who come from over 190 different countries, have an age range of between 18 years old to over 70 years old. Some join the International Programmes immediately after leaving school, while others may have been working for a number of years and need a qualification in order to improve their prospects. Others

purely seek the challenge of studying a new subject at degree level. In many countries graduates of the International Programmes occupy senior positions in government, commerce and industry. The value of a University of London degree is well recognised throughout the world.

A new name

In August 2010, we changed our name from the External System to the University of London International Programmes to better describe ourselves in the twenty-first century. This change allowed greater clarity and inclusiveness and we believe it has helped us to connect to more students.

One critical thing that did not change, however, was our commitment to offer worldwide access to a university education of a consistently high standard. We are very proud of our (and your) reputation and will continue to build on everything that the External System stood for and achieved. Although our name has changed, our people, values, reputation and history remain exactly the same.

Birkbeck College

Birkbeck College is ranked among the leading UK University institutions for its levels of national and international excellence in research in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

Founded in 1823 as the London Mechanics' Institute and incorporated into the University of London as Birkbeck College by Royal Charter in 1920, today Birkbeck provides a unique range of degree and other courses designed specifically to meet the needs of mature

students. Birkbeck is uniquely placed to meet the needs of the International Programmes student.

Birkbeck ranks among the top 150 universities in the world, according to data published in the 2011–2012 *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings. Phil Baty, editor of the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings, commented:

‘Our table of the top 200 represents approximately the top one per cent of higher education institutions worldwide, so securing a place within it is an outstanding achievement’.

The department of Iberian and Latin American Studies is one of the most renowned of its kind in the United Kingdom:

- Top-rated research: in 2008, 20% of our research activity was rewarded 4* in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). This is the highest mark possible, denoting research that is world-leading in its originality, significance and rigour.
- Research centres: the department is home to the following research centres:
 - Centre of Iberian and Latin American Visual Studies (CILAVS): this research centre offers a unique environment in which collaborative, cross-disciplinary and comparative research on visual subjects in the Hispanic and Lusophone world, Latin America and the Caribbean is undertaken.

- Iberoamerican Museum of Visual Culture on the Web: this is Birkbeck’s pioneering online resource on the visual cultures of Latin America and the Iberian peninsula.
- The academic staff members specialise in diverse aspects of cultural history and literature.

BA Spanish and Latin American Studies academic queries

If you have queries of an academic nature, you can contact the Programme Director. Programme Directors cannot engage in active regular advice or tuition. If you are studying in a local institution you should first consult your Course Director.

The Programme Director can be contacted as follows:

The Programme Director (International Programmes)

School of Languages, Linguistics and Culture (Spanish)
Birkbeck College
43 Gordon Square
London WC1H 0PD
Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 6166/6170/6171/6113
Email: undergraduate@silc.bbk.ac.uk

Dates to note

Dates to note	Things to do in the year ahead
At the time of initial or continuing registration	Start planning which examinations you intend to enter for. You will be able to download a personalised examination entry form from the Student Portal from mid-December.
Examination Centre closing date	Make sure that you complete and return both copies of the form with the fee to the Examination Centre before the closing date. Do not send your forms direct to us.
15 January	The last date for submission of the first coursework essays for all literary and cultural papers being taken.
1 February	All entry forms from Examination Centres must be received by us no later than this date. Entries received after 1 February will only be accepted, in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the University.
Three to four weeks before examinations	You will receive your Admission Notice, which confirms the dates and times of your examinations and your candidate number.
10 days before the examinations start	If you have not received an Admission Notice by this time, please use the online enquiry system (see page G.3 of the General section) to contact the Student Assessment Office.
22 April	The last date for the submission of the second coursework essays for all literary and cultural papers being taken.
Early May	The first examinations normally start. Note that the University is unable to take religious and/or public holidays into account when setting the examination dates.
Three weeks after the last examination	Last date by which we will accept information about, and corroboration of, any medical condition and/or other mitigating circumstance that may have affected your examination performance.
August	The results of most examinations will be released during this month and will be sent directly to the Examination Centres, which are responsible for forwarding them to candidates.
September/October (depending on programme)	Time to pay continuing registration fees, although you may wish to wait until you have your examination results.
30 September (for the May/June examinations)	The deadline to request an administrative recheck of your examination mark. Please note that this will not be an academic re-mark but purely an administrative recheck.

Studying for the BA degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies



* Students who demonstrate a native or near-native speaker competence in Spanish at the entrance test will be required to replace **Spanish language 1** with either another introductory course or with a specialised option.

How to plan your course of study

The degree programme

To complete the degree, you must follow and be examined in 11 courses. These are chosen from a total of 15 courses offered in the programme (four in language, 11 in literary and cultural studies), as follows:

Language

- Spanish language 1 (compulsory)*
- Spanish language 2 (compulsory)
- Spanish language 3 (compulsory)
- Spanish language 4 (optional).

Introductory literary and cultural options

- Introduction to medieval literature
- Tradition and innovation in Golden-Age prose and drama
- Introduction to nineteenth and twentieth century narrative
- The essay in Latin America.

Specialised literary and cultural options

- Medieval love poetry
- Women in the prose and drama of the Golden Age
- Culture and society in modern Spain
- Literature and the nation in Latin America
- The struggle of modernity in 20th century Spanish culture
- Modernity and the avant-garde in Latin America
- Spanish women writers and the Canon

For detailed syllabuses, see the PSR.

The programme is divided into three levels, which must be taken in sequence, as follows:

Level 1 – Four courses:

Spanish language 1, plus three introductory options.

Level 2 – Four courses:

Spanish language 2, plus either:

- (a) a fourth introductory option and two specialised options; or
- (b) three specialised options.

Level 3 – Three courses:

Spanish language 3, plus either:

- (a) **Spanish language 4** and one more specialised option; or
- (b) two more specialised options.

You must pass **at least three** courses (including the language course) from each of levels 1 and 2 before proceeding to levels 2 and 3 respectively.

Choosing your options

You should think about this carefully. If you are particularly interested in language, you will want to take **Spanish language 4**, leaving you with a total of seven literary and cultural options. If you are not, you will want to omit **Spanish language 4** and take eight literary and cultural options.

When choosing your seven or eight literary and cultural options, you may wish to follow subjects in the broadest possible range of fields (historical and geographical). Alternatively, you may wish to concentrate on particular periods, or pay greater or lesser attention to Latin America as opposed to Spain. Both approaches are equally valid, but you should take

this decision consciously (note that the Latin American options concentrate on the Spanish-speaking countries, but also include some Brazilian texts in English translation).

All students are recommended to do at least one option in the Golden Age (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), since this is the great period of Spanish literature, equivalent to the Elizabethan period in English literature. It would not make sense to do medieval and modern options without doing a subject from the intervening period.

You should not assume that the modern subjects are easier than, say, the medieval subjects. Old Spanish is not so different from modern usage as is the case with French or English; and modern culture is notorious for its rejection of certainties.

If you find that an option you have chosen does not suit you, change to another option before you have invested too much time and energy in it. Learn from your experience with the degree what you most like and what you are best at, and choose your options accordingly. If you fail a subject you may either retake it or choose another course; but if you achieve a poor pass mark, that mark will affect your final degree classification.

How long should you take to complete your studies?

Think realistically about the time available to you, and the amount of work you are going to have to do to reach the required level of competence (in other words, are you already fluent in the Spanish language, and used to thinking and writing about literary and cultural issues? Or do you need, like most students, to acquire these skills in the course of your work for the degree?). Full-time students at a University college complete the 11 courses in three years; part-time students take four years; as an International Programmes student you are likely to take at least four years, though it is possible to complete in three. The maximum period of registration is eight years.

You will probably want to vary the number of courses you take in any one year, depending on your domestic and professional commitments at the time. The structure is designed to allow you to do this: you can take from one to four courses in any year, as best suits you.

What skills do you need?

Linguistic competence

It is assumed that you are starting the degree with a knowledge of the Spanish language (written and spoken) equivalent to A-level standard. Knowledge of another foreign language is always useful, but what is really needed is the ability to think critically about the way language is used, whether the language is your native tongue or acquired.

Cultural knowledge

You are not expected to have any previous knowledge of Spanish or Latin American literature and culture, but it is assumed that you enjoy reading books and magazines, watching films and thinking about cultural issues, and that you are curious to learn more, and open to new ideas, while at the same time, you like to form opinions of your own. The students who achieve the best results are often those who start with few or no formal qualifications in the subject area.

Life experience

Learn to value the skills you have acquired from your personal and professional experience: for example, the ability to reflect critically on what you see and hear, to look at issues from more than one point of view, to structure and present an argument, to adjudicate between conflicting opinions, and to make connections between disparate ideas.

What skills will the degree help you to develop?

Linguistic skills

By the end of the degree you should be able to express yourself fluently in both written and spoken Spanish. We do not mind whether the Spanish you use is that of Spain or of a particular Latin American country, but you should be consistent and not mix different geographical varieties.

The language subjects are designed to test not only competence in Spanish but also your ability to think consciously about, and articulate, the reasons for particular forms of linguistic usage. By the time you have completed **Spanish**

language 1, you should have knowledge of the basic grammatical structures of Spanish, and be able to express yourself correctly both orally and in writing. After completing **Spanish language 2**, you should be able to organise ideas and put forward arguments in complex sentences, structured in long sequences. **Spanish language 3** aims to develop awareness of how linguistic usage varies according to context; as well as learning to use appropriate registers, you will also be required to analyse the linguistic features specific to the use of language in particular contexts. **Spanish language 4** aims to develop, in addition to practical translation and interpreting skills, an understanding of the theoretical issues involved in such activities. It is not enough to be a native speaker to perform well on these courses, particularly at the higher levels; you need also to develop the ability to talk and write about the ways in which the Spanish language is used. If you are not a native speaker and are sensitive to the way your own language is used, you will find it easy to develop a similar sensitivity with regard to Spanish. Conversely, by making you analyse and think critically about linguistic usage in Spanish, the language modules should also develop your ability to analyse and think critically about your own language.

Analytical and critical skills

The emphasis on analytical and critical thinking is particularly important in the literary and cultural options. These aim to give you in-depth knowledge of specific areas and aspects of Spanish and Latin American artistic and intellectual

production. We do not expect you to acquire comprehensive knowledge of all cultural forms from all historical periods in all the 20 countries of Latin America plus Spain. We feel it is more useful for you to know certain things well, and to be aware of the underlying issues and implications. In other words, although knowledge is important, we are more concerned with training you to develop ways of handling and applying that knowledge. The intellectual skills you will acquire can then be applied by you to other areas of Hispanic culture which you may subsequently encounter or study on your own. Indeed, we hope the skills learnt from the degree will equip you to understand and appreciate more fully the various aspects of culture you encounter in your life, whether Hispanic or not.

Analysis is the ability to break down a body of material or ideas into its component parts, in order to see what it is made of. Critical thinking is the ability to question why things are the way they are, and to realise that things can always be otherwise (in other words, if social or intellectual structures are the way they are, this is the result of conscious or unconscious choices that have been made). This degree, by studying various cultural forms in different historical periods and different Spanish-speaking countries, will help to make you aware of what those choices may have been, and what issues were at stake when those choices were made. It will also encourage you to be aware of what choices you yourself are making when you take a particular attitude to the material you are studying; in other words, you will gain a critical understanding of the

way you formulate your own ideas. To put things simply, you will learn never to take ideas (your own and those of others) for granted.

Relational thinking

An important feature of both analytical and critical thought is the ability to establish connections between different facts and ideas. Having analysed a body of material (in the case of this degree, a text or a corpus of texts) – that is, having broken it down into its component parts – you need to ask what the relationship is between those components. To take a simple example: if there are five characters in a play, what are the relationships between them? A more complex example would be: if a historian uses two mutually incompatible sets of metaphors to describe the nation, how do those contradictory images relate to one another?, and what does the contradiction tell us about where the historian is positioned with regard to the intellectual choices available at the time of writing? Critical thought also relies on relational thinking since, by questioning why things are as they are, it requires us to ask ‘Why this rather than that?’ or ‘Why this at the same time as that?’.

By encouraging you to look not just at what texts say, but at their underlying implications, the degree will enable you to establish patterns of similarity and difference between different cultural products, whether by different writers or artists working within the same historical context, or cutting across different historical periods (a perception about the way gender relations are handled in a

Golden Age play may trigger ideas about similar issues in a nineteenth-century novel) or geographical areas (something you happen to read about French history may clarify for you how a particular historical issue in Spain is different). Often the best ideas come from the ability to apply things learnt in one context to another context, where those ideas have not been applied before (though you should always be sensitive to the fact that different cultural contexts have their own specificity; the image of the ‘body politic’ may mean one thing in Golden-Age Spain and another in nineteenth-century Latin America). ‘Originality’, in fact, usually means making some previously unmade connection between disparate things. Several of the modules will encourage you to apply theoretical insights drawn from other disciplines, or developed by thinkers outside the framework of Hispanic culture, to the Spanish and Latin American texts you are studying. As an adult, you have an advantage over younger students in that you possess a corpus of knowledge and understanding of various subjects that you can draw on and relate to the texts studied in this degree.

Another way in which you need to develop relational thinking is by learning to assess the relative merits of different arguments. You will often be asked questions such as ‘To what extent is such-and-such true?’, and this requires you to consider both the ways in which it is true and the ways in which it is not, and to arrive at a balanced verdict. Since the degree is encouraging you to question ideas, you will find that nothing is black or white, but that everything can always be viewed from

more than one perspective. You should develop the habit of considering issues from as many different points of view as possible. This does not mean that you should not hold personal views of your own, but that these should be arrived at after weighing up the relative strengths and weaknesses of various possible positions.

Originality

It should be clear from the above that you are not expected to agree with all that you read in the critical studies on the reading lists. On the contrary, our aim is to encourage you to think independently and to develop original ideas by making new connections. You must, however, learn to structure your arguments logically and to back them up with appropriate evidence. This requires discipline and hard work. However, when logical argument and evidence are used convincingly to present an original idea, the results can be immensely rewarding and exciting (for the reader, but particularly for the writer: you). It is sometimes said that too much thinking takes the pleasure out of reading. We hope you will find that the intellectual skills learnt during the degree enhance the pleasure of reading by enabling you to make connections that you would not otherwise have made, and which in many cases will not have been made by others.

How will you be assessed?

Assessment of individual courses

All language courses are assessed through a combination of oral/aural and written work: for **Spanish language 1** and **2**, this consists of a listening comprehension test (25 per cent), an oral presentation (25 per cent), plus one three-hour unseen written paper (50 per cent); for **Spanish language 3** and **4**, this consists of an oral/aural examination (30 per cent), plus one three-hour unseen written paper (70 per cent). The oral component is examined by the way of recorded student presentations. The oral/aural examination may require you to listen to a CD-ROM or tape through headphones in a language laboratory; it is a good idea to get used to listening through headphones to audio tapes (for example, those provided with the subject guides for the language modules) played on your own CD-ROM or cassette player.

Language Marking Service

Teachers in the Department of Spanish at Birkbeck College mark the oral/aural and written examinations, but are not able to mark language coursework.

A Language Marking Service is available exclusively for students studying for the BA Spanish and Latin American Studies with the University of London International Programmes. Full details of this service, together with practice exercises for each of the four language components offered for the programme, will be circulated in a booklet to all registered students.

All literary and cultural options are assessed by a combination of coursework (30 per cent of the total mark) and a three-

hour written paper at the end of May/ beginning of June (70 per cent of the total mark). The coursework consists of two compulsory essays for each course; the mark for the better of these two essays is the one taken into account. These essays may be written in English or Spanish (no extra credit is given for answers in Spanish; you should write in whichever language you use best). Two copies of the first essay must be submitted to the International Programmes by **15 January**, and two copies of the second essay by **22 April** (late essays will not be marked, although short extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances, provided they are requested before the dates of submission). The three-hour written paper requires you to answer three questions for each option, which may be answered in either English or Spanish (no extra credit is given for answers in Spanish). You are always given a wide choice of questions, which cover the full range of the syllabus. One question may take the form of a commentary on an attached passage. You may base your examination answers on texts used for your two assessment essays for each course, since the topics covered will be different. However, you are advised not to reuse what you have written in an essay examination. Teachers from Birkbeck College will mark the two required essays and the written examination (one copy of each essay will be returned to you with written feedback; you will get the first essay back before writing the second, so you can learn from the comments); they are not able to mark additional coursework.

Please note that all essays and written and practical examinations are double-marked (i.e. they are marked by two teachers).

Classification of the final degree result

The final degree result is classified as follows:

- First class (honours)
- Upper second class (honours)
- Lower second class (honours)
- Third class (honours)
- Pass (without honours)
- Fail

Factors taken into account include the spread of marks in language and literature in each class (i.e. more credit is given to candidates who have received a number of marks in a higher class in both language and literature than to candidates who have high marks in only language or only literature). It must be emphasised that consideration of such factors means that it is not possible for you to calculate your final result exactly by adding up the marks obtained for each course.

The marking scheme

The following marking scheme is used for all assessed work:

70% or over	First class
60%–69%	Upper second class
50%–59%	Lower second class
40%–49%	Third class
34%–39%	Pass
33% or less	Fail

You will be given the marks for your essays for the literature and culture subjects when these are returned to you, with comments for feedback. All these subjects are assessed by a combination of coursework

and examination. You will be notified of the overall mark you have obtained for each subject at the end of the academic year in which you sat the examination.

More information on marking and classification can be found in the Regulations.

Dictionaries

A dictionary is provided for use during the three-hour written examinations for **Spanish language 3** and **4**. Students cannot use dictionaries for the practical language examinations (i.e. **Spanish language 3** listening comprehension, and **Spanish language 4** interpreting examination). The edition provided will be *The Concise Oxford Spanish Dictionary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) [ISBN 9780199560943]. Students may not bring their own copies into the examination room.

What resources will you need?

Language classes

You will need language tuition to supplement the subject guides for the language modules. Even if you are bilingual in English and Spanish, you will need practice in doing the kinds of exercise required by each subject. Show the subject guide to your tutor so that they know what skills you need to practise. The Education Department of the Spanish Embassy (or the Spanish Institute, if there is one locally) can give you advice on provision of Spanish language classes. See the subject guide to **Spanish language 1** for information on Spanish language learning materials, radio services, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Libraries

The libraries you use will have staff who can explain to you how to make the most of their facilities: make sure you ask for this help. The books you need may be listed under different disciplines and stocked in different sections of the library: make sure you consult the catalogue to find out exactly where the books you need are located. If a book is out on loan, don't give up; reserve it so it can be recalled for you. Books and articles in periodicals can also be obtained for you from other libraries through the inter-library loan service.

Before borrowing a book, check that it is going to be useful to you. Firstly, ask what you want to get from the book (do you want to know about the subject generally? Or are you looking for specific information in order to write an essay on a particular topic?). Then look at the list of contents and index and see if the contents correspond to what you are looking for. If you are still not sure, try reading the introduction and the opening and closing paragraphs of each chapter: these should sum up the basic points covered. If you find a particular book too difficult, read other easier texts from the subject first, and then go back to it.

You will find yourself disliking or disagreeing with some of what you read. This can often help you clarify your own priorities and ideas, by contrast. Indeed, the only way to learn to develop your own approach and ideas is by critically assessing, and where appropriate rejecting, those of others. Quite a lot of critical studies are not particularly good; the reading lists we give you include only what we feel are the most useful texts

(if you find other texts on your library shelves, you may want to check them out, particularly if they are recent works; but they have probably not been listed for a reason). If you find yourself getting nothing whatsoever from a particular text, it is best to go no further.

Apart from books, you will need to read articles in academic periodicals: these can be obtained only in libraries of institutions of higher education or other cultural bodies. Being short, articles often give you more ideas and information per page than books; they are also useful because they are written on specific topics, so you can instantly see if they are what you want. Many scholars have published their best work in article, rather than book, form.

Make sure that you note down the full reference for all the books and articles you consult in libraries. When writing essays you will need to give your sources, and you can waste days looking up the precise details again.

Reference books

There are a number of general reference books that you will find useful. These can be consulted in libraries; the information given below should help you decide which to buy for reference at home.

Study guides

Dunleavy, P. *Studying for a Degree in the Humanities and Social Sciences*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) [ISBN 9780333418420]. This is an excellent introduction to the study skills needed in preparing for a degree. Read it even if you think you know what is needed.

Chambers, E. and A. Northedge *The Arts Good Study Guide*. (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2008) [ISBN 9780749217082 (pbk)].

Reference works for language

Pountain, C. and J. Kattán-Ibarra *Modern Spanish Grammar*. (London: Routledge, 2003) [ISBN 9780415273039, 9780415273046 (pbk)].

Galimberti Jarman, B., R. Russell, C. Styles Carvajal and J. Horwood (eds) *The Oxford Spanish Dictionary. Spanish–English/English–Spanish*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) [ISBN 9780198607304, 9780198604754 (with CD-ROM)].

Dictionaries of literary terms

One of the following is worth buying:

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. (Boston, MA: Holt, Thomson and Wadsworth, 2005) eighth edition [ISBN 9781413004564, 9781413002188 (pbk)].

Baldick, C. *The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [ISBN 9780198608837 (pbk)].

Cuddon, J.A. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) [ISBN 9780631172147].

Also well worth buying is:

Williams, R. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. (London: Fontana, 1990) fourth impression [ISBN 9780006861508].

Introductions to literary criticism and theory

- Eagleton, T. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) [ISBN 9781405179218]. Intelligent critical account by leading Marxist theorist.
- Lodge, D. (ed.) *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*. (London/ New York: Longman, 1972) [ISBN 9780582484221]. The classic texts from T.S. Eliot to the present day.
- Lodge, D. and N. Wood (eds) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. (Harlow: Longman, 2008) [ISBN 9780582784543]. An essential compendium of formalist, structuralist, post-structuralist, psychoanalytic, political, feminist and reader-response theory. Buy it if you want to be up-to-date with the latest approaches to the study of culture. A good follow-up to Selden (1988) below.
- Selden, R., P. Widdowson and P. Brooker *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. (Harlow; New York: Pearson Longman, 2005) [ISBN 9780582894105]. The easiest place to start if this is new to you.
- Selden, R. (ed.) *The Theory of Criticism from Plato to the Present*. (London/ New York: Longman, 1988) [ISBN 9780582003286]. An accessible anthology for those interested in earlier as well as modern approaches to literature.

Introductions to Spanish and Latin American literature and culture

- Baddeley, O. and V. Fraser *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*. (London/New York: Verso, 1989) [ISBN 9780860919537].
- Blanco Aguinaga, C., J. Rodríguez Puértolas and I. M. Zavala *Historia social de la literatura española (en lengua castellana)*. Second revised edition, three volumes (Madrid: Castalia, 1984) [ISBN 9788470392993]. A lucid sociological analysis.
- Díez Borque, J. M. (ed.) *Historia de la literatura española*. Four volumes (Madrid: Taurus, 1980) [ISBN 8430629971].
- Franco, J. *An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) [ISBN 9780521444798; 9780521449236 (pbk)]. Again, still useful. Covers the colonial as well as the modern periods.
- Franco, J. *The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) [ISBN 9780140211535]. Both editions are out of print, but available in libraries. Still useful.
- González, M. and D. Treece *The Gathering of Voices: Twentieth-Century Poetry of Latin America*. (London/New York: Verso, 1992). [ISBN 9780860913696, 9780860915812 (pbk)].

Graham, H. and J. Labanyi (eds) *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction. The struggle for Modernity*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). [ISBN 9780198151999 (pbk), 9780198151951].

Jones, R.O. (ed.) *A Literary History of Spain*. (London: Ernest Benn, 1971–2). Seven volumes (including Spanish America). Now out of print, but still useful (the volume on twentieth-century Spanish literature is idiosyncratic).

King, J. *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America*. (London/New York: Verso, 2000) [ISBN 9781859842331].

Martin, G. *Journeys through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century*. (London/New York: Verso, 1989) [ISBN 9780860919520]. Essential: buy it.

Rico, F. (ed.) *Historia y crítica de la literatura española*. Eight volumes (Barcelona: Crítica, 1980) [ISBNs 9788474231144 (Vol.1); 9788474231397 (Vol.2); 9788474231939 (Vol.3); 9788474232127 (Vol.4); 9788474231854 (Vol.5); 9788474231083 (Vol.6); 9788474232318 (Vol.7); 9788474231465 (Vol.8)].

Rowe, W. and V. Schelling *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America*. (London/New York: Verso, 1991) [ISBN 9780860915416].

Verso *Critical Studies in Latin American Culture*. An excellent series.

Ward, P. (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Spanish Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) [ISBN 9780198661146]. Entries on authors in alphabetical order. Not entirely reliable but useful for biographical and bibliographical information.

Time management

Since you are working on your own, you will need a considerable amount of self-discipline. It is essential to devise a routine: it is better to put aside one evening a week and one afternoon at the weekend on a regular basis, rather than to work flat out for a month and then do nothing for the next two. It is impossible to say how many hours a week you should devote to study; what matters is how profitably you use your time. To do this, you need to work out a clear set of objectives and priorities, and to break each task down into a sequence of manageable stages. Each time you sit down to study, you should know exactly what you aim to have accomplished by the end of the allotted period. Do not set yourself unrealistic goals, or you will get discouraged. You are not expected to read everything on the syllabus; choose what is manageable. Be more or less ambitious according to the amount of time you know you have available. Our experience at Birkbeck with part-time adult students shows that those who do best are not necessarily those with the most time, but those who know their limits and work within them.

You will need a quiet room of your own to work (failing this, a room you can claim

as your own for fixed times of the week). It is sometimes difficult to get family and friends to appreciate that reading and writing require your undivided attention, but you will have to talk this through with them and ask them to be supportive. Another reason for establishing a regular routine is that your family and friends are likely to find your unavailability (and your territorial claim to part of the home) easier to deal with if they know that they must not go near you on (say) Tuesday and Thursday evenings, rather than not knowing when you will or will not want to speak to them.

Word processing

It is not necessary for you to type your essays, and you will, of course, have to write your examinations in longhand. However, if you do have a word processor, you will save yourself an enormous amount of time when editing your essays. Your notes and bibliographical references can also be stored on computer files and easily accessed (but make sure you have spare copies of everything on floppy disk, in case of disaster). If you have a portable computer, you can use it in libraries to take notes.

How to use the subject guides

The subject guides set out the aims of each course, list prescribed texts and recommended critical reading, and introduce you to the main issues covered. The guides to the language modules also provide you with a selection of written and aural exercises (with audiotapes or CDs) testing particular skills, together with

a key so you can monitor your answers; the guides to literary and cultural options provide you with readers of key articles that may be hard to obtain. These subject guides are, however, not complete self-study packages, but introductions to the subject that equip you with the materials and concepts you need, so you can take things further on your own. Before starting work on your chosen option you should read through the subject guide carefully as it will indicate the skills you should be developing, and the issues you should be bearing in mind. If, after reading the guide to a particular option, you feel its aims do not appeal to you, you should consider choosing another option instead.

After reading the subject guides, you will need to do a lot of work on your own: practical exercises in the case of the language modules; reading in the case of the literary and cultural options. The annotated reading lists in the guides help you decide what will be most useful. When deciding on your priorities (remember that you are not expected to read everything), take into account not only the indications in the subject guides but also your own personal tastes and strengths (i.e. choose what you like and what you are good at). Above all, you will need to do a lot of thinking to supplement what the subject guides give you; they will point you in the right direction, but you have to get there by yourself.

Reading

Reading strategies

You need to ask yourself what you want from a book (or article); not only to make sure you select the correct reading matter, but also in order to decide how to read it. There are various different reading strategies, depending on your objectives and the kind of material you are reading. You can save yourself a lot of wasted time if you bear this in mind.

The most common form of reading is 'sequential': that is, ploughing through word for word from start to finish. This is obviously necessary for a prescribed literary or cultural text, where you have to be aware of the implications of every detail (however, we shall see below that, even here, sequential reading is not the best method). In certain circumstances, sequential reading can be a waste of time.

Your critical reading lists are going to divide into essential and non-essential items. The latter can usefully be 'skim-read': that is, you glance through them, letting your eyes fall on points of interest that attract your attention. In particular, take note of opening and closing paragraphs of chapters, and skim the bits in between (note: this is not the same as 'skipping' them). If a section turns out to be interesting, go back and read it sequentially. For a particular type of skim-reading that is useful when revising for examinations, see below.

Another form of reading is 'search reading'. This is like skim-reading, except that you are looking for answers to specific questions, or for particular concepts or

ideas. Search reading is useful if you are reading in order to prepare for an essay or some other written task. Bear in mind if you do this that you will not be getting an overview of what the book or article says.

If an overview is what you want – that is, if you are reading a key textbook in order to get a general view of the subject – you clearly need to read through from the first page to the last. However, the best way of doing this is not, in fact, sequential reading, but something slightly more complicated. After reading for a while, you should stop, and recall and review what you have read so far; this may lead you to revise some assumptions. You should then read on a bit further, again stopping and repeating the process. In this way, you will read critically and not just passively, and you are more likely to remember the main ideas. This process of '**reading, recalling and reviewing**' is a habit worth developing when critical reading is what is needed.

When reading a prescribed literary or cultural text, you again do more than simply read it sequentially. What is needed here is 'close reading': that is, detailed reading with constant backtracking, not only in order to recall and review, but also in order to establish connections between different elements of the text (see page 9 for 'Relational thinking'). In other words, you are processing the text by abstracting patterns of similarity and difference; you are not just reading it but also **interpreting** it.

Finally, we should not forget the disappearing art of reading aloud: strictly speaking, drama is performance art and not literature at all. And many of the

effects of poetry can be appreciated only when we hear its rhythms and sound patterns. Even in the nineteenth century, novels were frequently read aloud in instalments.

Note taking

As with deciding on a reading strategy, it is important to work out what your purpose is in taking notes on a particular text: do you want a reminder of all the main points made or do you just want to extract ideas of particular interest?

When taking notes on a prescribed text or cultural texts, it is usually not a good idea to produce a summary of the whole work. It is best to underline or highlight interesting passages (but don't mark library copies); write a note in the margin of what is interesting about the passage, so you can look through the book quickly and instantly locate which passages illustrate which ideas. Otherwise, note which passages of the text (giving page references) illustrate which ideas. Writing out long lists of quotes, indicating what point they illustrate, is a waste of time.

When taking notes on the critical reading (which you will probably consult in a library and not read again), you may want to write down a synopsis of the main arguments. The most useful notes are likely to be those which remind you of interesting facts or ideas which you want to follow up and develop, but remember, if this is all you write down, then your notes will not represent an overview of the text. It is also useful to note down points that you disagree with: you can then show your capacity for original thought by refuting these points in your essay. In both cases

you will need to write down not only what the critic has said but also what your own thoughts are, taking care to distinguish in your notes between the two. The best way to make this distinction is to draw a line down the page and put what the critic has said and your own thoughts in separate columns.

The point of writing notes is to have a reminder of facts and ideas that can be consulted quickly; so it is important to set out notes in a way that is visually easy to access. Set each point out under a heading indicating what the point is. Write on one side of the paper only, so you can spread your notes out in front of you when consulting them, and make links between points made on different pages. Trying to save money by covering every inch of the page with writing will produce unreadable notes. The clearest notes are the briefest, as you can extract the information at a glance: practise the art of concise summary.

Make sure you write down, at the head of your notes, the full publication details of the source from which the notes are taken: (in the case of a book) author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication; (in the case of an article in a periodical) author, title of article, name of journal, volume number and year, first and last page of the article. Beside each point noted down, you should put the page number of the source to which the point refers. You will need to give precise details of your sources in your essays; if your notes are incomplete, you will have to go back to the source to find the page reference, which is a waste of time.

Writing down these bibliographical details is tedious, but absolutely essential; after a while it becomes a habit.

Apart from notes on your reading, you will also want to note down ideas that occur to you at other times (the best ideas often come to mind when you are reading or doing something unrelated to the subject). Write these ideas down instantly, or you will forget them. The note may consist simply of a reminder to yourself that you need to think (or read) more about a particular topic or idea later on. Put each idea on a separate piece of paper, so you can file them under different headings if appropriate.

Having compiled your notes, you will need some kind of filing system, in order to gain access to them easily. One file for each subject is not enough; subdivide the material covered and start a file for each subdivision (whether by author or topic). It doesn't matter what system you use, as long as you have one.

Preparing and writing essays

Writing a plan

Remember that the lecturers marking your essays are looking not only for your knowledge of the subject but also for your ability to perceive the various and often complex issues underlying the question. Start by writing the essay question out in full at the top of a blank sheet of paper. It is often productive to associate freely around the key words and phrases without reference to the particular text or texts you will discuss in the essay: for example, if the essay asks you to write on

the use of memory in García Márquez's fiction, first think of all the ways in which memory might be used (and their related implications) in any fictional text: this will probably produce more ideas than if you start by thinking about the ways in which memory is used by García Márquez. You may also find that there are some obvious uses of memory that do not interest García Márquez, and this may point to something important about García Márquez's focus. After this 'brainstorming', you will then need to go on to think about how García Márquez in particular uses memory: you may decide at this stage that some of your uses of memory, or their related implications, are not relevant in García Márquez's case; in which case, delete them.

The next stage is to order your different points. If the question requires you to think about more than one key term (as, for example: 'To what extent does the use of memory in García Márquez imply a fatalistic attitude to history?'), you will not only need to order all your different ideas about 'memory', 'fatalistic attitude' and 'history', but also to relate the ideas about these three concepts to each other. The easiest way is to put a number next to each idea, preferably in another colour ink. These numbers represent the order in which you will discuss the various ideas in your essay. Group together ideas that are connected in some way. Leave the most important or complex ideas until the end, so your essay moves towards a climax. You have now planned the structure of your essay. At this stage, you may want to write the plan out again, to make it clearer.

Gathering material

You should embark on this only after writing your plan (i.e. when you know what you need to look for, and how the different issues are related). You will need to assemble information and ideas drawn from the prescribed texts, from the critical reading, and (most importantly) from your own thoughts on the issues raised by both of these. Your essay should not simply repeat what the prescribed text(s) and the critical reading say; it should consist of your ideas on what the prescribed text(s) and the critical reading say. You will see why you need clear, brief notes and an efficient filing system when you try to assemble the necessary information and ideas for an essay for the first time. You may find it helpful to discuss your ideas with other people, to clarify points of confusion. If (as is likely) you spot contradictions in your ideas, try to work out whether the contradiction exists in the text(s) and is a real contradiction that should be recognised and discussed; or whether it exists only in your head, in which case it needs ironing out. In most cases, you will find that the former is the case; don't be afraid to suggest that a writer is contradictory: the contradictions are probably the key to something important.

Structuring the essay

After writing the plan, as suggested above, things become easier: most of the work is done at the planning stage, which should take you longer than actually writing the essay.

The first paragraph of your essay should outline all the various issues you feel the question is asking you to discuss. In

other words, it consists of an outline of your plan. In this introductory paragraph, you should merely identify the issues, and not relate them to the text(s) you are discussing, or indicate what your conclusions will be.

The body of your essay will go through the various points identified in the introduction, in each case showing how these points are dealt with in the text(s). Start a new paragraph when you go on to each new point. Make sure that the first sentence of each paragraph states clearly what point you are moving on to; always identify the issue under discussion before going on to give illustrations from the text(s). You need only two or three examples from the text(s) to support each point you make; but each point must be supported with textual detail. You are not expected to give a comprehensive account of the whole text; extract only those examples that illustrate the particular issues being discussed. Above all, do not go through the text in sequential order (this invariably produces a dull essay that repeats what the text says, rather than analysing and interpreting it); the structure of your essay should be dictated by the sequence of ideas outlined in your plan, with examples taken from whatever part of the text seems most appropriate.

Apart from giving examples from the prescribed texts to support your argument, you will also need to refer to critics. Repeating what critics say at length is not a good idea. You can use critics either as a time-saving device, noting that González has argued a certain point, freeing you from the need to go through that

argument and allowing you space to go on to other things; or as a way of showing off your original ideas, by pointing out how they differ from what González has said. The latter is something you should try to do wherever possible.

When discussing each point, try to consider it from more than one perspective. For example, you could argue that García Márquez's use of memory suggests that history repeats itself, giving examples from the text; and then put forward a counter-argument, based on different examples from the text, suggesting that his use of memory can also be seen as a way of breaking with the past. The more different points of view you consider, the more interesting your essay will be.

You will need a brief concluding paragraph. It is a waste of time to repeat your main points. The best conclusions are probably those that make a decision as to what, on balance, is the case (if your essay has taken the form of an argument and a counter-argument); or those that express your personal views on the subject (i.e. do you personally feel that the writer is successful in dealing with the issues discussed?). Another way of concluding is to identify new questions or problems thrown up as a result of your discussion: often the best essays are those that do not find answers but identify further questions or problems.

Editing

After finishing your essay, go through it, checking the following:

- Does each paragraph start by clearly identifying what issue is going to be discussed? (If you can't yourself clearly identify what issue is being discussed, something is wrong.)
- Does each paragraph discuss only one issue? (If not, divide it into more than one paragraph.)
- Do you discuss the same issue or issues in more than one paragraph? (If so, put these different sections together as part of the same discussion.)
- Do you say things at different points in the essay that are mutually contradictory? (If so, sort this out.)

Plagiarism

The International Programmes employs the use of online plagiarism detection software and your work may be submitted to this online service. The plagiarism detection software will help Examiners identify poor academic practice or potential plagiarism in students' work.

The Regulations state that all work submitted as part of the requirements for any examination must be expressed in the candidate's own words and incorporate his or her own ideas and judgments and without plagiarism. What this means is best understood if you bear in mind the minimal difference in academic status between staff and students, which is one of the defining features of university education. In other words, we, as a body of teachers and researchers, impose on you the same regulations of intellectual honesty that we impose on ourselves. You should consider the work you submit

to us for examination in the same way we consider the manuscripts we submit to our peers, in their capacity as members of editorial boards, for publication. As authors, you will frequently have to make references to the work of others in order to:

- rebut their ideas
- develop their ideas
- support your own ideas.

These references take the form of either a quotation or a paraphrase. You must distinguish a textual quotation from your own work, either by quotation marks or by a paragraph with narrower indentation on both sides of the page which is separated from the preceding and following paragraphs by a blank line. In both cases, your reader must be able to locate the original text with minimum fuss; to help them do this you should provide a reference either in a footnote or in parentheses (if you are using the author–date system of the Modern Language Association). Provide all the publication details (see the section below on ‘References and bibliography’). You may paraphrase (express in your own words the sense of) the ideas of others, and as in the case of textual quotations, you must provide a footnote or parentheses to enable your readers to locate the original statements that you are paraphrasing. You must ensure that it is clear and unambiguous to your readers that these ideas are not your own (often this is best achieved by introducing the paraphrase with a direct reference to the author, such as ‘According to Elliot...’ or ‘In the view of Castro...’); if it is not totally clear that this is the case, the Examiners will deem your work to fall below the standards of intellectual honesty required

by the University Regulations, and you will suffer the appropriate penalty.

References and bibliography

All the points made in your essay should be backed up by reference to examples from the prescribed texts, and to points made by critics. Quotes from either of these sources should be brief. It is an excellent idea to analyse a passage of a prescribed text in detail; but quote only those specific phrases that illustrate your particular point. Often it is more effective to refer to the text in your own words, rather than to quote; in this way you will make it clear what point you are making about the text.

Whenever you refer to a text (whether a prescribed text or a critical study), you must acknowledge your source. This is not only a form of intellectual honesty (presenting other people’s ideas as your own is a form of plagiarism, and is treated severely by Examiners); it also allows you to show off the reading you have done. When quoting or referring to a prescribed text, it is enough to put the page number in brackets after the quote or reference. (In your bibliography you should list the particular edition used, so your page reference can be traced; see later in this section.) When quoting or referring to a critical study, it is best to insert a footnote (or endnote, as preferred) giving full bibliographical details, as follows:

Reference to a book

Ludmer, J. *‘Cien años de soledad’: una interpretación*. (Buenos Aires: Tiempo contemporáneo, 1972) p.67 (or pp.66–69).

Italics can alternatively be represented by underlining.

Reference to a book with an editor rather than an author

McGuirk, B. and R. Cardwell (eds)
Gabriel García Márquez: New Readings.
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1987) p.134.

Reference to an article in a periodical

Kadir, D. 'The Architectonic Principle of *Cien años de soledad* and the Vician Theory of History', *Symposium*, (1978) 32: 341–55 (or 342, if you are referring to a particular page). Here, *Symposium* is the name of the periodical; 32 is the volume number; and 341–55 are the first and last pages of the article respectively.

At the end of your essay, you should give a bibliography of all the texts referred to or consulted (don't include things that were no use for this particular essay). The first item(s) in your bibliography should be the particular edition(s) of the prescribed text(s) used. Then list the critical reading, either in alphabetical order of author or in descending order of importance. The various items should be listed using the same format given above for notes (but without referring to particular pages quoted, of course). Your bibliography need not be very long; we realise that you may have limited access to libraries. It is much more important to refer in detail to the prescribed texts than to amass a huge amount of references to critics. Above all, references to critics should always occupy less space than your own ideas. If you really have problems getting hold of the critical reading, an essay that consists solely of your own ideas on the prescribed texts will probably be acceptable.

Revision and examinations

Revision

It is a good idea to study past examination papers for the courses you are taking, so you are familiar with the types of question that may be asked.

For the language courses, you should practise doing the kinds of exercise set in past papers. Go through any work you have had corrected and take note of the kinds of mistake you tend to make: revise these problems in a grammar book. It is also useful to surround yourself with as much written and spoken Spanish as you can, so that you take it in subconsciously: read newspapers and magazines, and listen to Spanish-speaking radio broadcasts (for example, Spectrum Radio International) or watch videos of Spanish or Latin American films.

For the literature and culture options, if you have read the prescribed texts (and some critical studies) carefully during your studies, revision should not be a major operation. For this reason, it is not a good idea to leave all the reading until close to the examination. Revising means rereading, not reading for the first time. Since you have to answer three questions for each course, it is a good idea to revise five texts or authors (depending on how the course is organised; check past examination papers to see if questions require you to answer on one text, or on several texts by the same author). This means that you will have two texts or authors in reserve, in case you don't like the questions on your three first choices. Revising more texts than this is probably not a good idea, since as a part-time

student you are bound to suffer from lack of time: it is better to know a limited amount of material well than to have superficial knowledge and understanding of everything on the syllabus.

You will need to go through the prescribed texts you have selected again, and through your notes on the relevant critical reading (if your notes are adequate, you should not need to reread the critical studies).

Try to read the prescribed texts again; having completed the reading for the course, you will now see things in them you did not see the first time. If you are really pushed for time, just look carefully through the passages you have underlined or highlighted (or your notes). The day before the examination, sit down with the prescribed texts in front of you, and skim-read each page: your eyes will fall on proper names (characters and places), which will remind you what happens and how much space is devoted to what. If you have read the text well the first time, this skim-reading will act as a trigger that brings everything back. You can get through a 600-page novel in two hours in this way.

It is not a good idea to prepare model answers to possible examination questions, not only because the same questions are unlikely to come up, but also because, if they do, you will then be trying to remember your model answer instead of thinking out your answer anew: this is likely to lead to a memory block or panic. What is helpful is to practise constructing model plans for questions set on past papers (see Structuring the essay on page 20 for how to construct a plan). This gets

you used to the intellectual discipline of thinking carefully about all the implications of the question, so that you will be able to turn your hand to virtually any question that comes up.

On a practical note, make sure that when you get to the examination period you are eating and sleeping well (i.e. that you are in peak physical – and therefore mental – condition). If you work flat out right up to the last minute, you will be too tired to give your best. You have to think out your answers during the examination (it cannot be done in advance), and you need to be feeling well enough to do this. It should be said here that, if you have medical problems during the revision or examination period, you should get a medical certificate from your doctor and send it to the International Programmes: without this, medical conditions cannot be taken into account.

Reading the examination paper and choosing questions

The first thing you have to do is read the instructions at the top of the paper carefully. Do not throw marks away by answering the wrong number of questions; or by answering two questions on the same writer when this is not allowed. On the language papers, the instructions to each individual question must also be read carefully (and obeyed scrupulously).

You then need to choose your questions. On the language papers, there may not be a choice. Your choice will be partly determined by which texts or authors you have revised. If it is left to you to decide which text or author a particular question

should be applied to (e.g. 'Examine the use of interior monologue in one of the course texts'), make sure you choose a text or author that allows you to discuss the topic specified.

It is a good idea, for your three questions, to choose two that are relatively complex and allow you to show off your capacity for independent thought; and one that is relatively straightforward, which you can leave until the end. If you know that your third answer is not going to require too much thought on the spot, you can get down to the first and second questions without panicking. And by the time you get to the third question, you will be too tired to deal with something that requires a lot of complex thought. Also, choose three questions that will allow you to write different kinds of answer: three answers that are much the same, or which repeat exactly the same material used in previous essays, will not impress an Examiner.

Managing your time

This is essential. It is possible to write your third question in 20 minutes, but not advisable. Your Examiners know that you are writing under examination conditions, and do not expect you to say more than can be said in the time allotted. In your introduction to each answer, you can mention aspects of the question that you know are important but which you have decided not to go into for reasons of time: this shows that you are aware of the issues, and leaves you free to say something interesting about those limited aspects which you have chosen to discuss. It is better to discuss a limited range of ideas in depth, rather than to rush superficially through everything.

If you are running out of time, make sure you at least attempt the required number of questions. An unanswered question will get a mark of zero, seriously affecting your average mark for the paper. An unfinished question will get some marks. Rather than simply stopping, try to cover the remaining points in note form. If your essay is unfinished, the Examiners will give you some credit for your plan: this is one of the many reasons for spending some time constructing a plan for each answer. If an essay is unfinished, write 'unfinished' at the end, so that the Examiners know that you did have more to say.

Planning and writing your answers

The next two paragraphs apply only to the literary and cultural options. Planning an answer to an examination question is done in the same way as for an essay (see Structuring the essay above), except that, given the pressures of limited time, it is even more important to know where you are going before you start to write. If you start writing without a plan, you are likely to panic. Also, the stress of examinations increases the risk of wandering off the point: if you have a detailed plan, you can keep referring back to it to make sure that what you are saying is relevant to the question. Any part of an answer that is irrelevant will get a red line through it, no matter how brilliant the idea. You normally have one hour to answer each question: use up to 20 minutes constructing the plan. In the remaining 40 minutes you will be able to write flat out, because most of the thinking has been done in advance; this way you will write more than if you spend 55 minutes writing the essay without knowing where you are going.

In an examination you are not expected to quote the texts (paraphrasing is enough) or to give full bibliographical references for your sources. But you should acknowledge by name any critic whose ideas you use; if you can't remember the exact name, at least say 'A critic has said...'

It is a good idea to write your answers on alternate lines, so there is room to add corrections and changes of mind. This is preferable to copying your answer out again at the end of the examination.

If you are used to writing your essays on a word processor, it may be advisable for you to practise writing short essays in longhand in preparation for the examination.

Checking your answers

In the language papers make sure you leave time to reread and revise your answers. Draw up in advance a list of the mistakes you most commonly make; check your answers for these. It is better to go through your answers several times, in each case looking out for one particular kind of mistake (e.g. agreement of adjectives, use of the subjunctive) rather than trying to spot all the different kinds of mistake at once.

Self-evaluation

This is extremely important when you are working on your own. Make sure you learn from the feedback you are given on your essays, and on any language work you do for a teacher. When you get your marks for the courses you have taken in a particular year, use that information to learn what you are best at and what are your weaknesses: work at your weak spots,

and choose your future options and essay topics so you can play to your strengths.

You can also do a lot to improve your performance by evaluating yourself. To do this, you need first to define your goals: at the start of each subject, write a list of the various things you hope to have achieved by the end of it. When you get to the end, ask yourself which of those goals you have successfully achieved. If you have not achieved a certain goal, ask whether the expectation was realistic, or whether you still find that goal important: if so, try to think what may have gone wrong, and what you can do about it. Also ask yourself whether you have achieved anything that was not included in your original list of goals: the subject may have made you aware of skills or needs you had not thought about previously. You may find at the end of a subject that you have developed talents you did not know you had. Self-evaluation is not an exercise in masochism but in confidence-building.

Hispanic studies resources on the internet

Some resources you might find useful are the following:

Latin American studies

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/las.html>

Iberoamerican Museum of Visual Culture on the Web

www.bbk.ac.uk/ibamuseum2/

Iberian Studies in SALALM

Academic Resources Guides

<http://library.brown.edu/gateway/ISiS/custom.php?id=602&task=custom&contentid=1197>

Biblioteca Virtual

Miguel de Cervantes

A website particularly useful if you are studying for courses including bibliography from the nineteenth century or before:

www.cervantesvirtual.com

Other useful resources for student access to Spanish and Latin American books and film

Books and film

J. Whiting Books
46 St Olaves Road
York, YO30 7AL
Tel: +44 (0)1904 656 766
julianwhiting@aol.com

Alibris www.alibris.com

Books

Espabooks www.espabooks.com

Secondhand books from worldwide dealers

Abe books www.abebooks.com

Film

FNAC www.fnac.es

DVDgo www.dvdgo.com

Spanish language and literature links

See 'I Love Languages' on:

www.ilovelanguages.com

formerly 'The Human Languages page' on:

www.june29.com/HLP/

'Zona Latina' on:

www.zonalatina.com

Some newspaper web addresses:

El País www.elpais.es (Spain)

La Nación www.lanacion.com.ar
(Argentina)

ABC www.abc.es (Spain)

Caretas www.caretas.com.pe (Peru).

Servicio Iberico de Libros

Online bookstore that specialises in providing books, periodical publications, magazines, printed and recorded music, CD-ROMs, or any type of documentary material from Spain to universities, cultural institutions, professors and interested people worldwide:

www.servilibros.com/cgi/menu5en.odb

The Online Library

The Online Library has been developed for International Programmes students. You can access your programme's individual Online Library homepage at:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/index.php?id=spanish

To access the Online Library from the Portal, click on the 'Online Library' tab.

Online Library tour

To help you to find your way around the Online Library, take the tour:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/help/tour.php

This should only take you five minutes to complete but it will save you a lot of time in the future.

Passwords for accessing the Online Library

To use the resources available in the Online Library you will need to request a personal Athens username and password. To do this, please fill in the form at:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/help/databases

Your personal Athens account will be renewed by the Online Library Team in December each year that you are registered as an International Programmes student.

Summon

Summon is the Online Library's new Google-like search engine that provides fast, relevancy-ranked results through a single search box. You can find journal articles by typing the article title into the Summon search box. You will need to

use your Athens password to access the resources that you find through Summon. To find out more, please go to:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/summon/about.php

Databases and electronic journals

The Online Library provides access to a wide variety of databases, many of which contain full-text electronic journals and eBooks. If you are interested in a particular journal use the Full Text Electronic Journal List:

<http://zk6qc5fe9p.search.serialssolutions.com/>

You can browse or search the full list of the Online Library's databases from the databases page:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/res/databases.php?id=spanish

Here are some of the major databases that the Online Library provides:

- **Academic Search Complete** – updated daily, this is a multidisciplinary database with full-text coverage of 7,900 periodicals, including more than 6,800 peer-reviewed journals.
- **Dawson's eBook collection** – several core textbooks are available here in electronic format, and the collection is constantly growing.
- **JSTOR** – full-text journals across a broad range of subject areas including classical studies, economics, education, finance, history, mathematics, political science, sociology and statistics.

- **Web of Knowledge** – delivers easy access to high-quality scholarly information in the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities. This also includes free access to My EndNote Web reference management.

The Online Library Team has developed introductory **Quick Start Guides** for each of the databases to help you learn to use them effectively:

www.external.shl.london.ac.uk/pdf

Support for using the Library

The Online Library Team will be available between 09.00 and 17.00 (GMT) Monday to Friday. You can contact them with your enquiries by email or telephone:

OnlineLibrary@shl.lon.ac.uk
+44 (0)20 7862 8478

You can also make enquiries by filling in a web form at:

www.external.shl.london.ac.uk/help/enquiries/index.php

A specialist librarian will respond to your enquiry within two working days. Email replies from the Online Library Enquiries Service are sometimes interpreted as junk mail (spam) by filters. This means that you might miss our reply to you, particularly if you are using Hotmail or AOL. To avoid frustration, if you are using a junk mail filter please set it to allow email from OnlineLibrary@shl.lon.ac.uk or uolia.support@london.ac.uk

The Help Desk

While the Online Library Team will aim to answer your enquiry within two working days, you may be able to find the information you need instantly at the Online Library Help Desk:

www.external.shl.london.ac.uk/help/

Feedback or suggestions?

If you would like to suggest a resource or have any ideas as to how the Online Library can be improved, please let the Online Library Team know:

www.external.shl.london.ac.uk/contact/

Keep up to date with Library developments in the News section of our website:

www.external.shl.lon.ac.uk/news/index.php

Assessment in the Spanish and Latin American Studies programme

The assessment information below is specific to the Spanish and Latin American Studies programme.

For general information about how the examination entry process works, please refer to 'Entering for examinations' on page G.19 of the General section.

Submission of essays for literary and cultural courses

The Student Assessment Office will send you a list of titles for the first compulsory essay during the last week of October.

A list of titles for the second compulsory essay will be sent to you in February.

To submit your essays for assessment, you should send two copies of each essay to the Student Assessment Office:

Student Assessment Office
University of London International
Programmes
Stewart House
32 Russell Square
London WC1B 5DN
United Kingdom

The first essay must be submitted by 15 January and the second essay by 22 April in the year of your examination. Any essay arriving after these dates will not be marked.

Aural and oral examinations

You will be notified of the date and time of the aural and oral examinations for Spanish language 1, 2, 3 and 4 by mid-March in the year of the examination. A notice will also be posted online once the date has been set.

You should be aware that permission to take aural and/or oral examinations outside of London is dependent on the Examination Centre's ability to make arrangements for the conduct of these examinations that are acceptable to the University. If it is not possible to make arrangements for you to take your aural or oral examinations locally, you must apply to take them in London.

Prizes for BA Spanish and Latin American Studies students

A **University of London Award for Academic Achievement** of £100, funded by the International Programmes, may be awarded at the Examiners' discretion to a student at any level of the BA degree in Spanish and Latin American Studies who has achieved a distinguished performance in the examination as a whole, or in any paper or papers thereof.

A **Dr Guenther** prize of £500, provided from a gift made by Dr I. Guenther, may be awarded annually at the discretion of the Convocation Trust to the graduate who has achieved the best performance in a modern European language. This prize is open to graduates in Spanish and Latin American Studies, French, German, Italian or the Joint Honours degree in Languages. A student awarded the Dr Guenther prize will not be eligible for the University of London Award for Academic Achievement.

Transferring to Birkbeck College

This information should be read in conjunction with the Transfer information in the General section.

Transferring to a course at Birkbeck College

Students who wish to transfer their registration formally and become students of Birkbeck College, rather than International Programmes students, should note that transfers can only be requested between July and September for the academic year starting in October. It is emphasised that entry to Birkbeck College is competitive and, while applications from International Programmes students are encouraged, transfer is not automatic and cannot be guaranteed.

International Programmes students within travelling distance of London may enquire from the Programme Director about the possibility of attending evening classes at Birkbeck College (1800–2100 GMT), providing there is room on the corresponding course/courses. Students should note that, although the BA in Spanish and Latin American Studies via the International Programmes consists of subjects from the BA Iberian and Latin American Studies offered at Birkbeck, not all of the subjects are offered in any particular academic year. In some cases, course syllabuses may also differ slightly.