

## Department of Spanish and Portuguese Curricular Retreat Report

Department Curricular Retreat  
August 29, 2008  
Mary Maples Dunn Conference Room

Present: Michelle Joffroy, Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Estela Harretche, Reyes Lázaro, Marguerite Itamar Harrison, Ibtissam Bouachrine, María Helena Rueda, Malcolm McNee, Patricia González, Silvia Berger, Molly Falsetti-Yu, Hugo Viera

Report:

### **Agenda:**

**The Department of Spanish and Portuguese had the following agenda for its retreat**

- I. Structure and Course Distribution: Assess the Spanish curriculum, its structure and course distribution, to determine how to better serve the needs of the Spanish Major and at the same time preserve course offerings that the College curricular goals and other majors depend on.
- II. Curricular Assessment/Design for Learning: Assess our curricula (Spanish and Portuguese) in light of the College's Design for Learning and in line with the College's curricular capacities, and identify courses where those capacities are best integrated and articulated.

### **I. Structure and Course Distribution:**

#### **A. Actions: The following changes were considered and adopted at the retreat, and received CAP approval in spring, 2008:**

1. We agreed to change the introductory course SPN 112 from a year-long, intensive course meeting five days per week, to a year-long course, meeting three days per week.
2. We agreed to reduce the number of sections of SPN 112 offered from 4 per semester to 2.

#### **Rationale:**

SPN 112 became intensive in 1996-97. Our purposes were to accelerate learning, get more students interested in the major, and, simultaneously, obtain some attrition in enrollments at the lower level, as advised by the outside reviewers of our earlier Decennial (fewer students would want to take intensive courses). With regards to the former goals, obviously students progressed at a faster pace, but this did not yield more majors. We discovered that our majors do not come from 112. Thus, in 2002-03, 6 years after implementing 112 as an intensive course, only one senior major had begun in 112; in 2004-05, two senior majors had begun in 112. From 2005 to 2008, only **2 majors (out of 72)** had begun in 112. (Department Retreat data, August 2008). This is not an evaluation of the course's effectiveness, but only one measure of its significance for the department and the major. Another important element in all this is that, as explained below, the course is management-intensive. The stark contrast between the few students who go on to major and, at the other end, the excessive management work and staffing required justifies the need to reconfigure 112

Regarding our other original objective: to bring about some attrition at this level, this has become a less pressing need, probably because students come better prepared from high school (as per the results of the placement test and the many first-years in our 200-level classes) or perhaps, also, because they take other languages (this we do not know). The fact is that fewer students need these courses now so that we have already decided that, starting in 2009-10, we will offer only 2 sections of 112 instead of 4. We trust this will be stable for the coming years.

We are of course happy to offer SPN 112 as a service course that introduces students to Spanish, that supports the curricular goals of the College and other academic majors (most majors now encourage study abroad, thus embedding a language proficiency requirement in the major): it is part of our mission and our interest, and it has been a very successful course by several measures. But given the departure of Nico Suárez, who designed and regularly revised the SPN 112 curriculum, and Ana Lopez, our former language coordinator—especially given the uncertainty and complexity of staffing matters for the course, much of which Ana handled—we think it is wise to reduce its administrative burden. Especially since SPN 112 does not yield majors, we consider it wise to reduce the demands associated with it, and to use our faculty resources in more creative ways that yield richer pathways through the major.

As a compromise, then, between providing this course at the most accelerated level and alleviating the management quotient, we think this change, from intensive to non-intensive, year-long, is the solution. Making SPN 112 non-intensive will eliminate the need for TA's; reducing the number of sections offered will release current instructors to teach in the more demanding, and higher-yielding (in terms of majors), 200-level courses.

## **II. Curricular Assessment: Design for Learning, CAP Curricular Goals**

**Curricular Expectations:** As a department that offers two different majors in language, literature and culture—Spanish (SPN) and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies (POR)—our mission falls primarily under the rubric of learning a foreign language and engaging with its cultures. In this regard, study abroad in Spanish and/or Portuguese speaking countries is considered a co-curricular goal of both majors, and we strive to meaningfully integrate the JYA experience as one model of global engagement within the curriculum. Nevertheless, our curriculum distinguishes itself from a traditional “foreign language acquisition” model in two significant ways:

**Transnational vs. national languages:** Because Spanish is the second most common language in the United States (after English); because Spanish is the primary language spoken at home by over 34 million people aged 5 or older in the United States; and because Hispanics/Latinos are the fastest growing demographic sector in the U.S. population, the Spanish curriculum educates students in the complexities of cultural and linguistic communities represented transnationally, “at home” as well as abroad. One example of this curricular commitment is seen in **SPN 125: Spanish for Heritage Speakers**, a course designed for speakers of Spanish who have not studied the language in an academic setting. Engaging with Spanish “and its cultures” is therefore inclusive of, but not reducible to, study away. Our curriculum integrates the rich dynamics of Spanish, and its communities, as a transnational experience.

**Interculturalism vs. multiculturalism:** As part of our previous restructuring of the SPN major requirements, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese instituted a one-semester Portuguese language requirement for the Spanish major, and created **POR 125: Portuguese for Spanish Speakers** to facilitate the completion of the requirement. The integration of both Spanish and Portuguese reflects our commitment to moving past the multiculturalist model of “sampling” cultural differences, to a more complex *intercultural* model that cultivates in our students an awareness of and engagement with the cultural, historical, and experiential contingencies that shape interactions in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds. The linguistic, political, historical, and cultural intersections of the Americas, the Caribbean, Spain, Brazil, Portugal, and Lusophone Africa are made material and concrete for all Spanish majors. In addition to **POR 125**, the Department also created an advanced course in literary translation, **SPN 380/POR 380**, which gives students the opportunity to engage in an advanced and in-depth way with the intercultural realities of Spanish and Portuguese cultural and literary traditions. The course has been an extremely successful addition to the curriculum and fulfills advanced course requirements for both the Spanish and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies majors. Indeed, it is a model for future projects

that seek to foster more integration and intentionality in the intellectual development of our students. Finally, an interesting and possibly path-breaking intercultural “entry point” to both majors was instituted this year by one first year student considering the Spanish major who enrolled in **POR 100** as an entry point to the Spanish major when both sections of SPN 112y were filled to capacity.

The SPN and POR curricula integrate second language learning with cultural studies (including, but not limited to, literature, music and film) at every level of study. Overall the curricular assessment shows that the SPN and POR curricula offer courses that cover all the “capacities” identified by CAP, with the exception of *applying scientific reasoning*.

See the *Department of Spanish and Portuguese Curricular Goals and Capacities Guide to Courses* for detailed information on course distributions.

**The Department of Spanish and Portuguese Curricular Goals and Capacities Guide to Courses**

**Goal I: Think critically and analytically; convey knowledge and understanding**

<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Courses</b>
<b>Writing clearly</b>	<i>SPN</i> 244, 250, 251, 260, 261, all 300-level courses; <i>POR</i> 200, 215, 220, 221, 280, all 300-level courses
<b>Speaking articulately</b>	<i>SPN</i> 200, 220, 230, 240, 241, 245, 246, 250, 251, 260, 261, all 300-level courses; <i>POR</i> 200, 215, 220, 221, 280, all 300-level courses
<b>Reading closely</b>	<i>SPN</i> 230, 240, 241, 245, 246, 250, 251, 260, 261, all 300-level courses; <i>POR</i> 220, 221, 280, all 300-level courses
<b>Evaluating and presenting evidence accurately</b>	<i>SPN</i> 250, 251, 260, 261, all 300-level courses; <i>POR</i> 280, all 300-level courses
<b>Knowing and using quantitative skills</b>	<i>SPN</i> 220, 246: Negotiating the Borderlands, 372: Women, Environmental Justice and Social Action; <i>POR</i> 215, all topics, 221: The Brazilian Body, 221: Cultural Crosscurrents in Today's Portuguese Speaking World, 221: Envisioning Lusofonia, 381: Race, Nation, and Narrative.
<b>Engaging with artistic creation and expression</b>	<i>SPN</i> 120, 125, all 200-300 level courses; <i>POR</i> 215, 220, 221, 280, all 300-level courses
<b>Working both independently and collaboratively</b>	<i>SPN</i> 120, 125, all 200-300 level courses; <i>POR</i> 125, 220, 221, 280 all 300-level courses

**Goal II: Develop historical and comparative perspective**

<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Courses</b>
<b>Learning foreign languages</b>	<i>SPN</i> : all courses; <i>POR</i> : all courses
<b>Studying the historical development of societies, cultures and philosophies</b>	<i>SPN</i> 230: Women's Visions of Mexico, 230: Central American Poetry of War and Peace, 230: A Transatlantic Search for Identity, 230: The Indian Question in Peru and Mexico: Identity, Nation Building and Cultural Autonomy; 241, 245, 246, 250, 251, 260, 261, 332: Medieval Spain under Muslim Reign, 366: Rewriting the Spanish Civil War: A Journey to Exile, 372: Women, Environmental Justice and Social Action, 372: Stages of Conflict, 373: Urban Spaces and Migrant Identities in Latin America,; <i>POR</i> 381: Brasil Profundo <i>CLT</i> 268: Latina and Latin American Women Writers, <i>CLT</i> 364: Don Juan:

	Worlds Traveler
<b>Understanding multi-and inter-disciplinary approaches</b>	<p><i>SPN</i> 241, 245, 246, 370: (Dis)locations of culture in Contemporary Latin America, 372: Stages of Conflict; 373: Literature, Film, and the Transnational Imagination;</p> <p><i>POR</i> 221: Envisioning Lusofonia, 381: Multiple Lenses of Marginality: New Brazilian Filmmaking by Women; 221: Popular Music, Nationhood, and Globalization, 221: Shifting Landscapes in Brazilian Film, 381: Race, Nation, and Narrative</p> <p><i>CLT</i> 364: Don Juan: Worlds Traveler</p>

<b>Goal III: Become informed global citizen</b>	
<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Courses</b>
<b>Engaging with communities beyond Smith</b>	<p><i>JYA/SPN</i>: All JYA/Study abroad programs, PMSCP (Puebla, Mexico) co-curricular community service requirement</p> <p><i>POR</i> All JYA/Study abroad programs, 220: Contemporary Cityscapes</p>
<b>Learning tolerance and understanding diversity</b>	<p><i>SPN</i> 230: The Indian Question in Peru and Mexico: Identity, Nation Building and Cultural Autonomy, 246, 332: Queer Iberia, 340: Between the Familiar and the Alien: The Construction of the “Other” in Cervantes, 373: Urban Spaces and Migrant Identities in Latin America,</p> <p><i>POR</i> 220 : Contemporary Cityscapes 221: Brazil x Five, 221: Cultural Crosscurrents in Today’s Portuguese Speaking World; <i>POR</i> 381: Angola, Brazil, and Cuba: Race, Nation, and Narrative; <i>CLT</i> 268: Latina and Latin American Women Writers</p> <p><i>LAS</i> 201: The Bronze Screen</p>
<b>Applying moral reasoning to ethical problems</b>	<p><i>SPN</i> 230: Representations of violence in Latin American Literature, 370: Violence and Ethics in Latin American Narratives, 372: Women, Environmental Justice and Social Action</p> <p><i>POR</i>: 215: all topics, 220: Contemporary Cityscapes, 221: all topics</p>
<b>Understanding environmental challenges</b>	<p><i>SPN</i> 372: Women, Environmental Justice and Social Action</p> <p><i>POR</i> 381: Brasil Profundo</p>