



Universidad de Valladolid

The Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes

6 creds.

2nd semester, 2026-2027

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Aims and Objectives

This course intends to explore the rich relations between Spain and England in the 16th and 17th centuries, a period when war and religious strife marked the image of the “Other”, happening in parallel to a literary and cultural golden age in both countries. The figures of Shakespeare and Cervantes loom large in this period, but many other English and Spanish voices and texts illustrate an ambience of mutual interest coexisting with rivalry. We will examine echoes, references, imitations and translations in a variety of texts, including pamphlets, letters, news, poems, as well as more canonical works of fiction.

By the end of the course, successful students should be able to:

- Understand the complex and varied historical and cultural relations held between Spain and English throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- Assess the importance of the historical context of Anglo-Spanish political rivalry and alliance in the cultural production of both nations.
- Assess the importance of the historical context of Anglo-Spanish religious antagonism in the cultural production of both nations.
- Analyze a set of essential English and Spanish works of the time, tracing the connections and interrelations that allow contextualizing them with Anglo-Spanish relations.
- Analyze translations, from Spanish to English and vice-versa, within the historical context of reference.
- Identify intertextualities in early modern English and Spanish texts, including pamphlets, letters, news, poems, as well as more canonical works of fiction.

- Handle with solvency the theoretical framework and critical concepts that allow deepening the understanding of the texts under scrutiny.

Course Program

1. POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. The political and diplomatic tensions that defined relations between Spain and England from the mid sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries are the background for the life and work of two authors (Shakespeare and Cervantes) who coincided chronologically but lived and wrote about very different circumstances. We will study cross references between both authors as well as the political and diplomatic tensions between Spain and England as a consequence of the Reformation.
 2. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION AND REPRESENTATIONS ON THE STAGE. Both Spain and England developed their own playgoing traditions in parallel but with evident differences between them. We will close read some plays from the period where there is a crossover between traditions and which feature characters or events that represent the other. The transmission of texts between Spain and England by way of letters, manuscripts and printed material will be studied concerning their itineraries as well as reception.
 3. RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATIONS AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE. Spain and England were not just clashing at a political level. Their religious differences were another source of confrontation. Surprisingly, this increased people's mobility between the two countries, as well as the production of Anglo-Spanish texts. In this section we'll read texts expressing the experience of transnational mobility in letters, news, poems and a variety of works, and the echoes of these circumstances in Shakespeare and Cervantes.
 4. MATERIAL AND TEXTUAL ENCOUNTERS: MANUSCRIPTS, PRINTED BOOKS AND TRANSLATIONS. In the age of Shakespeare and Cervantes, Anglo-Spanish cultural and literary relations can be traced through their material and textual traces. This section will focus on books and manuscripts that travelled between England and Spain, and on Anglo-Spanish intertextualities and translations of texts.
 5. WORKSHOP: Students will participate on a practical session including visits to Casa de Cervantes, the English College and other sites of special significance for the topics of the course.
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Methodology

The students will be expected to attend lectures, prepare for them reading the set texts and recommended bibliography, and be actively involved in class discussion as well as any other organized activities.

Assessment

The students will be evaluated on a combination of their class attendance and participation, their reading of bibliography and a final paper or reading journal and/or oral presentation.

Participation is highly recommended as it is an important percentage of the final mark. Those students who find it impossible to attend classes are expected to submit a critical commentary of the set texts on the due date (at least 600 words for each text); if that is your case, please let us know.

Bibliography and Resources

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Schedule

Information about the schedule will be announced on the website