

## FIRST-YEAR SPANISH – NEW COLLEGE

### Note on the first-year course

In your first year at Oxford, you will prepare four papers for the Preliminary Examination in Spanish, which you will sit at the end of Trinity Term (the summer term):

**Paper I** will consist of:

(i) a translation from English into Spanish of a passage of about 250 words (called a ‘prose’); and (ii) a set of twenty or so sentences to translate, again into Spanish, intended principally to test your knowledge of Spanish grammar. Tuition for this paper is organised centrally and you will be taught mainly by native speakers in classes with students from other colleges.

**Paper II** will consist of:

Two translations from Spanish into English. This paper is taught by me in a weekly class. As well as learning translation skills, we continue to work on Spanish grammar and vocabulary in this class. You will need a good bilingual dictionary (i.e. Spanish-English, English-Spanish), the set grammar book (see enclosed reading list) and an exercise book or similar in which to note new vocabulary, which you must do systematically: a lack of vocabulary is one of the most common shortcomings at the end of the first year.

**Paper III:**

This paper consists of the close study of four important Spanish texts from different periods, covering the short story, the novel, drama, and poetry. You will have lectures on these texts throughout the year, not necessarily coinciding with your tutorials on them, which are taught by me. For these tutorials you will probably be in a pair or a group of three. Your lecturers will give you reading lists to help guide your secondary reading. Tutorials on these texts will begin in Michaelmas Term (i.e. October) when we shall study *El médico de su honra*, ‘Rinconete y Cortadillo’ (from the *Novelas ejemplares*) and *Campos de Castilla*. *La fiesta del Chivo* will be studied at the start of Hilary Term (i.e. January).

**Paper IV:**

This paper traces the history of the Spanish ballad (or *romance*) from medieval times to the twentieth century. It is taught, like paper III, in tutorials, and through lectures given at various times during the academic year. Lecturers will provide you with detailed reading lists and our tutorial study of these texts will begin in Hilary Term with the *romancero viejo* and then the *romances artificiosos* by Lope de Vega, Quevedo and Góngora. Some of the texts by these three Golden-Age poets are difficult and you should not expect to understand all of their references or fathom their linguistic complexity immediately. You will be given some sample commentaries during the first year to help you contextualize and understand them. The modern *romances* by the Duque de Rivas, Antonio Machado and Lorca will be studied in Trinity Term (after Easter), during which we shall also revise the year’s work in preparation for exams at the end of the academic year.

The enclosed reading list provides details of the prescribed editions.

**Before coming up to Oxford, please read and familiarize yourself thoroughly with the Calderón, the Cervantes, and the Machado texts. It is important, too, to begin learning any unfamiliar vocabulary that these contain.**

As you know, the learning of a language is a gradual business. You should take every opportunity to enrich your knowledge of Spanish by speaking the language when you have the chance, reading newspapers and watching or listening to news and other broadcasts, and noting down new vocabulary and words and phrases that you do not understand as you hear and read them. An active attitude to language acquisition and a willingness to go on learning is enormously helpful for a language student.

The literary side of the course will be new to many students and, although some feel uncertain as they undertake the reading, the vast majority of students at Oxford end up relishing this part of the course and the worlds it opens up. It can take some time and hard work to come to terms with the content and the demands of the literature papers and so it pays to be prepared. As well as reading the three texts mentioned above, you should try to see and discuss Spanish plays and films and read something about the history and culture of Spain and Spanish America. Below are some suggestions that you may find helpful:

Raymond Carr, ed., *Spain: A History* (Oxford: OUP, 2000)

Peter Russell, ed., *Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies* (London: Routledge, 1989)

Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992)

If you have any questions about any of this, please do email me:

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I'm looking forward to meeting you again in October. In the meantime, all good wishes for a pleasant summer.

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