

SPAN 204

Intermediate Spanish

General Description

Introduction

Aside from the obvious reason of obtaining college credit, there are many important reasons to continue your study of Spanish. It is now the third most common spoken language in the world. Of the approximately 400 million speakers worldwide, more than 40 million live in the United States. By the year 2050, it is estimated that one of every four Americans will be Latino. Learning Spanish will enable you to meet new people, explore different cultures, and participate in growing business opportunities.

Course Objectives

Unlike Spanish courses that are designed to teach Spanish to tourists, this course centers on communication. Created by linguists who have studied how people best learn to communicate in a foreign language, the *Metas* textbook and related materials will help you perfect your grammar and enhance your vocabulary through the study of the people, culture, music, history, and geography of the Spanish-speaking world. Instead of learning Spanish through a study of its grammatical rules or through phrases from a guidebook, you will be reviewing grammar while reading and hearing about historical events, debating world issues such as ecology, and analyzing samples of literature. By the end of the course, you will have gained a much broader appreciation of the culture of the Central and South American countries.

While this course will strengthen your reading, writing, and listening skills, it will give you very little practice speaking. The best way to learn to speak a foreign language is to actually speak it, and as this is a correspondence course, this aspect of

communication will not be covered. This does not mean, however, that you should ignore this most important skill—I encourage you to seek any and all opportunities to speak Spanish! Go to a Mexican restaurant, speak to neighbors and co-workers, and find conversation partners. This practice will not only reinforce your work for the course, it will also help you to improve your spoken Spanish.

Textbook

The text for SPAN 204 is *Metas: Spanish in Review, Moving Toward Fluency*, by Sharon W. Foerster and Anne Lambright (2008), along with the accompanying workbook (the *Manual*) and three CDs. We will call it *Metas* for short. You may purchase the package from the Higher Grounds bookstore at the Friday Center in person, using the book order form in this manual, or online at <https://s4.its.unc.edu/HigherGrounds>. Purchase of the textbook will also give you access to a wealth of online support material, including quizzes and interactive exercises. You are required to have access to the Internet for this course.

In addition to the required materials, you should have a Spanish/English dictionary. I suggest using a full-size dictionary—trying to use a tiny pocket dictionary can be more frustrating than not having one to use at all! (The glossary in *Metas* is not intended to be used as a dictionary and contains only words found in the text.) Always remember to pay attention to the part of speech of the word you are looking up: *bien* and *mucho* both mean “fine,” but one is an adverb and the other is a noun.

The text is based on the adventures of five friends who meet in an Austin, Texas, coffee house for conversation. The friends are from different parts of the Spanish-speaking world and will introduce you to their countries of origin. As you learn about *los cinco amigos* and their cultures, you will also review Spanish grammar and learn how to express yourself more clearly by describing, comparing, reacting, narrating past events, speaking about your likes and dislikes, making hypotheses, and speaking about the future—the seven communicative goals.

Since SPAN 204 comprises the second half of the intermediate

course, you will cover the last three units in the text, *Unidades* 4–6. Each *Unidad* has two *capítulos*, and each lesson in this manual covers one half of a *capítulo* in the text. Therefore, there are twelve lessons.

The text and the workbook contain helpful exercises designed to help you make the move from thinking about grammar in its mechanical uses to using it in context.

Study Suggestions

Each lesson contains reading and writing assignments from the text, several grammar exercises, and online activities from the Web component of the course. Each lesson is prefaced by objectives to help guide you. Be sure to read the objectives, the discussion, and the complete assignment in this manual before you begin reading in the text.

As you begin a reading assignment, first look at the pictures and the passage's title. Learning to read in a foreign language is difficult because the tendency is to stop at each new word and to look it up. This is not a good idea! Stopping so frequently will actually impede your reading comprehension. Before attempting to read a new section, try to form an impression of its subject matter based on the title and the accompanying pictures or photographs. First, skim the passage, trying to form a basic impression of what the author wants to convey. What is the central point? Are there characters, and if so, who are they? What perceptions do you have about the reading? Skimming (even if only for a few paragraphs) will help to orient you to what you are about to read.

Only after skimming the passage should you try to begin reading with more attention to detail. Although you will be tempted to look up every unfamiliar word, try to resist the impulse and instead make inferences about the content of the work based on what you do understand. Often we learn more by focusing on what we do understand than on what we don't. If you find that you still do not understand the passage because of a few words, look them up, paying special attention to context (*media hora*, for example, does not mean “stocking hour” but “half hour”). Never write the English word over the Spanish one—underline the word in question and define it at the bottom of the page. The

extra effort required by moving your eyes will help you to remember the word better. Plus, your text will remain clean enough to read later, after you have memorized the word!

You should employ a similar technique when you read or listen to material online. Before beginning, first look at the accompanying picture and read the title of the passage to help orient you to what is to come. You should also read the questions so that you have a general idea of what the passage is going to cover (keeping in mind that some of the questions may be true/false and will as such be deliberately misleading). While listening to the material online, don't get hung up on one or two words—try instead to get a general impression of what the passage is about. Pay attention as well to the different accents represented on the online materials. Maybe the next time you're in the grocery store you'll hear someone speaking in that accent and be able to tell where she is from!

Assignments

Each lesson will require you to read, complete grammar exercises, and write. You will answer reading comprehension questions, use grammar points in a variety of exercises, and write about the content of the lesson. Always think carefully about what you are going to write in Spanish before beginning. Translating from English does not work and often creates sentences that make no sense, such as “Between and drink a chair” (*Entre y tome una silla*, in Spanish, or “Come in and have a seat”). **Do not** use online translation services. Besides being academically dishonest, you will be cheating yourself out of genuine learning and practice. In addition, it is always obvious to someone fluent in the language that such a service has been used (if you doubt this, just read the instructions to some common household products manufactured in other countries that say things like “Please to not use beneath water”). By the end of the course, you should find it much easier to express yourself in written Spanish.

Even though the answers to many of the workbook exercises can be found in the back (and the answers to online exercises can be checked by clicking the *Verificar* button), you should attempt to complete them before checking to see if you're right. The extra effort will pay off in greater fluency later on. Despite the fact

that you won't be graded on workbook or online exercises, you should still do them to help improve your aural communication and reading comprehension.

The amount of time you need to spend on each lesson will depend on how strong your background is in Spanish and how long it has been since you last took a Spanish course. If you were taking this course on campus, you would spend about nine hours per lesson each week (three in-class hours plus six hours of homework). Make sure that you budget enough time to complete the course within your time frame! Spending a lot of time on the first few lessons will help you to re-familiarize yourself with Spanish, and the time required to complete each later lesson should diminish.

Grading and Final Exam

Your written assignments will count 75 percent of your final grade, and your final exam will count 25 percent.

The final exam will be similar to the assignments in the lessons: vocabulary exercises, grammar exercises, and some brief essays. A careful, thorough review of each lesson will be very profitable in reviewing for the final. No reference material (dictionaries, grammar books, verb conjugation books, computers) may be used during the final exam. Consult the study guide at the end of the course to get a clearer idea of the format for the exam.

You must pass the final exam in order to receive credit for the course.

A Final Word

I hope you enjoy SPAN 204 and find it to be a wonderful introduction to Latin American culture, literature, and history.
¡Buena suerte!