Long Assignment for

Reading Texts, Reading Life
Spanish 320

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Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

SPN 320 is a new, multi-section, fifth-semester course that develops students’ Spanish-language (L2) reading skills for all types of L2 texts (written, visual, and aural) of increasing length. We understand the word “text” broadly, and students may “read” films, graphic novels, myths, paintings, newspaper articles, songs, poems, internet blogs, TV and radio broadcasts, and so on. Course goals include: learning strategies to facilitate L2 reading in multiple genres, increasing L2 vocabulary, and furthering students’ cultural literacy about the Spanish-speaking world. All coursework, discussions, and assignments are in Spanish throughout the course.

Small group discussions and task-based activities of many types dominate our class sessions and promote oral and aural fluency in a low-risk, collaborative environment. Writing fluency in Spanish, which is implicitly encouraged via the modeling provided by many of the texts students read, is actively fostered through required responses to written prompts on all readings. These must be typed before class and submitted at the end of each class. Verbal communication and process are valued over grammar, which means that grammar mistakes are addressed only when they are inappropriate for this more advanced level, or they impede communication. The course is capped at 22 students.

There is no published textbook that incorporates the variety of texts we seek to examine, and so each instructor selects course content according to personal expertise. My class focuses on modern Mexico, with a special interest in Mexican women’s situations in the 20th and 21st centuries. During the semester, students complete three individual “linguistic tasks” that relate to three genres they have worked with. Students also complete a “personal learning journal” for which they select new items (culled from readings) to learn, and they read one on-line text (e.g., a BBC broadcast in Spanish, a Spanish-language TV program, an on-line blog) most weeks. They become accustomed to focusing on what they do understand (rather than unknown words), and they are encouraged to reflect on cultural differences.

This long assignment is the final exam project; it is designed to measure their understanding of the novel, which reflects how effectively they use reading strategies, genre conventions, an expanded vocabulary and cultural literacy when analyzing this last, and lengthiest, text.
The course used a more abbreviated, less developed version of this assignment for the first time last year. Key changes I made in this version:

- Including “threshold elements.” I had incorporated these basic requirements as part of the evaluation, giving them point values. It makes much more sense only to accept work that fulfills rudimentary expectations, rather than awarding them points.

- Evaluating the submission of typed answers to the guided questions for each chapter. This change correlates well with the value placed on process all semester long, and also lets me assess directly individual student preparation for small-group discussions.

- Requiring a one-paragraph prospectus as the novel ends. My goal is to encourage them to organize their thoughts and focus their review-blog earlier, and spend more time locating and organizing their evidence.

- Including a “closure” component, where they read and write a guided critique of two review-blogs by classmates. This final step allows them to consider different ways of understanding and organizing a review based on the same content.

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The Assignment I Distribute to Students

SPN 320 – Reading Texts, Reading Life
Final Exam: Blog-Review of *Fronterizas*, by Roberta Fernández

For the final exam, you will write a 1,200 to 1,500-word blog-review of *Fronterizas*.

Your blog audience is your peers, who are educated readers able to understand Spanish-language texts---either as native speakers or as individuals like you who enjoy reading, seeing and listening to Spanish-language texts of all sorts. These peers follow your blog to help decide whether to see, read, or listen to texts they haven’t read. [Your exam will also include critiques of blogs by two of your classmates.]

**Blog Subject**

*Fronterizas’s* front cover blurb states that this text comprises portrayals of six women whose cultural and personal habits impact Nenita, the narrator. Each chapter focuses on one of these women. Other general text themes you will see are:

- how this small community influences the individual
the emergence of a feminine aesthetic

- a recognition and positive valorization of [hispanic] culture

- how elements from the past impact present situations and actions

In the course of this semester, we have read and analyzed a variety of Spanish-language texts that focus primarily on women’s situation in twentieth and twenty-first century Mexico. With each text we have given special emphasis to understanding how different types of textual elements function (verbal, visual, auditory) and then practicing strategies for analyzing them in texts. These elements include:

**Verbal, Visual and Auditory Aspects**
- handling unknown words (determining word functions, deciding which words are necessary for making meaning)
- identifying cognates and false cognates
- identifying types of language (informational, persuasive, graphic, euphemistic), register (formal, informal) and tone (aggressive, controlled, emotional, factual)
- recognizing idioms [Spanish and English], metaphor, and some other abstract language use and arrangement
- understanding paragraph structure and some style elements
- expanding personal vocabulary by identifying synonyms, transitions, and new Spanish words
- describing image types (photographic, drawn, stock art, outline, etc.), placement, and their symbolic or metaphoric value
- evaluating how color is used in images and in text
- considering how basic auditory elements like voice [number, type, pitch], instruments, the use of harmony, speed, and similar elements communicate information and support meaning

**Textual Analysis Components**
- recognizing a variety of text genres and the typical components of those genres
- determining the audience of a text and how audience affects the text
identifying the purpose and specific message of a test

• evaluating the narrative voice and how it influences content

• improving cultural literacy about Mexican and Chicano values and society

You will draw on many of these skills as you read and then write about Chicana author Roberta Fernández’s short novel *Fronterizas*. Your written analysis allows you to demonstrate how well you’ve mastered the elements and strategies during the semester.

**Blog Content**

You need to include the elements listed below in your blog, but this listing does not imply that your review-blog should simply list and answer a series of questions. You will mention other aspects as you construct your review-blog.

Your blog also needs to:

• be logical

• be persuasively organized

• use transitions effectively, and

• conclude with a clear recommendation to your readers concerning the general worth and nature of the text. Your recommendation needs to relate well to what you have mentioned previously.

It’s very important to be specific throughout your discussion and incorporate multiple pieces of evidence from the novel (citing in text, following MLA conventions) for each observation you make. You may choose which elements to develop in greater depth. Remember, however, that an effective analysis will incorporate all of these aspects in some way. Remember also that we have investigated the usefulness of drafting and revising. I encourage you to follow this same strategy.

You need to include eight items in your blog that:

1. Describe the historical, geographic, cultural and social context of these chapters.

2. Choose a minimum of three of the women to describe in some detail. For each one, also select at least two quotes that, in your opinion, best characterize her, and explain why each quote succeeds so effectively.

3. Include at least three other quotes that seem to be particularly valuable, and explain what they add to *Fronterizas*.
4. Identify what you consider an essential theme that unifies the novel, and explain why it matters and how it is developed. You may either use one of the four themes listed earlier (under Project Subject and Audience) or you may select one of your own that you find compelling.

5. Several moments and several objects either possess or come to attain a symbolic value in the novel. Choose ONE that you find to be significant, and explain what it represents in the text as a whole.

6. Several elements (for example, Nena’s life at the university) logically form part of the “slice of life” depicted in the story but do not figure as part of the narrative at all. Select ONE such “absent element” and explain why, in your opinion, the author left it unexplored in the text.

7. As author of your blog, you have logically reviewed other texts for your readers. Using this fact, explain how Fronterizas connects with some of the other readings that we have studied in class this semester. Remember to find some specific, rather than general (and superficial) connections.

8. Proverbs, or traditional sayings, (e.g. “the early bird gets the worm”) figure as part of the dialogue at various moments in the story. Select two or three, explain what each one means, and then comment on how the use of these traditional “wisdom statements” affect our perception of the characters and how they relate to the events and people in the characters lives.

**Project Process**

We will read most, if not all, of the novel in class, in small groups of 3 to 5 individuals. You will have guided questions for each chapter that should help you focus on useful parts of each reading, and understand more. We will use the first chapter and its guided questions to practice reading and completing the guided questions for subsequent chapters on (weekday and date).

After chapter one, you will read each chapter and answer the questions as best as you can before class, typing your replies and thoughts. At the beginning of class, each group will review together, orally their answers to the guided questions, and These answers must be typed, and handed in when the group has finished reviewing them, and then, in the same small groups, you’ll begin reading and preparing the guided questions for the next chapter. Each chapter’s guided questions are worth 3 points of the final project grade (15 points total). No late submissions are accepted.

You will also, by the end of chapter 6, submit a one-paragraph prospectus, which is a statement of the key idea or theme that will serve to drive the structure of your blog. Your prospectus should include reference to why this key idea matters, and some indication of where the idea has figured in the text. Around this prospectus, you will weave your answers to the eight items listed earlier. Your prospectus statement is worth 5 points.
**Process Due Dates and Values**
(No late submissions are accepted)

- Guided Questions 2 due 3 pts.
- Guided Questions 3 due 3 pts.
- Guided Questions 4 due 3 pts.
- Guided Questions 5 due 3 pts.
- Guided Questions 6 due 3 pts.
- Prospectus Statement due 5 pts.

Exam Day Critique of 2 Peer Blog-Reviews 5 pts.

At the scheduled final exam, you will turn in your completed blog at the beginning of class, and then **read and critique in writing** the blog reviews of two of your peers. I will provide a guide for this last element of the final exam project. The critiques will be worth 4 points (2 pts. each). This is the only part of the exam that will not be typed, but you will still double space your critique.

**Useful Points to Remember**
- Please remember, this is our final exam. For that reason, aside from our in-class discussions and consultations with me, **do not consult with other individuals** when writing your preliminary drafts or final version. If you have a question of any type, ask me, and I will answer all specific items that I can.

- It is not necessary, or particularly recommended, to consult any secondary sources. If you choose to do so, document your usage in the bibliography.

- Be sure to include references to characters, events or aspects from all chapters of the novel.

- Although I have provided a detailed list of questions/points to include, you are not writing to me, but to your devoted blog-reader peers 😊. Remember your audience.

- Remember to include MLA-Style in-text documentation of all direct and indirect references to *Fronterizas* or any other text you use.
Final Exam Rubric

Threshold

The completed blog-review **must** meet each of these requirements to be accepted for grading:

1. Includes the following items
   
   a. References to all 6 chapters
   
   b. All 8 elements specified in the project description
   
   c. All Guided Question submissions, the theme statement, preliminary drafts and other materials used, stapled neatly behind the final version of the blog.

2. Double spacing for all project elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Your Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations are specific, well reasoned, not superficial, and supported by appropriate text references</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas connect logically, and use appropriate transitions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blog-review clearly addresses the intended audience, and maintains a consistent, appropriate tone</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Author attempts to catch audience interest from the first sentence uses strategies throughout the blog-review, to maintain interest</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
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<td>------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar and Structure</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains subject-verb agreement consistently</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“noun-adjective” “”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controls present, imperfect and preterit tenses well</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses subjunctive correctly several times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varies sentence syntax and avoids unnecessary structure repetition</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally avoids direct translation (Eng. Span) mistakes</td>
<td>5</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary and Other Aspects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employ appropriate, specific vocabulary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses synonyms rather than repeating same word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes page references for all direct and indirect references to text(s) mentioned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has eliminated all careless errors and typos</td>
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**NOTE: You earned part of your final exam grade by completing several of the assignments earlier in the process of reading the novella.**

<p>| Guided chapter questions (3 pts. each) | 15 |
| Prospectus | 5 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam day critiques</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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