

Hispanic Studies

Module descriptors for Inbound Students.

Name	Dissident Voices: Indigenous Activism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary Mexico
Code	SPU44211
Semester	1
ECTS credits	10
Pre-requisite	3 years university-level Spanish or B2/C1 level of Spanish

Module Content

The module traces the status of indigenous communities within Mexico, from Independence onwards. It especially focuses on various state-led initiatives developed in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution and pursued well into the second half of the twentieth century, with the aim of integrating the indigenous population into mainstream national life.

The module interrogates the effectiveness of these initiatives, and examines the indigenous peoples' response to them. From 1970s onwards, their response becomes more organised, as they begin to articulate their own views about their position within Mexico, both as indigenous and Mexican citizens and engage the hegemonic state in a meaningful dialogue about this.

Within this framework, the module explores the concept of evolving cultural identity that occurs not only as a result of internal processes within the minority cultures, but also in response to external influences coming from the hegemonic society.

With regard to the latter, the module focuses on some of the key strategies used by the indigenous people in engaging the dominant society in dialogue, such as indigenous organising, cultural production, feminist activism and the indigenous claim on *usocostumbrismo* (the right to live according to their traditions) while simultaneously working from within their communities to eradicate customs that disadvantage some of the communities' members.

The prescribed texts for this module include a curated selection of:

- literary texts (prose and poetry)
- historical documents outlining the recent indigenous claims on their cultural autonomy within Mexico
- academic texts

The literary texts include the works of both non-indigenous writers (from the 1950s-1960s) as well as the works of indigenous self-representations written since 1990s onwards.

The former are known as *indigenista* literature and are significant in their own right, since they represent the indigenous life and the disadvantaged positions of these communities within Mexico at the time when their self-representation within the Mexican written literary opus was non-existent. As such, they testify to the role literature has in shining a light on the repression of cultural minorities, on social injustice and inequality.

The latter works, published in bilingual editions (indigenous languages / Spanish language), are conceived as *literatura para nos/otros* and are known as indigenous literature. They are significant as they testify to the minority cultures' engagement with the hegemonic one in a way that has been denied to them previously. These works are authentic representations of the indigenous contemporary culture that often celebrate the cultural difference of these communities in relation to the mainstream society. As such, they interrogate the idea of Mexico where indigenous people are both indigenous and Mexican, and where respect for difference is balanced with respect for what makes people equal.

Besides this, the indigenous literature also explores issues seen as pivotal for reforming the customs, traditions and practices that are not necessarily intrinsic to their culture but have become entrenched in their way of life on account of centuries of subjugation and exploitation, often carried into the modern times. The module will explore all these aspects of indigenous literature.

Assessment

Essay (100%)

Essay 1 (30%): One 1,500-word mid-term essay

Essay 2 (70%): One 2,000-2,500-word end-of-term essay