I. Course Description

Velocity. Mutability. Instantaneity. Revolution. The concept of modernity is about these ideas and more. A malleable term whose origins can be traced to Baudelaire’s French language, the word “modernity” has remained at the center of cultural and intellectual debates around the globe, perhaps because the very idea of the “globe” is a product of modernity itself. Something similar can be said about the term “modernism,” whose deployment in cultural and aesthetic debates is as frequent as its definition remains undefined. When placed alongside these two concepts, the Spanish term “Modernismo” cannot but appear in a different, if not even opposite, light: Modernismo seems to be a rather well-defined term within Latin American literary history. The concept of “modernismo” whose semantic borders are not in flux and whose capacity to subsume a well-defined set of “modernista” phenomena is not at all at question.

The goal of this class is to question the presumed stability and identity of the concept of Modernismo. To do so, we will trace an ambitious synoptic trajectory, surveying some of the
major stations of the modern cross in Latin American literature. We will pay attention to the ways authors such as Asunción Silva, Martí, Darío, and Casal have been read by some of the major critics within Latin American studies (Ramos, Rama, Gutiérrez Girardot, Mario Santí) in close proximity to the emergent discourses on modernity in sociology, the philosophy of history, and European literary studies. After an initial foray into the field of Modernismo, we will take an equally synoptic approach to four foundational conceptual moments in the history of the idea of modernity, surveying 1) Marx’s thinking of general equivalence in Das Kapital, 2) the encounter between Weber’s liberal-democratic understanding of modern rationality and Schmitt’s theologico-political counterproposal, 3) the debate between Löwith and Blumenberg over the nature of secularization, and 4) Nietzsche and Heidegger’s assessments of modernity and its intrinsic relation to nihilism. We will then “return” to Latin America in order to explore the “after-lives” of Modernismo in the literary contributions of Quiroga, Lugones, Storni, de Burgos, Bolaño, and Braschi.

II. Readings

1. Literary Texts

   E. A. Poe, “The Man in the Crowd” in The Selected Writings of E. A. Poe **
   C. Baudelaire, “Parisian Tableux” in Flowers of Evil **
   J. Asunción Silva, De sobremesa
   J. Martí, Ismaelillo
   ———, Versos libres
   ———, Ensayos y crónicas
   R. Darío, Azul
   ———, Prosas profanas
   ———, Cantos de vida y esperanza
   ———, Los raros **
   L. Lugones, Selections from Las fuerzas extrañas
   H. Quiroga, Selections from Cuentos de amor, de locura y de muerte
   A. Storni, Un libro quemado **
   J. L. Borges, “Fervor de Buenos Aires” in Obras completas vol. I
   J. de Burgos, Poema en veinte surcos **
   R. Bolaño, Estrella distante
   G. Braschi, “Ground Zero” in United States of Banana

2. Primary Texts: Theories of Modernity

   C. Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” in The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays **
   K. Marx, Selections from Capital **
   F. Nietzsche, Selections from Writings from the Unpublished Notebooks **
   G. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Form **
   M. Weber, “Politics as Vocation” in The Vocation Lectures
   ———, “Science as Vocation” in The Vocation Lectures
C. Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form***
H. Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics* in *Creative Energy* in *The Creative Mind***
M. Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being” in *Nietzsche* vol. 3-4***
———, “*The History of Being***
———, “The Age of the World Picture” in *Off the Beaten Track*
W. Benjamin, “Central Park” in *Selected Writings IV*
———, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in *Selected Writings IV*
———, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility” in *Selected Writings III*
K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*
H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*
O. Paz, “Los hijos del limo” in *Obras completas, vol. 1: La casa de la presencia*
———, “La otra voz” in *Obras completas, vol. 1: La casa de la presencia*
P. de Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity” in *Blindness and Insight*

3. **SECONDARY SOURCES**

R. Gutiérrez Girardot, Selections from *Modernismo: Supuestos históricos y culturales*
J. Ramos, Selections from *Divergent Modernities***
A. Rama, Selections from *Las máscaras democráticas del Modernismo***
E. M. Santi, “Ismaelillo, Martí y el Modernismo”***
A. Rodríguez Pér saco, Selections from *Relatos de época***
O. Terán, “Leopoldo Lugones: Bordar la modernidad”***
I. Schulman, Selections from *Painting Modernismo***
F. Morán, Selections from *Casal à rebours***
S. Molloy, Selections from *Las letras de Borges***
L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Selections from *Reading Capital***
G. Deleuze, Selections from *Nietzsche and Philosophy***
T. Asad, Selections from *Formations of the Secular***
C. Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere***

Books marked with one asterisk (*) are available for purchase online.
Readings marked with two asterisks (**) will be on USC’s Automated Reserves System (ARES) [https://usc.ares.atlas-sys.com/](https://usc.ares.atlas-sys.com/), the blackboard site of the course, or distributed via email by the instructor.
III. Course Schedule

1. Introduction: Approaching Literary Modernity

01/10/17  E. A. Poe, “The Man of the Crowd”
          C. Baudelaire, “Parisian Tableaux” in *Flowers of Evil*
          ———, “The Painter of Modern Life” in *The Painter of Modern Life…*
          W. Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” in *Selected Writings IV*
          ———, “Central Park” in *Selected Writings IV*

01/17/17  P. de Man “Literary History and Literary Modernity” in *Blindness and Insight*
          O. Paz, “Los hijos del limo” in *Obras Completas I: La casa de la presencia*
          O. Paz, “La otra voz” in *Obras completas I: La casa de la presencia*

2. Modernity and Latin American Modernismo

01/24/17  J. Asunción Silva, *De sobremesa*
          R. Gutiérrez Girardot, *Modernismo: Supuestos históricos y culturales*

01/31/17  J. Martí, *Ismaelillo*
          ———, *Versos libres*
          ———, Selections from *Ensayos y crónicas*
          J. Ramos, Selections from *Divergent Modernities*
          E. M. Santí, “*Ismaelillo, Martí y el Modernismo*”

02/07/17  R. Darío, *Los raros*
          ———, Selections from *Azul*
          ———, Selections from *Prosas Profanas*
          ———, Selections from *Cantos de vida y esperanza*
          A. Rama, *Las máscaras democráticas del Modernismo*

02/14/17  J. del Casal, Selections from *Poesía completa y prosa selecta*
          I. Schulman, Selections from *Painting Modernismo*
          F. Morán, *Casal à rebours*

3. Modernity’s Abyssal Grounds:
   Equivalence, Rationality, Secularization, Nihilism

02/21/17  K. Marx, Selections from *Capital*
          L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Selections from *Reading Capital*
Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences
University of Southern California

02/28/17  M. Weber, “Politics as Vocation”
———, “Science as Vocation”
C. Schmitt, Roman Catholicism and Political Form

03/07/17  K. Löwith, Selections from Meaning in History
H. Blumemberg, Selections from The Legitimacy of the Modern Age
T. Asad, Selections from Formations of the Secular
C. Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism”

03/11/17  EXTRA SESSION
F. Nietzsche, Selections from Writings from the Unpublished Notebooks
G. Deleuze, Selections from Nietzsche and Philosophy

03/14/17  SPRING BREAK

03/21/17  M. Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being”
———, “57. On the Essence of Power”
———, “The Age of the World Picture”

4. AFTER-LIVES OF MODERNISMO: AVANT-GARDE

03/28/17  L. Lugones, Las fuerzas extrañas
H. Quiroga, Secciones de Cuentos de amor, de locura y de muerte
A. Rodríguez Pérzico, Selections from Relatos de época
O. Terán, “Leopoldo Lugones: Bordar la modernidad”

04/04/17  A. Storni, Un libro quemado
J. L. Borges, Fervor de Buenos Aires
G. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
S. Molloy, Selections from Letras de Borges

04/11/17  J. de Burgos, Poema en veinte surcos
H. Bergson, “Introduction to Metaphysics”

04/18/17  R. Bolaño, Estrella distante

04/25/17  G. Braschi, “Ground Zero” in United States of Banana

05/10/17  FINAL PAPER DUE
IV. Course Requirements

PARTICIPATION
Active participation of all students is expected. This presupposes reading the texts assigned for class, listening attentively to your colleague’s presentations and engaging with their contributions to our class. The language of the seminar will be both Spanish and English, and you should feel free to speak in the language in which you’re most comfortable.

PRESENTATIONS
You will be responsible for two in-class presentation based on the required readings (approximately 15 minutes, 6-8 pages double-spaced).

FINAL PAPER
The final paper is due on May 10. The paper should be 20-25 pages long. You will also be required to submit a one-page abstract of your final paper on our last meeting on April 25.

FINAL GRADE
The final grade will be calculated in the following manner: participation (20%), presentations (30%), final paper (50%).

Note on Academic Integrity: Any instance of plagiarism will be subject to the disciplinary process outlined by USC’s Student Judicial and Community Standards. Plagiarism is not restricted to copying word by word the writings and thoughts of others. It also includes citing improperly, as well as paraphrasing ideas taken from any source other than your own thoughts without recognizing the author of those ideas. Students should be familiar with the process outlined by USC’s Student Judicial and Community Standards, which can be accessed in the link below:

http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/pages/students/academic_integrity.html

Students should also consult the Trojan Integrity: A Guide to Avoid Plagiarism, which can be accessed in the following website:

http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/903/docs/Trojan_Integrity_-_Guide_to_Avoiding_Plagiarism.pdf

Note on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Disability Services and Programs, to obtain a letter of verification for approved accommodations. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in 3601 Watt Way, GFS 120 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Their website is:

http://dsp.usc.edu/contact/