Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Barcelona
Course Code / Title: BC/HIST 330 Conflict, Memory and Democracy: Modern Spanish History
Contact Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: History / Political Science, Spanish Studies, International Relations
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites / Requirements: None

Description

This course examines how Spain's recent past, from the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and Francoism to the democratic transition and the consolidation of democracy, continues to shape its contemporary society and politics. It explores the political, social, and economic transformations of the postwar period and democratic era, including immigration, feminist reforms, the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, and the emergence of new political movements. The course also examines historical memory, national identity, and territorial tensions, particularly Catalan and Basque nationalism, placing these issues in a European context and incorporating debates over identity and integration within the European Union since the early twenty-first century. Barcelona and Catalonia provide a local perspective on how Spain's historical legacies intersect with broader European debates over identity, citizenship, and political belonging.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Analyze the major political, social, and economic transformations that shaped Spain from the Civil War to 2026.
- Examine the legacy of Francoism, the democratic transition, the development of contemporary Spanish democracy and the issues that is currently facing.
- Compare competing interpretations of Spain's historical memory, particularly regarding the Civil War, and Francoist repression.
- Distinguish between the different forms of nationalism and territorial conflict in Spain, with particular attention to Catalonia and the Basque Country.
- Identify the major social changes that transform Spain including immigration, European integration, economic modernization, and changing cultural and political values.
- Analyze how European integration has shaped Spain's political, social, and economic development.
- Develop the ability to critically assess the paradoxes and tensions of contemporary Spanish democracy, including debates surrounding democratic deficits, political polarization, and institutional legitimacy.

Requirements
Students are expected to come to class prepared, having completed the assigned readings and considered the questions and themes presented in each session. The course emphasizes critical thinking rather than memorization: students are expected to engage with different interpretations of Spain's recent history, analyze primary sources, and participate actively in discussions. Assigned readings average approximately 20–25 pages per class session, combining scholarly articles, book chapters, primary sources, memoirs, and contemporary documents. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise noted.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** Students are expected to contribute actively and thoughtfully to class discussions, debates, and activities. Participation includes asking questions, responding to classmates, analyzing sources, and engaging respectfully with different interpretations.

- **Reading quizzes**: Two short quizzes assess students' engagement with the assigned readings. The quizzes focus on key arguments, concepts, events, and evidence rather than detailed memorization.

- **Reflection papers**: Students participate in two field study activities at sites connected to Spain's modern history and attend a session with a guest speaker whose professional experience relates to the themes of the course. Students submit three brief reflections (500 words) connecting these experiences to the topics discussed in class.

- **Midterm exam:** The midterm evaluates students' understanding of the major historical developments and themes covered during the first half of the course. It combines short-answer questions with analytical essay questions.

- **Final exam:** The final exam covers the second half of the course while also asking students to make connections across the entire historical period. Questions emphasize analysis and comparison.

- **Group research project:** Working in small groups, students investigate a topic related to modern Spanish history and present their findings to the class. Projects incorporate both primary and secondary sources and encourage students to consider competing interpretations of historical events and their contemporary significance. This project will have a research component and an audiovisual component.

Grading

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation *(see rubric below)*	15%
Reading quizzes (2 at 5%)	10%
Reflection papers (3 at 5%)	15%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%
Group research project	20%

- Written component: 10%
- Oral component: 10%

Class Participation Grading Rubric

	A – 90-100% Exemplary	**B – 80-89% Proficient**	**C – 70-79% Developing**	**D – 60-69% Unacceptable**	**F – 0-59% Missing**
Frequency of class participation	Actively contributes 2+ times per meeting	Actively contributes at least 1 time per meeting	Actively contributes at least half of the time during term	Actively contributes less than half of the time during term	Does not contribute
Quality of class participation*	Contribution is always thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, frequently interacting with peers	Contribution is mostly thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, usually interacting with peers	Contribution is somewhat thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, sometimes interacting with peers	Contribution is rarely thoughtful, accurate, and constructive, rarely interacting with peers	Does not contribute or interact with peers
Level of class preparation	Always fully prepared and on task	Mostly prepared and on task	Somewhat prepared and on task	Rarely prepared and on task	Consistently unprepared and not on task

Readings / Resources

Core readings:

Encarnación, Omar G. “Memory and Politics in Democratic Spain.” In The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics. Oxford, 2020.

Muro, Diego. “The Stillbirth of a Catalan Republic.” Current History. Berkeley, 2018.

Núñez Seixas, Xosé M. “Spanish Nationalism Since 1975.” In The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics. Oxford, 2020.

Pardos-Prado, Sergi. “Migration Politics: The End of Spanish Exceptionalism?” In The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics. Oxford, 2020.

Preston, Paul. *A People Betrayed: A History of Corruption, Political Incompetence and Social Division in Modern Spain*. New York, 2020.

Radcliff, Pamela. *Modern Spain: 1808 to the Present*. Boston, 2017.

Sánchez-Cuenca, Ignacio. “Spanish Democratization: Transition, Consolidation, and Its Meaning in Contemporary Spain.” In The Oxford Handbook of Spanish Politics. Oxford, 2020.

Shubert, Adrian, and José Álvarez Junco. *The History of Modern Spain: Chronologies, Themes, Individuals*. London, 2018.

Tamarit Sumalla, Josep M. *Historical Memory and Criminal Justice in Spain: A Case of LateTransitional Justice*. Cambridge, 2020.

Additional readings:

Balcells, Laia. *Rivalry and Revenge: The Politics of Violence during Civil War*. Cambridge, 2017.

Bonime-Blanc, Andrea. Spain's Transition to Democracy: The Politics of Constitution-Making. London, 2019.

Cuadras-Morató, Xavier, Germà Bel, and Toni Rodon. “Crisis? What Crisis? Economic Recovery and Support for Independence in Catalonia.” Regional Science Policy & Practice. Oxford, 2019.

Orriols, Lluís, and Toni Rodon. “The 2015 Catalan Election: The Independence Bid at the Polls.” South European Society and Politics. London, 2016.

Rodon, Toni, and Marc Guinjoan. “When the Context Matters: Identity, Secession and the Spatial Dimension in Catalonia.” Political Geography. Amsterdam, 2018.

Rodon, Toni, and María José Hierro. “New Forces Shake Up the Spanish Party System: The 2015 Local and Regional Elections.” South European Society and Politics. London, 2016.

Rodon, Toni, and Raül Tormos. “The Burden of a Violent Past: Formative Experiences of Repression and Support for Secession in Catalonia.” British Journal of Political Science. Cambridge, 2022.

Rodon, Toni. “The Spanish Electoral Cycle of 2019: A Tale of Two Countries.” West European Politics. London, 2020.

Royo, Sebastián. “From Boom to Bust: The Economic Crisis in Spain, 2008–2013.” Boston, 2020.
Tremlett, Giles. *The International Brigades: Fascism, Freedom and the Spanish Civil War*. London, 2020.

Films:
Carracedo, Almudena, and Robert Bahar. The Silence of Others. Spain/United States, 2018.

Garaño, Jon, Aitor Arregi, and José Mari Goenaga. The Endless Trench. Spain/France, 2019.

Podcasts:
Cot, David. New History of Spain. Podcast, 2024–present.

Memoria e Historia. “Ni una, ni grande, ni libre,” with Nicolás Sesma and Mercedes Yusta. Podcast, episode 4×06.

Saldremos Mejores. “Saldremos antifranquistas,” with Natalia Junquera and Carmina Gustrán. Podcast, episode 5×11, 2025.

Video resources:
Inside History. The Spanish Civil War – First Part. YouTube, 2023.

Carracedo, Almudena, and Robert Bahar. The Silence of Others – Official Trailer. YouTube, 2018.

Content

Topic 1 – The Spanish Civil War and Its Legacy
- Origins and political divisions of the Second Republic
- The military uprising and the international dimension of the conflict
- Republican and Francoist experiences of the war
- Violence, exile, repression, and the long-term legacy of the conflict

Topic 2 – Francoism: Dictatorship, Repression, and Society
- The establishment and evolution of Franco’s dictatorship
- Political repression, censorship, and political opposition
- Everyday life under Francoism
- Social, economic, and cultural transformations from the 1940s to the 1970s

Topic 3 – The Democratic Transition and the 1978 Constitution
- Franco’s death and the political transformation after 1975
- Political parties, elections, and the role of King Juan Carlos I
- The 1978 Constitution and the creation of autonomous communities
- Debates over the achievements and limitations of the Transition

Topic 4 – Spain in the 1980s: Democracy and European Integration

- The consolidation of democratic institutions
- The attempted coup of February 23, 1981
- Spain's entry into the European Economic Community
- Social and cultural changes during the 1980s

Topic 5 – The 1990s: Modernization and the New Spain

- Economic growth and Spain's integration into Europe
- The 1992 Barcelona Olympics and the transformation of Spanish cities
- Changes in Spanish society, culture, and political life
- The emergence of new political and social debates

Topic 6 – Immigration and Social Transformation

- Spain's transformation from an emigration country into a major destination for immigration
- Immigration from Latin America, North Africa, Eastern Europe, and other regions
- Integration, multiculturalism, and debates over national identity
- The political and social consequences of demographic change. Changing gender roles, Feminism and debates over work-life balance.

Topic 7 – Nationalism and the Territorial Question

- The development of Catalan and Basque nationalism after Franco
- Autonomy, federalism, and competing visions of the Spanish state
- The rise of the Catalan independence movement
- The 2017 independence referendum, declaration of independence, and political crisis

Topic 8 – The 2008 Economic Crisis and Political Change

- The Spanish housing boom and financial crisis
- Unemployment, austerity, and the social consequences of the recession
- The Indignados/15-M movement
- The emergence of Podemos, Ciudadanos, Vox, and the transformation of the traditional party system

Topic 9 – Historical Memory and the Unresolved Past

- Memories of the Civil War and Francoist repression
- Exhumations, memorials, and the recovery of victims
- The Historical Memory Law and debates surrounding the Democratic Memory Law
- Competing interpretations of Francoism, the Transition, and Spain's democratic past

Topic 10 – Contemporary Spain: Democracy, Identity, and their Paradoxes

- Political polarization and the fragmentation of the party system
- Debates concerning democratic institutions, representation, and accountability
- The relationship between national, regional, and European identities
- Contemporary challenges to Spanish democracy and competing interpretations of Spain's future

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Civil War and Historical Memory: Visit to the Refugi 307 other relevant Civil War Sites.
- Visit Catalan Institutions of government: Generalitat de Catalunya and Parlament de Catalunya (Seat of Catalan Government and Catalan Parliament)
- Guest speaker: Secessionist movement in Catalonia

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty's discretion.