



UVA IN VALENCIA PROGRAM

HIEU 3712 SPANISH CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

OTOÑO 2026

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course approaches sport as a lens through which to understand contemporary Spain. From a multidisciplinary perspective, students will examine the historical, cultural, social, political, and economic forces that shape Spanish sporting life and national and regional identities.

The first part of the course focuses on soccer, tennis, basketball, cycling, motor sports, regional sports, and major international events hosted in Spain. The second part broadens the analysis to traditions, festivals, dance, gastronomy, tourism, literature, film, and other cultural forms that interact with sport and public life.

The course is taught in English. Students will work with readings, documentary and film material, guided discussion, and short analytical activities. Spanish terminology will be introduced where it helps students interpret the cultural context.

Learning objectives:

1. Analyze sport as a cultural, social, political, and economic phenomenon in contemporary Spain.
2. Explain how national and regional identities are expressed through teams, athletes, competitions, and traditions.
3. Interpret historical and current debates surrounding soccer, gender, commercialization, and public institutions.
4. Connect sporting practices with film, literature, music, festivals, gastronomy, tourism, and everyday life.
5. Compare Spanish and U.S. perspectives on sport and use evidence to support clear, informed arguments.
6. Develop critical reading, discussion, audiovisual analysis, and oral communication skills.
7. Reflect thoughtfully on cultural experiences in Valencia and relate them to course concepts.

GRADING

As at UVA, final grades follow the scale below:

A+	100-99	B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-67
A	98-96	B	86-84	C	76-74	D	66-64
A-	95-90	B-	83-80	C-	73-70	D-	63-60
						F	59-0

Video: a sporting/cultural experience in Valencia	15%
Two concept quizzes	25%
Midterm exam	25%

Final exam	25%
Daily work and participation	10%

Video: a sporting/cultural experience in Valencia — 15%

Each student will create an individual video in English, lasting between 30 seconds and one minute, about a meaningful experience during the semester in Valencia. The video must connect that experience to a specific course topic. A simple description of a place or activity is not sufficient: the student must make a clear cultural observation and support it with an example.

Possible approaches include a sporting event or venue; a conversation about a team or athlete; a regional or national identity expressed through sport; gender and equality in sport; commercialization or tourism; a local tradition connected to physical culture; or a comparison between sporting culture in Spain and the United States.

Assessment criteria: connection to and rigor regarding course content, 40%; clarity and organization, 25%; accuracy and effectiveness of communication, 20%; creativity, suitability for the format, and compliance with the time limit, 15%.

The strongest videos may be proposed for publication on UVA's official social-media channels. Publication requires the student's express authorization and the corresponding institutional approval. Selection is independent of the course grade: it gives no extra credit and does not disadvantage students whose videos are not selected or who decline publication.

Concept quizzes — 25%

Two short quizzes will be given during the semester to consolidate key concepts. The first will focus on soccer, identity, gender, and the social and political history of sport in Spain; the second will focus on regional traditions, major events, cultural expression, and tourism. Students will be evaluated on accurate use of course concepts and examples that demonstrate understanding.

Midterm exam — 25%

The midterm will be theoretical and applied and may include multiple-choice, short-answer, source-analysis, and brief essay questions. It covers the material studied through the review session, including:

Soccer and society: the history and political uses of Spanish soccer; Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, and regional identity; major players; women's soccer and equality; soccer in film and literature.

Other sports and institutions: tennis, basketball, swimming and water sports, handball, beach volleyball, motorcycling, motor racing, and cycling; major Spanish figures and the social meaning of sporting success.

Final exam — 25%

The final will be theoretical and applied and may include multiple-choice, short-answer, source-analysis, and brief essay questions. It focuses on the second half of the course while requiring students to connect those topics to the principal concepts developed throughout the semester. It includes:

Major events, traditions, and cultural expression: the Barcelona Olympic Games, the 1982 World Cup, the America's Cup, bullfighting and bull festivals, Las Fallas, Holy Week, Catalan human towers, flamenco, dance, film, music, and literature.

Gastronomy, routes, and tourism: the cultural and economic significance of foodways, the Camino de Santiago, major monuments and landscapes, island and regional tourism, and the relationship among sport, heritage, place, and identity.

Daily work and participation — 10%

Students are expected to follow the assigned plan, complete readings and brief analytical activities, and participate actively. Coming prepared is essential for learning and earning a strong grade. Students are responsible for catching up on missed work.

The course is communicative and practical. Students will frequently work in pairs or small groups to analyze sources, justify interpretations, and compare Spanish and U.S. perspectives.

A: Always prepares for class, completes assigned work, participates voluntarily and frequently, collaborates well, and contributes positively to the classroom environment.

B: Participates voluntarily and frequently and responds appropriately to the instructor's questions.

C: Participates occasionally when called upon and asks questions from time to time.

D: Makes little effort to participate and completes only minimal work.

F: Is absent or shows disrespect toward the work of the class.

MATERIALS and BIBLIOGRAPHY

All readings, audiovisual materials, and bibliographic resources required for the course will be provided by the instructor and made available through the UVA in Valencia virtual classroom.

COURSE CALENDAR AND SESSION PLAN

SESSIONS	MONTH
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8	SEPTEMBER
Monday, September 7	Welcome and course introduction. Sport as a cultural lens. History of Spanish sport and its political uses. Spanish soccer vocabulary.
Wednesday, September 9	Soccer and mass culture. Reading and discussion: 'The Opium of the Masses.' Spanish and U.S. perspectives on fandom.
Monday, September 14	Major Spanish soccer clubs: anthems, institutions, finances, and identity. Real Madrid and Franco's regime.
Wednesday, September 16	FC Barcelona, Catalanisme, and the Real Madrid–Barça rivalry. Guided source and video analysis.
Monday, September 21	Great soccer figures in Spain: a historical perspective. Athlete biographies and the construction of public icons.
Wednesday, September 23	Film: La gran final (Gerardo Olivares). Sport, globalization, access, and spectatorship.
Monday, September 28	Discussion of La gran final. Women's soccer in Spain, equality, labor conditions, and current debates.
Wednesday, September 30	Soccer in literature and poetry. Sport as narrative, metaphor, and collective memory.
6	OCTOBER
Monday, October 5	Review: soccer, politics, regional identity, gender, film, and literature. Guided analysis of course sources.
Wednesday, October 7	CONCEPT QUIZ 1. Spanish tennis from Manolo Santana to Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz.
Monday, October 19	Spanish basketball since the 1980s. La Familia, international success, and Pau Gasol.
Wednesday, October 21	Swimming, water sports, handball, and beach volleyball. Geography, infrastructure, and sporting culture.
Monday, October 26	Motorcycling and motor racing: Spanish champions, the Dakar Rally, Cheste Circuit, Pingüinos, and Fernando Alonso.
Wednesday, October 28	Cycling: grand tours, leading Spanish cyclists, legendary stages, Lagos de Covadonga, and the Angliru.
10	NOVEMBER
Monday, November 2	Major sporting events in Spain: the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games and their urban and economic impact.
Wednesday, November 4	Midterm review: soccer and society; major athletes; tennis, basketball, water sports, motor sports, and cycling.

Monday, November 9	MIDTERM EXAM.
Wednesday, November 11	The 1982 FIFA World Cup and the America's Cup. Mega-events, public investment, tourism, and national image.
Monday, November 16	Bullfighting, bull festivals, and music: history, symbolism, controversy, and changing public attitudes.
Wednesday, November 18	Spanish festivals and traditions: Holy Week, saetas, Las Fallas, and Catalan human towers.
Friday, November 20	Make-up class following the Monday/Wednesday schedule. Film: Bodas de sangre (Carlos Saura). Body, ritual, and performance.
Monday, November 23	Flamenco: styles, song, dance, performance, tourism, and major figures including Paco de Lucía and Camarón de la Isla.
Wednesday, November 25	Spanish gastronomy: origins and cultural meanings of products such as Iberian ham, turrón, and cava.
Monday, November 30	CONCEPT QUIZ 2. Gastronomy, tourism, cultural heritage, and regional identity.
2	DECEMBER
Wednesday, December 2	Routes across Spain: major monuments, cities, tourist attractions, the Camino de Santiago, Romanesque routes, and the Canary Islands. Guidance for the final video.
Monday, December 7	Landscapes and tourism in Catalonia and across Spain. Course synthesis and submission of the final video.
Monday, December 14	FINAL EXAM.

INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE

1) Use of Spanish at the Center

The use of Spanish at the Center is strongly encouraged. Remember that you have come to Spain to learn Spanish and immerse yourself in its culture, and there is no better way to do so than by using

Spanish on as many occasions as possible.

2) Class Attendance and Tardiness

2.1) Attendance and punctuality are essential for the successful completion of the course. Consequently, unexcused absences and lateness will negatively affect the final grade.

2.2) Only one unexcused absence is permitted. Please bear this in mind when planning trips or outings.

2.3) Arriving more than 5 minutes late to class will count as half an absence (1/2). It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of an absence before the class begins.

2.4) Arriving more than 30 minutes late to class will be considered an absence.

2.5) Four (4) unexcused absences will result in the student not receiving credit for the course.

2.6) Only documented absences will be considered excused: a religious holiday, a family emergency, or a medical appointment. Medical absences must be supported by a doctor's note and submitted at reception on the day the student returns to class after the incident has ended.

3) Academic Integrity

3.1) The exchange of information is not only permitted but is also a way of enriching the knowledge acquired during the course. However, all work submitted for each course must be individual and original in every respect. Any sources and direct quotations used must be properly cited.

3.2) Remember that the use of artificial intelligence to complete assignments or examinations is strictly prohibited unless an instructor expressly states otherwise. Such use constitutes a lack of authenticity, and may amount to direct plagiarism, in addition to undermining the development of critical thinking and writing skills, which are among the primary goals of this program. Failure to comply with this rule will result in a grade of "F" for the course.

3.3) Any work that has received credit for one course will NOT be accepted for credit in another course. There will be NO exceptions to this rule. Reusing such work will result in immediate failure of the second course. If assignments for two different courses are related in any way and the student has questions about whether the second project is permissible, the matter must be discussed with all instructors involved. This will prevent any possible unintentional violation of this rule.

3.4) As with punctuality, assignments must be submitted on time. Any late submission will result in a reduction of the grade for that assignment.

3.5) Failure to comply with the provisions set out above will result in the loss of the corresponding course credits for the course in which these rules have been violated.

3.6) If you have a documented special need that requires academic accommodations (SDAC), it must be certified by your home institution. Please contact the Head of Studies in Valencia, María Andrés (maria.andres@uvavalencia.org).

4) Activities, Workshops, and Lectures

Throughout the course, various activities, workshops, and lectures are organized. Participation may be voluntary or mandatory if the instructor considers the activity relevant to the course.

5) Classroom Conduct

5.1) It is very important that all students arrive to class on time, prepared, and with the materials needed for the day. During class, students must treat one another and the instructor with respect, demonstrate a positive attitude, and help create a participatory and collaborative environment that supports effective learning. Any violation of these expectations will have direct consequences.

5.2) Electronic devices (laptop, mobile phone, smartwatch) may be used in class only for course-related purposes. If a student uses such technology for personal reasons during class, the student may be penalized with an unexcused absence.

5.3) The use of computer or electronic technology during examinations is prohibited unless the instructor determines otherwise in accordance with the examination format.

6) Course Content

On occasion, and always within the context of the course, certain “sensitive” topics may be addressed both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, if a student feels offended by such content in a particular class, the student may leave the class, and doing so will not have any negative effect whatsoever on the final grade. Faculty members will always be open to communication and dialogue in order to promote better intercultural understanding.

7) Final Clarification

The instructor may modify or add activities and/or change the dates indicated according to the learning needs of the group. Effective learning requires not only careful planning, but also a certain degree of flexibility.