

International Study Abroad: The Politics of Soccer in Spain and Beyond

BIS 480 ❖ June 18 to July 17, 2024 ❖ Madrid, León, and Barcelona

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This program will approach fútbol (soccer) as a political and cultural phenomenon, examining the ways in which the sport functions as a site for political contestation on local, regional, national, and international scales. The course will analyze issues of political economy, race, gender, nationalism, colonialism, and popular culture. While Spain will be a key site of this exploration – with its recent spate of sporting success on the international scene and a famous rivalry between two of the best club teams in the world (with political overtones involving the Franco dictatorship and Catalanian independence) – the course will also explore the politics of soccer elsewhere. Topics covered will include human rights violations and corruption surrounding recent and future World Cups, and the exploitation of (often very young) athletes from across the globe. This course will begin in Madrid and end in Barcelona, but the vast majority of the course will take place in León.

GOALS AND STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

1. To develop critical and comparative skills in cultural studies analysis;
2. To become familiar with fundamental debates in the politics of soccer;
3. To apply critical and creative analysis to local, national, and international settings; and
4. To express insights and observations through multiple means, including visual and electronic media.

The course is structured to give a balance between theory and practice regarding the analysis of soccer as a political and cultural phenomenon on the one hand, and an appreciation for the emotional and competitive appeal of fandom on the other.

CONSULTING WITH ME

It is my goal to be as accessible as possible to you. If you have any questions about or suggestions for the course, please don't hesitate to let me know. Likewise, if any issues arise for you while we are in Spain, whether directly or indirectly related to the course itself, it may be helpful to make me aware of it sooner rather than later. I will be available to meet following our classes every day. I am also often available at other times; contact me and we can set up an appointment for another time. Let me know how I can be helpful to you.

EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

Course Contribution (30%). The format of the class is discussion-based and, as with all study abroad programs, deeply experiential; therefore a much larger portion than normal of your final grade depends on your overall contribution to the course, including our time in Madrid and Barcelona (as well as, of course, class discussions and other activities in León). On the most basic level of course contribution, you should come to all class events on time, having read the assignments and having given them some thought in preparation for participating in discussion. I take it as assumed that all members of the course, including myself, treat each other respectfully, and know the difference between genuine discussion and intellectual posturing. Class participation is not only a way to share what we've learned, but also a chance to ask questions, experiment with new

ideas and explore issues that are unclear. Your contribution to the course should include intellectual risks that you might not get the opportunity to take elsewhere.

Material History/Reading Journal (35%). I am very aware of the difficulties involved in producing longer papers while also trying to experience and process what is happening during a study abroad program. Rather than assigning a long paper, I am asking you to keep a “material history” of your time abroad. Some would call this a scrapbook. Some would call it a journal. Those descriptions work, but not to the fullest extent of what I would like you to do here. Your “material history” will include your responses to the readings and connecting those readings to your current and past experiences (whether with soccer more generally, your observations while in Spain, or your life experiences completely outside of soccer and the study abroad program). It can be as expansive as you wish but must also remain attached and intact within your reader. At the very least, I’d like you to do two things: 1) write notes, both in the margins and at the end of articles, that display how you make sense of the readings and connect them to each other, to our guest speakers, and to your own experiences; and 2) use the pages to collect additional materials (match tickets, flyers from stadiums, museums, other discoveries) and reflect on how they connect to your thinking about the politics of soccer. I will collect the “material histories” twice – once around the midway point of the program, and again at the end of our time in León – and return them before the end of the program.

In most cases the readings are reasonably short or written in a journalistic style. It’s important that you spend some time on each class session’s readings and come prepared to engage with your classmates. The readings collected here are only meant as a way to focus discussion around the chosen themes, and our primary goal is not to convince you of the merits of the author’s arguments but rather to provide a space for critical thinking. So you should also think of the material history as a kind of reading journal. It will be especially useful to think about how the articles challenge, complicate and inform your past experiences or assumptions regarding politics and cultural phenomena.

Tumblr Project (35%). The final element of the course is to pull together your observations and learnings from the class together with all the creativity you can muster. We will jointly construct a micro-blog for the class using Tumblr. Our class Tumblr site is at <politicsofsoccer.tumblr.com>; you’ll see that I have begun populating the site, as have past iterations of this study abroad program in 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2022. You should feel free to share the site with friends and family, so let’s keep it rated PG-13. The site is not findable through a search, so only those who you share the link with should be able to find it. Each of you should submit (just hit the “submit” button – you don’t have to create a Tumblr account to do so, but I would encourage you to do so) at least twenty posts between now and the end of the program on July 17, with at least ten posts by the midway point of the program. These posts should be specific to the politics of soccer in some way – they can be long or short, profound or funny, serious or sarcastic. Each of you should experiment with a variety of forms and lengths of posts. They can be critical reflections and they can be aware of their own fandom, too. They can be reflections on the readings, on our speakers, or on your observations of what you see happening around you. They can be images with commentary. They can also be sharing of other blogs or images found online, as long as you explicitly explain *why* you are reblogging the post and connect it to the themes of our class. The goal is to build a shared repository of insights and learnings from the class in a forum that can, if we so choose, be shared publicly (or at least semi-publicly). You should feel free (in fact, encouraged!) to respond to each others’ posts to continue the dialogue; likewise, you should be careful not to repeat what others have already done. In other words, the goal is to build on each others’ work rather than duplicate it.

GRADING DISTRIBUTION

course contribution:	30 %
material history:	35 %
tumblr project:	35 %

TWO-CREDIT INDEPENDENT STUDY

You will also be participating in a two-credit independent study course in conjunction with this course, BIS 498 Undergraduate Research, where you will be combining some of the analysis and approach to soccer in the context of what you observe – in a systematic way – in León. You will receive separate instruction regarding the details of the independent study.

GENERAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

All students are expected to participate in all class activities; let me know immediately if something will prevent you from doing so. The course calendar will change over time due to unforeseen circumstances; please be sure you are using the most recent version. You are responsible for all materials and announcements covered during class sessions. I also expect you to use your UW e-mail account regularly, so that I can communicate with each of you electronically between classes. If you wish to use another e-mail address as your primary account, set up your UW account to forward to your other address. We will also communicate as a class using Discord, especially for issues that may arise that need more immediate attention than email allows. There will be no final examination. No incompletes will be granted, barring *extraordinary* circumstances.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See <<http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/academicconduct>> for crucial information regarding academic integrity. The library also has an extremely useful website with resources at <libguides.uwb.edu/ai>. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes a violation of the University of Washington Student Code, and you will be held responsible for any such violations whether they were intentional or not.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Diverse backgrounds, embodiments and experiences are essential to the critical thinking endeavor at the heart of university education. In IAS and at UW Bothell, students are expected to:

- respect individual differences which may include, but are not limited to: age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family status, gender presentation, immigration status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and veteran status.
- engage respectfully in discussion of diverse worldviews and ideologies embedded in course readings, presentations, and artifacts, including those course materials that are at odds with personal beliefs and values.

Students seeking support around these issues can find more information and resources at <<http://www.uwb.edu/diversity>>.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Your experience in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. Disability Resources for Students (DRS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. If you experience barriers based on disability, please seek a meeting with DRS to discuss and address them.

If you have already established accommodations with DRS, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include but is not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 425.352.5307, TDD 425.352.5303, or rlundborg@uwb.edu.

READINGS

We will read substantial portions of three books, listed below, to be read prior to arriving in Spain. All other readings will be provided as part of the course reader or, if assigned during the program itself, electronically. A more detailed course calendar that includes readings and their due dates will be included in the course reader and updated during the summer. Other readings may be assigned throughout the course as appropriate. I am always open to suggestions from you for additional readings that you have found helpful – the reading list is always a work-in-progress.

The three required books are:

Galeano, Eduardo. 2013. *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* (revised and updated version). New York: Nation Books.

Lowe, Sid. 2014. *Fear and Loathing in La Liga: Barcelona, Real Madrid, and the World's Greatest Sports Rivalry*. New York: Nation Books.

Taranath, Anu. 2019. *Beyond Guilt Trips: Mindful Travel in an Unequal World*. Chico: AK Press.