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Karina Elizabeth Vázquez  
*University of Richmond*, kvazquez@richmond.edu

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## Breaking the Waves: Deconstructing Class/Gender and Sociocultural Stereotypes Through a Spanish Readings Course on Human Rights with Service Learning Component

**Karina Elizabeth Vázquez**  
University of Alabama

As the film directors Bertrand Tavernier and Laurent Cantet demonstrate in their respective films *It All Starts Today* (1999) and *Entre Les Murs* (2008), schools still reproduce social inequality and cultural stereotypes. One of the most important challenges teachers and professors confront as members of civil society, particularly in moments of social crisis or instability, is to promote students' critical thinking in relation to individual and collective rights. A deep understanding of the concepts and history of human rights infuses the foreign language classroom with a sense of cooperation and dignity that will promote the deconstructing of social and cultural stereotypes. This article analyzes the pedagogical implications and impact of readings on human rights and Service Learning within a community where "foreign languages and cultures" are recent social components of changes related to labor and immigration. This work explores the interrelation between the pedagogical and social dimensions of "critical thinking" within curricula.

**Keywords:** Spanish language, foreign language (FL) classroom, human rights, Service Learning (SL), class/gender.

We are about to tell you / The story of a journey. An exploiter  
And two of the exploited are the travelers.  
Examine carefully the behaviour of these people.  
Find it surprising though not unusual / Inexplicable though normal  
Incomprehensible though it is the rule.  
Consider even the most insignificant, seemingly simple  
Action with distrust. Ask yourselves whether it is necessary  
Especially if it is usual.  
We ask you expressly to discover / That what happens all the time  
is not natural.  
For to say that something is natural / In such times of bloody  
confusion  
Of ordained disorder, of systematic arbitrariness / Of inhuman  
humanity, is to  
Regard it as unchangeable.

(Bertolt Brecht, *The Exception and the Rule*)

Teaching a course on human rights involves challenging social and pedagogical aspects that foreign language (FL) professors must address to avoid perpetuating ethnocentric and Eurocentric perspectives. In the Spanish classroom, one of the most difficult tasks is preventing students from replicating common

stereotypes about the Spanish-speaking countries and societies studied. Dictatorships, censure, state terrorism, ideological and political discrimination, violence, and poverty are all sociopolitical phenomena usually perceived as anomalies unique to those societies suffering them. The *abstract* articulation of universal notions such as freedom, justice, welfare, progress, and rights might lead students to reproduce universalistic perspectives, regardless of the *concrete* social and cultural contexts and the epistemological determinations (Foucault, 1968) of the analytical categories being used in the classroom. The universality of these categories rests upon the notion that the human subject is pure, rational, and autonomous and the idea "that humans were invested with inalienable rights and freedoms" (Jonsson, 2010, p. 115). An epistemological approach on human rights provides students the tools to understand the order of underlying historical perceptions in the production of knowledge about reality.

For intermediate/advanced Spanish students enrolled in reading courses it is of great importance to become aware of the "scattered" meaning of the "universal" (Balibar, 2002, p. 146) and its different modalities. Critical comprehension of the societies and cultures

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Author note: I was an assistant Professor of Spanish at Missouri Western State University from August 2008 to May 2011, and that I had a great experience at Missouri Western, and I am happy for having taught there and having met my students  
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studied in those courses and of the immediate social surroundings, through using the target language, helps students to avoid Eurocentric or Western prejudices and to understand universality “[as] reality with representations of unity and diversity . . . as fiction [and] as symbol” (Balibar, 2002, p. 147).

In intermediate/advanced foreign language classrooms, the absence of an epistemological approach has at least three negative social and pedagogical consequences. First, the classroom reproduces the knowledge of reality that results from conceiving in the *abstract* a specific human subject, and an order of things that belongs to the domain of the *concrete*, dismissing other possible orders. It becomes a place where concepts such as freedom, justice, and rights seem to be given *ex cathedra* as gifts to those who do not have them. Second, students are not engaged in developing critical thinking skills necessary for creating a socially just and democratic society (Ferrer, 1972). The notion that there is one specific kind of human subject in a global place reinforces the stigmatization<sup>1</sup> of individuals and societies. Third, paradoxically in the name of universality (Balibar, 2002), the classroom reproduces a policing approach to the *other*. By means of the criminalization of this *other*, the society disciplines its members and suppresses from the public sphere all possible differences in the order of things (or reality).

Michel Foucault’s (1975) notion of the disciplinary society states that power is not the result of the exclusive use of coercive tools but of institutional regulation and standardization. Dividing and standardizing individuals’ functions subdues them to binarisms or antagonisms such as us/them, normal/abnormal, healthy/sick, local/foreigner, citizen/alien, or legal/illegal. These reproduce power relationships within a society attempting to regulate it in toto. The classroom, then, is no more than a place where “pedagogical action . . . produces the dominant culture, contributing thereby to the reproduction of a hierarchy within a social formation which dominates the educational system. This hierarchy secures a monopoly of legitimate

symbolic and physical violence” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992, p. 6).

This article analyzes the pedagogical implications of a university course, Spanish Readings on Human Rights with a Service Learning Component. How can combining cultural readings and community Service Learning (SL) in the FL classroom help to dismantle universalistic perceptions, prejudices, stigmas, and stereotypes? How does a SL project in the FL classroom help students become aware of the limitations of any universalism and recognize and value human rights? Ideally, this type of course emphasizes linguistic and cognitive skills in order to promote critical thinking in both languages, Spanish and English.

The combination of reflection, action, and experience has long been a goal among educators. In the last decades, foreign language teachers have moved to more learner-centered pedagogies in an attempt to engage students in critical thinking. They have sought to transform the classroom from a passive place for the reproduction of knowledge to a more interactive arena of action and reflection (Vygotsky, 1962) that involves class and community cross-activities. Thus, students and teachers have become more conscious of their place not only in the classroom but also within the community and the world (Freire, 1999). The communicative dynamic based on students’ critical learning and understanding of social and cultural representations helps students see themselves as community members (Varona, 1999; Caldwell, 2007). In the classroom this creates constant feedback among students and between them and the professor, that stimulates the group task-based activities (Lee, 2000; Lee & Van Patten, 1995), improving their confidence in the target language as well as their awareness of sociocultural variables.

This type of open classroom assumes a communicative dynamic based on students’ critical learning and understanding of social and cultural representations. By seeing themselves as both students and community members (Varona, 1999), they engage in the group activities and gain awareness of the collective dimension of the society. The main purpose for FL professors in combining diverse pedagogical tools and contents from humanities and human rights is to

<sup>1</sup> The definition of stigma used here is the one given by Erving Goffman, which states that a stigma is the special relationship between an attribute of the individual and a stereotype (Goffman, 1963, p. 14).

sensitize the classroom environment to the contradictions, complexities, and ironies of the subjects and materials presented.

In a course on Spanish readings that includes different genres' texts, understanding the concept and history of human rights in Latin America implies also a deep understanding of the connotative character of language. This allows better appreciation of formal and content aspects of discourse. These aspects are essential tools for greater understanding of the ideological background of cultural societal practices, and they allow for the deconstruction of social and cultural stereotypes by combining readings, discussions, and action. The main objective of this type of course is that students develop critical thinking skills to understand their own society and the ways freedom, civil rights, and social equality function in it. Through the curricular combination of humanities and human rights in the foreign language classroom, students engage in a critical approach to cultural practices and aesthetic hierarchies by understanding the race, gender/class, ideological, and political prejudices that underlie the very notion of culture itself.

St. Joseph, Missouri, where Missouri Western State University is located, is a community where foreign languages and cultures, as well as foreign workers in different areas of the labor force, are social phenomena that go back many years. As in other areas of the Midwest with a predominantly white Caucasian population, in the last 10 years the Hispanic population of St. Joseph has doubled, matching the numbers of African Americans.<sup>2</sup> Still, this phenomenon is not always well understood or tolerated. Despite its proximity to the Kansas City metropolitan area, the visibility of cultural diversity, foreign languages, and cultural identity has become more noticeable only in recent years. All Service Learning or community-oriented experience has a significant

impact on students and community members. It brings new experiences to the critique of gender, class, and language stereotypes in the university classroom, but also into some public spaces. In this case, although the presence of heritage speakers of Spanish is increasing within the university population, most of the students, nevertheless, are originally from the region; the course topic and Service Learning provided them an enriching opportunity to reflect on their own perceptions of the changes within their community. For civil society it is a chance to break with contexts of discrimination, fear, or a sense of strangeness regarding the Spanish language and the Hispanic population.

At times, those who don't speak Spanish endure gender/class stereotypes and the pre-existing perceptions of "otherness" rooted in ethnocentric and Eurocentric views. The presence of "others" generates an irrational but very real fear of, for example, losing the English language, being "invaded," or having jobs taken away, which also might permeate the educational institutions. Intermediate and advanced language classes that introduce foreign cultures and societies may contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes and ethnocentric perspectives if a combined critical understanding and sensitivity are not promoted. A Spanish reading course on human rights may help dismantle long-held stereotypes, as social, political, and cultural variables are exposed and explained. By combining reading, discussion, and Service Learning, students feel infused with the need to "speak to others." As Tzvetan Todorov has noted, "Humanists saw themselves as universalists, when in truth their horizon ended at the edges of Europe" (as cited in Stanton, 2006, p. 1518). The Western ideals of freedom, equality, justice, tolerance, secularism, and cosmopolitanism are not free from prejudices and stereotypes that need to be addressed critically and exposed in the classroom, and also through praxis.

In a university course on foreign languages, a Service Learning project within the community allows students still predominantly local to review and think about the cultural, economic, and social rights, as espoused in documents after the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, from a local as well as an

<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2000 the percentage of Hispanic population in Buchanan County, MO, was 2%, while by 2009 it had reached 4.1%, a number equivalent to the African American population. Although the data for the 2010 census are not yet available for the State of Missouri, the 2009 information demonstrated a significant growth in the Hispanic population. However, their lack of visibility and representation is still notorious, as well as the continuing strong reactions toward the undeniable importance for the region of the Spanish language.

expanded perspective. The course attempts to infuse students with “social justice” questions from a universal as well as a particular view (Jackson & Shapiro-Phim, 2008, p. 16) and engage them in society from a humanistic and civic perspective: “At present, both human rights and the humanities, it seems . . . are struggling to articulate ways and means of speaking ‘with’ others, as agents in their own right, while at the same time trying to get beyond the limits of the local to make ‘generalizable’ statements and claims that are . . . nonimperial” (Stanton, 2006, p. 1520).

Generally, the objectives of Spanish reading courses are to improve students’ reading skills and to provide them with critical thinking tools needed in upper-level courses on literatures and cultures of Latin America and Spain.<sup>3</sup> To maximize this project’s potential in terms of critical and creative engagement, students participated in its design from the beginning, with discussion sessions about the purpose of Service Learning in foreign languages in the community of St. Joseph. The project followed four phases: 1) discussion of objectives, 2) preparation of materials, 3) service, and 4) interpretation/critical thinking. For this article, I will focus on the two last phases.

The community partner for the Service Learning project was the program, “Domestic Violence Offender Education Group (DVI)” from Addiction Awareness LLC, which functions at the Parole and Probation Center of the St. Joseph Correctional Center. After discussing different Service Learning activities, the class decided to address the request for Spanish interpreters made by the DVI directors at the beginning of the semester. After agreeing that the service would not involve professional translation or interpretation, the class decided to work in groups as language and cultural facilitators during one of DVI’s weekly sessions. The program consists of 52 classes that individuals (men and women) on probation or parole for charges of domestic violence must attend as part of completing their sentence.

<sup>3</sup> Usually, these classes meet three times per week in 50-minute sessions throughout the semester. The amount of extra time invested in a Service Learning project like the one described here was between two and four hours every week and was always arranged by agreement with students.

Through task-oriented activities (readings, assignments, and journals) attendees discuss and reflect on topics such as gender stereotypes and their relation to social and cultural representations and violence, the ethnic component of those stereotypes, discourses of violence in gender models and stereotypes, self-esteem, and accountability, among others. The class cooperated with the DVI, attending, in groups of three, one session per week (the men’s group), from 4:30 to 6:00 during two months. Students’ activities consisted of 1) becoming familiar with the printed assessment handbook (DVI, 1997), which presented terms and concepts related to the readings on human rights, such as gender violence, social and racial profiling, and so on, and 2) assisting, under the professor’s supervision, the Hispanic participants in the DVI session.<sup>4</sup> Although some participants understood portions of the group and handbook’s directions, they needed help understanding them while participating in the activities.

The conceptualization of Service Learning, which drove this project, presented it as a cooperative program designed by the professor and students. Activities would be oriented to broaden the students’ and community’s cultural and social horizons. At the linguistic level, its main purpose was to understand the conventions of language in real and diverse communicative contexts. At the pedagogical level, this Service Learning promoted individual and collective critical knowledge and thinking toward civic and democratic engagement (Freire, 1999). Students’ participation attempted to encourage involvement in civic responsibilities, as well as in justice and social equality advocacy. They saw Service Learning as a way to encourage local community interest in other cultures by means of reflection. There was clear agreement about the need for a “welcoming” and “receptive” environment toward diversity and also toward difference in the St. Joseph community. This was reflected in discussions students had after each service. They exchanged opinions about topics such as institutional repression, gender violence, poverty,

<sup>4</sup> They also helped in translating procedures and directions during assessment interviews under professors’ advising.

gender/class stereotypes, and cultural and religious commands based on their interpretation of the readings, as well as their personal reactions to the experience at the DVI.

Through the readings about gender/class exploitation, poverty, social inequality, and right to identity, students comprehended the particular historical contexts of violence. They were able to understand and identify, for example, Rigoberta Menchú's rights (Menchú, 1995), questioning the ethnocentric view on indigenous communities' current situation regarding land ownership and dignity. Prejudices regarding ethnicity, class, gender, oral cultures and traditions, and indigenous legacy were linked to the principles that also define stereotypes of consumption, modern economy, and urban society. The Service Learning project at the DVI had the specific objective of contextualizing these reflections within violent situations in their own community. This allowed them to reflect on the functionality of stereotypes of ethnicity, class, and gender in institutions. When these prejudices appeared in their own interpretations of familiar surroundings, self-reflection resulted.

One of the most relevant outcomes of this course has been the constant unfolding of the symbolic violence implied in most social relationships, as an essential element in the social reproduction of power and authority. Course readings were distributed in such a way that texts on human rights, gender, and class were analyzed during all the phases of the Service Learning. The class discussed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a selection of chapters from Rigoberta Menchú's testimony; Juan Rulfo's short story, "El llano en llamas"; the film *México: The Frozen Revolution*, by Raimundo Gleyzer; Alfonsina Storni's journalistic pieces on women's rights; the film based on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Yo, la peor de todas*; the testimony of Alicia Partnoy's *The Little School*; Estela Barnes de Carlotto's "Historias de abuelas"; and the fictional short stories, "Aquí pasan cosas raras," by María Luisa Valenzuela, and "El hombre sirena," by Samanta Schweblin. The class also discussed texts regarding the right to the truth, sexual and biological identity, and labor and migration. Readings included short stories from *Los otros cuentos*, by the Subcomandante

Marcos; the play, *El Manchado*, by Ariel Barchilón; fragments of the novel, *Ni muerto has perdido tu nombre*, by Luis Gusmán; the story "El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo," by Senel Paz, and its film version, *Fresa y chocolate (Strawberry and Chocolate)*, by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea; "Los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales," an Amnesty International document, and the short story "Un asunto vecinal," by Lorenzo Silva. This last reading took place in the context of public opinion regarding the Arizona law (Senate Bill 1070 1) that enables police officers to ask about migratory status and request documentations if there is "reasonable suspicion" of illegal status. Topics such as the criminalization of immigration and work, as well as the profiling of individuals by their phenotype, were immediately related to readings and the DVI focus group discussions. Students compared the reactions toward immigration presented in Silva's short story to the forms of reaction in the United States. They compared the different motivations between Mexican or Latin American immigrants' attitudes toward emigrating and facing social and cultural challenges in the receiving country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at present, with those of Europeans coming to America and acquiring land during the 16th and 17th centuries, and their reactions toward indigenous communities of the time.

These texts introduced students to gender and social inequalities, and simultaneously produced discussion of concepts such as freedom of speech, rights, justice, and welfare. The social realities confronted by indigenous peasants from Guatemala and Mexico, as well as Latin American foreign workers in the U.S. and Spain, were analyzed through texts and documentaries. This allowed students to discuss the extent of the terms *legal/illegal* and *local/foreign*. They approached xenophobia and class and gender stereotypes in the critical perspective presented by these texts. At the same time, they confronted the extent of their own stereotypes while trying to understand and interpret stories presented at the DVI (those related to the participants as well as those from the pedagogical material introduced by the group). This pedagogical action allowed the students to reflect on their own awakening as they listened to the violent

experiences of others and recognized them as familiar, even “normal” for individuals in the community and society. In-class discussions of concepts, readings, and films and selection of relevant news from newspapers in Spanish added material for thought. Concepts and ideas such as “gender expectations” (i.e., how men and women are supposed to be or behave), “normality,” men’s and women’s rights, “gender violence,” and the relationship between social inequality, class stereotypes, and social profiling were critically reviewed.

During SL, students noticed that gender stereotypes, one of the aspects they analyzed in texts by Alfonsina Storni and Samanta Schweblin (Storni, 2002; Schweblin, 2009), were linked to the social and cultural background. They started to relate to stereotypes in “subjective” cultural, social, and ideological spheres since they were able to share at the DVI the ways men and women perceive themselves within specific sociocultural frames that resemble class/gender values. They contributed opinions when the therapist leading the group requested input, and in some cases they exchanged information with the DVI participants. The group specifically helped translate and interpret various terms and also translated some of the personal stories told by DVI group members. The dynamic of the experience created a shared space between participants and students, and they became aware of social and cultural determinations of gender/class expectations and their relationship to violence, at the personal or familiar level as well as the institutional level, especially as they apply to unemployment situations. The relationship between failure to meet gender and class expectations and the violent reactions to this, and the changing job market situation, where linguistic skills are increasingly important, was discussed during one of the sessions and later in the classroom. In these discussions, the students proposed that prejudices about Hispanic peoples and the Spanish language could be two possible results, among others, of this interrelation.

The experience of combining curricular readings with a human rights perspective and Service Learning promoted student awareness of the cultural and social aspects of language.

Being aware of language nuances made them begin to use the target language with a consideration for the ideological implications of speech and its role in communication. Students became conscious of their own use of language while understanding and communicating in different contexts, for example, during assessment with their “client” and also during “informal conversation” with personnel. Their confidence in communicating increased due to the class discussions and the post-SL sessions, and through growing confidence in dealing with the language’s ideological, social, and cultural nuances. Coincidentally, this phenomenon usually happens clearly for the first time to language students in their initial experience abroad. Through this SL experience, they could see contradictions in their own understanding of human rights concepts, even within their own society and culture. This induced them to be aware of their communicative skills and their ability to comprehend and interact in different social contexts by being conscious of the prejudices, stigmas, and stereotypes encountered.

At the critical thinking level, this experience was a deconstruction of fixed ways of approaching Latin American societies and society in general. Students found they could critique the tools they use to produce and reproduce a particular knowledge of reality. At times, they found themselves reinforcing social inequality and stereotypes. Their views about the “other” as portrayed in readings were confronted by their own ideological ground and “tolerance” boundaries when reflecting on the experience at the DVI. Students observed their own tendency to “profile” in accordance to gender and social class stereotypes. They noted how they related to “gender expectations” and how that related to expectations about the DVI participants. Social class seems to dictate the values of gender subjectivities (such as “do not do female things,” “the man is the provider,” “men deserve respect,” “behave like a woman,” etc.). Students observed that social class views predisposed them to some of these values also. From that perspective they reviewed the ideas from Storni’s “Diario de una niña inútil” (2002) and Schweblin’s “El hombre sirena” (2009). The failure to fill in already internalized gender roles

and the violent reactions to those stereotypes were facts interpreted and discussed in class, and specially during the group reflections after each SL session, and in the individual written reflections. By linking the questioning of masculinity that appeared in the DVI stories with that revealed in these readings, students could visualize the violence carried by stereotypes within the cultural system. This enabled them to relocate concepts such as victim and victimizer to a wide social, cultural, and institutional context where gender and class stereotypes function.

It was clear at this point that critically reading texts and life experiences both depart from preconceptions and stereotypes that imply certain violence. Students remarked that sharing the same physical space with the DVI participants, by listening and being able to participate in and reflect on the DVI, made them conscious of the blurred line that separated “us” and “them” in the same way as occurred in Lorenzo Silva’s short story “Un asunto vecinal” (Silva, 2004), which presents a crime motivated by xenophobia. They were aware of the reversibility of the terms *victims* and *victimizers* after acknowledging the social and cultural imperatives that individuals try to accomplish while following a social “norm” or “stereotype.” They discovered that physical proximity and speaking during the SL caused them to confront their own prejudices, which are not always obvious when interpreting and discussing readings in a classroom. They noticed they did not have prejudices when talking about people’s right to build up their own identity. And they came to understand the negative effects of gender and social class prejudices on DVI participants. But at the same time, this understanding brought up conflicts regarding same-sex relationships or male friendship and homosexuality, during the discussions on Senel Paz’s story (Paz, 2008) and Gutiérrez Alea’s film, *Fresa y chocolate*. While it was possible for them to deconstruct class/gender stereotypes and prejudices after listening during the DVI sessions, it was difficult to deconstruct these stereotypes when discussing topics such as homosexuality. This aspect promoted critical thinking about the contradictions between the students’ interpretations of the texts and their

perceptions of concrete situations related to topics presented in the text, which involved stereotypes of masculinity.

Understanding how reality can be an “interpretation,” in order to stay true to values they consider universal, was of central importance for the students’ questioning of each one’s interpretive boundaries. By listening and participating in an experience involving people deemed “poorly behaved” by local society, students realized that stereotypes are framed by beliefs—religious, social, cultural, political, and academic. They questioned the function of stereotypes in reinforcing an individuality based only on these beliefs, thus reinforcing our sense of security and belonging. The creation of a different place for the “other” frames our sense of dignity, solidarity, and comprehension of the unknown, and reproduces an ethnocentric view. Detachment from fixed, preconceived ideas became visible for students as an essential tool in any attempt to talk and understand the “other” or the “reality.” The connection between readings, task-oriented activities (such as blog postings and reviews), classroom discussions, preparation for assisting at the DVI, Service Learning, and follow-up individual and group discussions provided students with a unique experience that will impact their future performance as students and also their commitment in their communities. This experience broadened students’ preparation for classes on special topics, for participation in study abroad and/or exchange programs, and internships. It also helped them discover career paths, such as translation and interpretation, and consider the critical social and cultural aspects of language in these professions. For the community, this experience might be an opportunity for its younger members to become advocates for social policies, equality, and dignity through the exercise of understanding, tolerance, and acceptance. In an increasingly diverse society facing economic challenges, this experience contributed to students’ awareness of the importance of “discern[ing] a problem in the very way we perceive a problem” (Žižek, 2010).

At the community level, the Service Learning project had varying degrees of impact. DVI participants were very welcoming to students and receptive to the SL activity,



although from the beginning, some participants demonstrated no interest and did not value the presence of students. Through the students' and professor's active participation in therapist requests, as well as with interpretation and translation services for the Hispanic members, they opened a space for dialogue. Throughout the sessions, interaction with Hispanic DVI participants increased, and in return, participants became more interested in the students and the professor. For DVI participants, learning to communicate with them from a space perceived not as "invaded" but as shared by other members of the community was a new experience. They began to look forward to students each session. Their awareness that students represented community members helped them move from personal experiences of violence to being accepted as contributing members within the community. For DVI participants this was also an opportunity to see how their experiences could teach and help themselves and others. The students and the professor began to realize how the stories shared at the DVI focus group resonated with personal, group, and social experiences everyone has. At this point, sharing the space, listening, and communicating both in English and Spanish created an environment where students re-evaluated their ability to listen to others and learn from situations that required them to let go of preconceived conceptions and become aware of the role of prejudice in their own production of "knowledge." For the Hispanic DVI participants, this was a chance to express their thoughts and fears, and also to improve their English skills. During the sessions, being aware of cultural differences seemed a good starting point to grasp the importance of sensing it is possible to be heard. Students became aware of the pedagogical role their words can have when talking with others about domestic violence and its relationship to gender/class stereotypes and expectations. At the sessions, this awareness was part of the new beginning and new perspective on self-esteem that participants were working through. They had the opportunity for the first time to recognize they have something useful to share if only people will listen.

This class proposed to integrate humanities with human rights and attempted to produce a

cognitive critique of gender, class, and language stereotypes associated with changes in migration and employment. In the end, by promoting an experience of integration based on the recognition of dignity, it avoided a focus on inequality or lack of right by presenting the irrationality of antagonisms. The class recognized these antagonisms as part of the knowledge gained in understanding "reality," even the reality of the "other," and questioned them as part of a system of social and cultural expectations. In this sense, the relevance of a Service Learning project within a community with an increasing number of "foreign workers" resides in its provocative potential to make antagonisms visible, such as "legal" and "illegal," "Spanish" and "English," "us" and "them," "me" and the "other." These binarisms make invisible the need for equitable social policies in a society that is expanding and changing demographically and culturally. The students and the participants of the DVI had the opportunity to see the emergence of some possible "praxis," which although not translated into activism, can have a social and cultural impact. In this way, the classroom stops functioning as a place where pedagogical action "...reproduces the dominant culture, contributing thereby to the reproduction of the structure of the power relations within a social formation in which the dominant system of education tends to secure a monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1992, p. 6). In the foreign language classroom on human rights, the combination of readings and Service Learning can be a powerful tool to dismantle gender and class stereotypes, as well as a place to question and rethink the categories used to understand human rights now, in the immediate social context of a university or anywhere else.

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### Appendix

#### SPA310 - SPANISH READINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS Missouri Western State University

Dr. Karina Elizabeth Vázquez

#### DESCRIPCION DEL CURSO:

Este curso prepara a los estudiantes con una concentración o especialización en español para la lectura crítica de textos de diverso género (testimonio, ficción, documento, nota periodística, declaración, teatro, etc.). El curso busca abordar de manera comparativa, crítica e integral los distintos aspectos de los derechos humanos y su importancia en la realidad social de Latinoamérica, España, y los Estados Unidos.

#### OBJETIVOS:

- Desarrollar las herramientas para la lectura crítica en español.
- Aumentar el vocabulario mediante el hábito de la lectura.
- Abordar la historia social, política, y cultural de los países hispanohablantes utilizando conceptos útiles para pensar también la historia de los Estados Unidos.
- Mejorar la expresión oral mediante debates, presentaciones, y actividades de “Service Learning.”
- Explorar y desarrollar los mecanismos de argumentación en el debate a partir de la lectura crítica.
- Analizar textos diversos que ejemplifican los conceptos presentados en la clase.

#### REQUISITOS PARA TOMAR ESTA CLASE:

- SPA310 es un requisito previo para la mayoría de los cursos de español de los niveles 300 y 400, así como para los estudiantes especializados en español (majors y minors).
- SPA201
- Puntuación suficiente obtenida en el examen de “placement.”
- Un curso similar en otra universidad, con el permiso previo de alguno de los profesores de la sección de español.

#### TEXTOS REQUERIDOS:

1 -**Selección de textos disponibles en “e-reserve” en la biblioteca.** El acceso a los textos se lleva a cabo mediante la página web de la biblioteca, en la sección de “reservas on line” bajo el nombre Karina Vázquez. El código de acceso lo dará la profesora el primer día de clases.

2.-**Vox Diccionario de Sinónimos y Antónimos.** (1994) McGraw-Hill, ISBN: 0844204692 (o cualquier otro diccionario similar).

3.-Un buen **diccionario Español-Inglés-Español y/o Español-Español.**

4- Cualquier texto de gramática española. (En la biblioteca se puede consultar: Campos, Héctor. *De la oración simple a la oración compuesta*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Press, 1993. MSW Lib REF 4375.C36

**ALGUNAS PELICULAS EN LA BIBLIOTECA:**

<i>Bolivia</i> (Argentina)	<i>Luchando</i> (Cuba)
<i>Crónica de un escape</i> (Argentina)	<i>Macario</i> (México)
<i>Cocalero</i> (Bolivia)	<i>Machuca</i> (Chile)
<i>The Devil's Miner</i> (Bolivia)	<i>Mexico: The Frozen Revolution</i> (México)
<i>Fresa y chocolate</i> (Cuba)	<i>The Short Films of Raymundo Gleyzer</i> (Argentina)
<i>La historia oficial</i> (Argentina)	<i>The Take</i> (Canadá)
<i>El Norte</i> (US)	<i>Botín de guerra</i> (Argentina)

**SITIOS DE INTERES EN LA RED:**

- 1) <http://www.amnestyusa.org/en-espanol/>
- 2) <http://www.hijos.org.ar/>
- 3) <http://www.madres.org/>
- 4) <http://www.abuelas.org.ar/>

**CALIFICACIÓN:**

La nota final se determina basándose en el esquema a continuación:

100% - 90% =	A
89% - 80% =	B
79% - 70% =	C
69% - 60% =	D
59% and below =	F

**LA NOTA EN LA CLASE:**

- 20% Pruebas de vocabulario y comprensión de texto (3)
- 30% Participación activa en clase (esto no es asistencia)
- 25% Service Learning
- 10% Blog con opiniones críticas sobre las películas o textos seleccionados
- 15% Diario de lectura de periódicos

1) **Pruebas de vocabulario y comprensión de texto:** Habrá **TRES pruebas de vocabulario y comprensión de texto** a lo largo del semestre, en las fechas indicadas en calendario de clases. Cada examen abarcará los temas que se han tratado hasta la fecha.

2) **Participación:** La nota de participación está compuesta por la realización de las actividades de clase, la entrega de tareas y la discusión activa de las lecturas y de los aspectos gramaticales presentados durante la clase. En este curso las inasistencias significan que no se ha cumplido con la participación requerida para aprobar el curso. Por lo tanto, no hay un límite de ausencias y queda a cargo del estudiante el asumir que cada ausencia afecta la nota de participación y, por ende, la calificación final del curso.

3) **Service Learning:** En este curso los estudiantes tendrán la oportunidad de diseñar, junto a la profesora, una actividad específica orientada hacia el intercambio en español con la comunidad de St. Joseph enfocándose en alguno de los aspectos discutidos en clase. Esta sección del curso está dividida en tres etapas: 1-Debate y diseño; 2-Intercambio, y 3-Evaluación crítica e informe. Los estudiantes y la profesora entrarán en contacto con algunos agentes comunitarios vinculados a la comunidad hispana y luego de evaluar distintas actividades seleccionarán una o dos. Cada actividad no excederá un tiempo máximo de 45 minutos tendrá lugar fuera del horario de clase, en el sitio a convenir con los miembros de la

comunidad, y en función del tipo de actividad a llevar a cabo. El propósito central del componente de Service Learning en este curso es crear un espacio en el que, mediante el uso del español, los estudiantes y los miembros de la comunidad puedan explorar y reflexionar críticamente sobre las diferencias y coincidencias de sus experiencias culturales.

4) **Películas y Blog:** Esta parte de la nota incluye la discusión en el Blog sobre las películas asignadas. A lo largo del semestre, los estudiantes deberán ver cuatro películas relacionadas con el tema central del curso y deberán participar de un debate escrito con sus compañeros. Para recibir el crédito completo para esta actividad, los estudiantes deben ver las cuatro películas y completar la actividad de escritura en el blog. **BLOG:** <http://karinatifle.blogspot.com/>

5) **Lectura de periódicos:** Los estudiantes escribirán un “diario” en el que llevarán un registro, a modo de reflexión, de noticias sobre derechos humanos que extraerán de la lectura de los periódicos. Este diario debe incluir dos entradas por semana y se entregará en las fechas indicadas en el calendario de clases. Cada entrada debe incluir: Fecha de la noticia / Nombre del diario / Título de la noticia / Descripción de la noticia y reflexión.

El objetivo principal de esta actividad es aprender sobre la actualidad política, social, cultural, y económica de Latinoamérica que guarden relación con las diversas áreas que comprenden los derechos humanos.

### CALENDARIO DE CLASES

- Clase 01:** Presentación del curso.
- Clase 02:** ¿Qué son los derechos humanos? Introducción
- Clase 03:** *Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos* (1948) - Vocabulario
- Clase 04:** *Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos* (1948) – Comprensión
- Clase 05:** *Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos* (1948) – Interpretación y discusión crítica “Actitud ciudadana. El respeto a la ley”
- Clase 06:** *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1982) – Cap. I (La familia)  
Tema: El derecho a la tierra y a la identidad
- Clase 07:** *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1982) – Caps. VI y XVI (El trabajo en la finca y período de reflexión)  
Tema: El derecho a la propiedad colectiva e individual  
Discusión de la película *La revolución congelada* (R. Gleyzer)
- Clase 08:** Cuento: “Nos han dado la tierra” (Juan Rulfo)  
Tema: El derecho a la tierra y al trabajo  
  
Service Learning. Etapa # 1: Debate de opciones y diseño  
Blog posting sobre *La revolución congelada*. Hora límite: Medianoche
- Clase 09:** *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1982) – Cap. XXIV (Marcha de los campesinos a la capital)

Tema: El derecho a la organización

- Clase 10:** Cuento: “Tomar la palabra” (Subcomandante Marcos)  
Tema: La tradición cultural
- Clase 11:** Cuento: “La historia del león y el espejo” (Subcomandante Marcos)  
Tema: La tradición cultural
- Service Learning. Etapa # 1: Debate de opciones y diseño
- Clase 12:** Cuento: “La historia del león y el espejo” (Subcomandante Marcos)  
Tema: El derecho a la protesta
- Clase 13:** Prueba de vocabulario # 1
- Service Learning. Etapa # 1: Debate de opciones y diseño
- Clase 14:** Cuento: “Las lavanderas” (Elena Poniatowska)
- Clase 15:** Cuento: “Diario de una niña inútil” (Alfonsina Storni)  
Tema: La imagen social de la mujer  
Discusión de la película *Solas* (España)
- Clase 16:** Texto periodístico: “Derechos civiles femeninos” (Alfonsina Storni)  
Tema: La igualdad de género  
Blog posting de *Solas*
- Clase 17:** Short Story “El hombre sirena” (Samantha Schweblin)
- Clase 18:** *La escuelita. Historias de desaparición y supervivencia en la Argentina* (Alicia Partnoy) - Introducción  
Tema: La libertad de ideas políticas
- Clase 19:** *La escuelita. Historias de desaparición y supervivencia en la Argentina* –  
Introducción – Comprensión y discusión crítica
- Clase 20:** Cuento: “Aquí pasan cosas raras” (Luisa Valenzuela)  
Tema: La libertad de expresión
- Clase 21:** “Aquí pasan cosas raras” (Luisa Valenzuela)  
Tema: La libertad de expresión  
Discusión de la película *Machuca*
- Clase 22:** Ensayo: “Nuestras gloriosas Fuerzas Armadas” (Pilar Calveiro)  
Tema: Las dictaduras, la privación de la libertad y derechos del individuo  
Blog posting sobre *Machuca*. Hora límite: medianoche
- Clase 23:** Pieza teatral: *El manchado* (Ariel Barchilón)  
Tema: La libertad de creencias y de expresión
- Clase 24:** *El manchado* (Ariel Barchilón)

Tema: La libertad de creencias y de expresión

- Clase 25:** *El manchado* (Ariel Barchilón)
- Clase 26:** Carta: “Carta abierta a mi nieto” (Juan Gelman)  
Tema: El derecho a la identidad
- Clase 27:** Texto periodístico: “Historias de abuelas” (Estela Barnes de Carlotto)  
Tema: El derecho a la identidad  
Discusión de la película *Botín de guerra* (I. Blaustein)
- Clase 28:** Fragmentos de la novela *Ni muerto has perdido tu nombre* (Luis Gusmán)  
Tema: La verdad y la memoria  
Blog posting de *Botín de guerra*. Hora límite: medianoche
- Clase 29:** Prueba de vocabulario # 2
- Clase 30:** Relato: “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo” (Senel Paz)  
Tema: El derecho a la identidad sexual
- Clase 31:** “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo” (Senel Paz)
- Clase 32:** “El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo” (Senel Paz)
- Clase 33:** Artículo periodístico: “Ya hay matrimonio gay en América Latina” (Artículo Página/12)  
Tema: Los derechos y los servicios sociales  
Discusión de la película *Fresa y chocolate* (T. Gutiérrez Alea)
- Clase 34:** “Ya hay matrimonio gay en América Latina” (Artículo Página/12)  
Blog posting sobre *Fresa y chocolate*
- Clase 35:** “El comienzo” (Marco Valle)
- Clase 36:** “Los rumanos” (Marco Valle)
- Clase 37:** ¿Qué son los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales? (Amnesty International) - Vocabulario
- Clase 38:** Relato: “Un asunto vecinal” (Lorenzo Silva)
- Clase 39:** “Un asunto vecinal”  
Discusión de *Un día sin mexicanos –Wetback - El Norte* o *The Other Europe*
- Clase 40:** “Un asunto vecinal”  
Blog posting sobre alguna de las películas. Hora límite: medianoche
- Clase 41:** “Un asunto vecinal”
- Clase 42:** Prueba de vocabulario # 3
- Clase 43:** Reflexión final