CS113: THE DAY OF THE DEAD RITUAL

FALL 2014

Tuesday & Thursday 5:00–6:50 PM
Haines 118

Professor Martha Ramirez-Oropeza
Office hours: T/R 3:45-4:45 pm, or by appointment
Chávez Department Bunche Hall Lecturers’ Office

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DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
The course explores the philosophical roots and evolution of the traditional Mexican festivity of the Day of the Dead. It considers how it was sculpted by its Pre-Hispanic origin, transformed by Spanish invasion and colonization, augmented with Chinese commerce, affected through Mexico’s Independence, Reform and Revolutionary epochs, interpreted by artists Posada and Diego Rivera, revitalized in the United States by the Chicano Cultural Movement, and explored by the new technological digital era.

Special attention is given to practicing the setting of an altar, deciphering the metaphors and glyphs of the Nahuatl language and ancient calendar systems, and learning the traditional invocation in the Nahuatl language. This course examines the profound essence of contemporary Day of the Dead observance, motivates creative critical thinking about how colonization and globalization has impacted this ritual, in order to consider and transform the way we celebrate the Day of the Dead Ritual today. The focus of the first part of the course will be the preparation of a massive altar, and the enactment of the Miquiztli, Pre-Hispanic ritual in the UCLA/SPARC community center on that day. Afterwards, the experience will deepen our understanding, and through reflective readings, and final project, students will suggest creative ways of sharing this ritual with the future generations.

REQUIRED TEXT: CS 113 Class Reader

GRADING SUMMARY
Daily Participation 10%
Participation the Day of the Dead Altar-Setting and Ritual 10%
Team Altar Project 10%
Reflective Essay 10%
8 essays on most important readings 40%
Team Final Creative Project 20%

COURSE DESIGN
This course will be one of total immersion. It is designed in two parts: (1) preparing for the ritual, and participating in it (2) reflecting on the ritual experience, and suggesting a creative way to transmit it.

I. The first half of the course will focus collective and individual spiritual and emotional preparation to enact the Day of the Dead ritual:
   a. You will memorize in Nahuatl, Spanish and English and practice movements involved in the traditional “Invocation to the Four Corners” and “the Calling of the Spirits.”
   b. You will take notes on lectures about the terminology in Nahuatl philosophy to shed light on the indigenous concepts of life and death.
   c. You will read articles for a deeper understanding of the historical roots of this multi-layered tradition.

Leading up to the day of the event, students will work in teams creating items for the ofrenda, such as papel picado, paper zempoalxochitl flowers, and other elements of the altar. For example, each student will bring a photo of a relative, accompanied by what foods or garments he or she liked. Furthermore, within a team, this student will make 20 paper zempoalxochitl flowers for the ritual.

On the two most important dates of the course our class will meet off-campus, at the Social and Public Art (SPARC) community center. On the first, we will set up the altarpieces and rehearse, and on the second date, you and all of the community, will enact the “Miquiztli, the Day of the Dead celebration.

Afterwards, students will write and turn in a hard copy, three-page, single-spaced, midterm reflection paper on their individual experience, describing how enacting this ritual impacted their lives.

II. The second half of the course has two sections with different objectives.
   A. The three weeks following the Day of the Dead ritual, you will return to the previous readings for a more contemplative consideration of the significance of the ritual, now that you have experienced it. You will be responsible to write a one-page essay responding to each of 8 articles (See articles below written in bold). These written assignments should be up-loaded on the class website no later than midnight the day before the class of the day they are assigned.

   From the 8 readings, you must choose your favorite. Remember, this will be your second reading of the essays. Everyone who choses the same article will become an essay reading team member. On the assigned day, the essay teams will lead a class discussion of the article. In a roundtable fashion, the team will be responsible to comment on the article, pose questions to the class, and generally
explore everyone’s thinking about the ideas in the essay.

Remember, everyone will have submitted an essay per/article---before class. If three articles will be discussed, then you must submit your comments, (3 paragraphs), on these three articles the night before.

8 essays on reading assignments 40%.

B. Team Final Creative Project
The second objective is a creative and collective project. During the final weeks, you will work with a team of at least five members. Your team will have to come up with a means of “passing-on” this ritual for future generations. This can take the form of a ritual, a performing or visual arts piece, a game, a poem, a children’s activity book, cookbook, TV show, a Lotería, a contemporary codice, or any other idea that the team might envision.

Each student will write a one-page, single-spaced, hard copy paper, to hand in on the day of the presentation. It will describe the project; how your collaboration worked; why the team decided this was the most effective way of passing on the ritual; and how this course has contributed to your overall understanding of this tradition.

SUMMARY

Team Projects

Midterm Altar Project
Class Day of the Dead Ritual at SPARC/UCLA Community Center
Final Creative Project

Individual Writing Assignments

1- Three-page Midterm Reflection Paper
8- Article Essays
1- One-page Essay on Team Final Creative Project

CCS 188-1 Class Reader Articles

2. Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition. “Aztec Religion, Worldview and Medicine.” pp. 36-45

Refer to Apendix Articles for more information.
1. Margaret Read MacDonald Editor, *The Folclore of World Holidays*, “November 2, All Souls Day.”
2. Jesus Perez Uruñuela *Ocotepec, Un cerro de mexicanidad*. “Día de los Muertos” (Spanish)
3. Ketzalkoatl en el Miktlan Myth analysis
4. All Saints Day, the Celts history
6. Ihkuak Nimikiz , Netzahualkoyotl poem
7. Nahuatl dictionary terms related to Day of the Dead

**Calendar of Course Activities**

**Week 0 Thursday, October 2**

Seating Assignments.

Students will form teams according to their year of birth in the Pre-Hispanic calendar. They will identify their region and always sit in this classroom area:

**Tochtli/Rabbit- South, Akatl/Reed- East, Tekpatl/Flint- North or Kalli/House- West.**

Welcoming Ritual:

- Setting the Altar
• Practicing reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions”
• Introductions and overview of the course and expectations.
• Introduction to the roots of the Day of the Dead Ritual.

Read for Week 0:
1. Elizabeth Carmichael & Chloe Sayer, *The Skeleton at the Feast: the Day of the Dead in Mexico.* “Forward-Pre-Hispanic Background.” University of Texas Press, 1992, (pp. 7-35)
2. Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, *Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition.* “Aztec Religion, Worldview and Medicine.” pp. 36-45

**Week One Oct 7-9**
Practice reading script (at the end of Reader), “Invocation to the Four Directions”
Foundation of Nahuatl thought: Ometekuhtli-Omezihuatl, The Creative Duality; Tonalli, Teyolia, Ihiyotl Souls; Nahuatl Creation Myths.
View: Video on Nahuatl Mythology

Read for Week 1:
1. Miguel Leon Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture.* “Concept of the Universe.” pp. 25-48

**Week Two Oct 14-16**
Practice reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions” and “Calling of the Spirits.
Ancient Mexican Calendar systems.

**Students will choose a Reader Article for Team Roundtable Presentations. (See Week Seven-Nine)**

Read for week 2:

**Week Three Oct 21-23**
Practice reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions” and “Calling of the Spirits.
Themes to be covered:
European influence on Day of the Dead
Present-day Indigenous Rituals
Student teams will be formed for Midterm Altar Building.

View: Video on Day of the Dead traditions in Mexico

Read for week 3:

**Week Four Oct 28-30-Nov 1st**

Artist, Jose Guadalupe Posada’s influence on the Day of the Dead celebration. Diego Rivera’s new “Catrina.”

Teams will be given class time to work together on organizing work on Altar projects.

Read for week 4:

**THURSDAY, October 30th**: Altar Building Day 5:30PM to 6:30PM
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST**: Day of the Dead Ritual 5:30-8:30PM- (TBC)

“Day of the Dead Ritual” at SPARC

MIDTERM: Altar Building Day, and Day of the Dead Ritual. IMPORTANT! Both Thursday and special Saturday class meetings will be at the Social and Public Art Resource Center, (SPARC.)

These dates and hour schedules are tentative and to be confirmed by October 2nd. At this point, if students have extraordinary impediments for attending, please speak to professor.

IMPORTANT: If you need more time to build your altar section, or want extra points for helping me, you may come on Friday, October 31st, in the afternoon or early on Saturday, November 1st. It is an enormous task! I will be at SPARC. Just check in with me when you would like to come help. However, even if you are planning to come on these optional days, you are still required to attend the orientation for a general rehearsal on Thursday, October 30th class session at SPARC, and the event day, Saturday, Nov. 1st!

Address:
THE SOCIAL AND PUBLIC ART RESOURCE CENTER, (SPARC)
685 VENICE BLVD, VENICE, CA 90291  (310) 822-9560
http://www.mapquest.com/maps?address=685%20Venice%20Blvd&city=Venice&state=CA&zipcode=90291#

For more info: contact Felipe Sanchez, felipe@sparcmurals.org
PLEASE CARPOOL or take Blue Bus #3, from UCLA to Lincoln/Venice Blvd, walk six small blocks west on Venice Blvd. To 685 Venice Blvd.

**It is of utmost importance to be punctual to these class meetings!**

Since the weekend of Oct 31\textsuperscript{st}, Nov 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd}, will be full of community Day of the Dead celebrations, you are strongly encouraged to attend these events, to contrast and compare these ceremonies in your midterm paper. I will provide a list of places to go to, and you can suggest others to the class. (i.e. Woodlawn Memorial Cemetery, Self-Help Graphics, Grand Park, Edison Language Academy, Hollywood Forever, etc.).

**In preparation for Week Seven, Article Roundtables:** Please re-read the eight articles listed above in **bold** fonts (See “Reader Articles”). Everyone who choses the same article will become that specific Reader Article Team member. On the assigned day, the teams will lead a class discussion of that article. All other students must submit on the class website, by midnight, three paragraphs on the specific articles to be discussed.

**Week Five Nov. 4-6**

Article Roundtable discussions on readings.

**Week Six Nov 11 (HOLIDAY)-13**

Article Roundtable discussions on readings.

*Midterm Reflection Essay due Nov 14*

**Week Seven Nov 18-20**

Article Roundtable discussions on readings.

**Week Eight Nov 25\textsuperscript{th} (Nov 28 HOLIDAY)**

Article Roundtable discussions on readings. Class time will be given for Final Creative Project planning.

*Final Creative project presentations will be scheduled. Projects such as performing arts or games, that require more time will be allotted 20 min. Other visual arts or book projects will be displayed and be allotted 5 min.*

**Week Nine Dec 2-4**

Final Creative-Project Presentations.
Week Ten Dec 9-11

Final Creative-Project Presentations.
Closing Ceremony, with last words and potluck celebration.