DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The course explores the philosophical roots and evolution of the traditional Mexican Ritual 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, depicted by artists, José Guadalupe Posada and Diego Rivera, revitalized in the United States by the Chicana/o Cultural Movement, and re-interpreted by the new digital era.

This course examines the profound essence of contemporary Day of the Dead observance, motivates critical thinking of how colonization and globalization has impacted this ritual. It poses the question of how to creatively and respectfully celebrate the Day of the Dead Ritual today. In a total-immersion learning process, both theoretical and practical, students will be exposed to the ancient Nahuatl indigenous oral and written traditions. In this way, from setting an altar, to understanding the metaphors in the philosophic poetry of *Flower and Song*; from deciphering glyphs in *codices*, to applying ancient calendar systems to their personal lives, and memorizing the words of invocation in the Nahuatl language; students will deepen their experience in this ritual, to be able to share, and pass it on to future generations.

Special attention is given to both student’s individual effort, in writing, attendance and participation, as well as, student team participation. There are four important team projects, which will require self-organization, collective creativity and self-evaluation, because all team members will receive the same grade.

The focus of the first part of the course will be on preparing for the enactment of the Pre-Hispanic Day of the Dead ritual at the UCLA/SPARC, Social and Public Art Resource Center, to be held on November 1st. After this experience, in the second part of the course, students will deepen their understanding, through midterm reflective writing, roundtable team presentations, and creative ways of sharing this ritual with the future generations in their final projects.
REQUIRED TEXTS:
1. CS 113 Class Reader, UCLA Academic Reader Solutions. Bookstore
2. “Day of the Dead Ritual Workbook.” Professor Ramírez-Oropeza

GRADING SUMMARY
INDIVIDUAL 50%
Individual Attendance and Participation 10%
Individual Midterm Reflective Essay 10%
Individual one-page essays on readings 30%

COLLECTIVE 50%
Team Classroom Altar Project 10%
Team participation on the Day of the Dead Altar-Setting and Ritual 10%
Team Roundtable Presentations 10%
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, activities will focus on collective and individual
spiritual and emotional preparation to enact the Day of the Dead ritual:
   a. Students will memorize the traditional “Invocation to the Four Corners” and
      “the Calling of the Spirits,” in Nahuatl, Spanish and English.
   b. Student teams will practice setting an altar. Each student will bring a photo of
      a departed friend or relative, accompanied by what he or she liked. Students
      will share something about their departed relative and why they brought the
      items they did.
   c. Students will read articles for a deeper understanding of the historical roots of
      this multi-layered tradition, that will be referred to in lectures.

On the two most important dates of the course our class will meet off-campus, at the
Social and Public Art (SPARC) community center. One day will be to set the altarpieces
and rehearse, and the other when we will enact the Day of the Dead celebration.

Midterm Paper
Afterwards, students will write and turn in a hard copy, four-page, double-spaced,
midterm reflection paper. It should describe the experience, both individual and
collective, interweave the experience with readings, and insights on 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, Teams 1-11 will
      summarize their article in a Power Point, and lead a class discussion. In a
roundtable fashion, the team members will speak, then pose questions to motivate class participation.

All students will re-read articles, for a more contemplative consideration of the significance of the ritual. Each student will write a one-page essay, on each of the reader articles. It should contain three paragraphs: summary, what stood out, and a critical analysis of the article. 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.

B. Team Final Creative Project
The second objective is to collectively creative a project as a way of “passing-on” this ritual to future generations. This can take the form of a ritual, play, movie, game, poem, children’s activity book, cookbook, TV show, a Lotería, Rap, a contemporary codice, or any other idea that the team might envision. Each team will organize how the work will be done. This is a difficult task. Since all the students in that team will receive the same grade, it is of utmost importance that every member participate in an equal, yet possibly different manner.

On week nine, prior to final team presentations of their Creative Project, each team will submit a five-page, double-spaced paper. It will name the participants; describe the project; how each member worked in this collaboration; why the team decided this was the most effective way of passing on the ritual; and how this project reflects team’s overall understanding of this tradition, taking into consideration ritual experience, lectures and readings.

*All Teams will hand in their five-page, double-spaced Final paper on Nov 24*

CCS 188-1 Class Reader Articles

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


10. *The Skeleton at the Feast: the Day of the Dead in Mexico.*” Travellers’ Tales and The Here and Now.” pp. 45-74 (Part I)


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**Calendar of Course Activities**

**Week 0 Thursday, September 24**

**Seating Assignments.**
During the weeks prior to the Day of the Dead Ritual, students will sit according to their year of birth in the Pre-Hispanic calendar. They will identify their region posted on a chart on each wall, and always sit in this side of the classroom: **Tochtli/Rabbit- South Wall, Akatl/Reed- East Wall, Tekpatl/Flint- North Wall or Kalli/House- West Wall.**

- Introductions and overview of the course and expectations.
- Professor will model the Setting of an Altar for all teams to follow.
- Welcoming Ritual: Students will stand in their regions and Practice reading the, “Invocation to the Four Directions.”
- **Students will choose to study one of the Course Reader articles. A sign-up sheet will be passed. Those who have chosen the same article will conform a team for the entire quarter. Articles 11-13 on “Posada” will be considered as one. Each team will have approximately, 9 students. Unless there is higher enrollment. At the end of the class session, team members will meet each other.**

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 September 29- October 1st

- Two Teams will set their altar. Tue 1-2, Thu 3-4.
- Practice reading script in Workbook, “Invocation to the Four Directions”
- Lecture: Foundation of Nahuatl thought. Ometekuhtli-Omezihuatl, The Creative Duality; Ancient Mexican Calendar systems. Tonalli, Teyolia, Ihiyotl Souls; Nahuatl Creation Myths.
- Nahuatl words for Roll Call. “My Name is___,” “Ninotoka___”

View: Video on Nahuatl Mythology

Read for Week 1:


Week Two October 6-8

- Two Teams will set their altar. Tue 5-6, Thu 7-8.
- Practice reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions” and “Calling of the Spirits.”

Read for week 2:


Week Three October 13-15

- Two Teams will set their altar. Tue 9-10, Thu 11.
- Practice reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions” and “Calling of the Spirits.”
- Lecture: Present-day Indigenous Rituals
- View: Video on Day of the Dead traditions in Mexico

Read for week 3:


Week Four October 20-22

- Practice reading, “Invocation to the Four Directions” and “Calling of the Spirits.”
- Lecture: Artist, Jose Guadalupe Posada’s influence on the Day of the Dead celebration. Diego Rivera’s new “Catrina.”
- View: Video on Day of the Dead traditions in Mexico
- Teams will be given class time to work together on organizing Altar projects.

Read for week 4:

10. The Skeleton at the Feast: the Day of the Dead in Mexico.” Travellers’ Tales and The Here and Now.” pp. 45-74 (Part I)

In preparation for Week Six, Article Roundtables: Re-read the articles and note the dates for your team’s roundtable discussion. All students must submit three paragraphs on each of the articles to be discussed. Please upload on the class website, by midnight before the discussion.

Week Five October 27-29

During this week altar-building at SPARC begins. Professor will be working on the general decorations and students are required to go to SPARC for at least one 3-hour session to assist.

The days are listed below and students must sign up on CCLE, under Week 5.
Sunday 10/25: 10:00 AM-7:00 PM
Monday 10/26: 2:00 PM-7:00 PM
Wednesday 10/28: 2:00 PM-7:00 PM
Friday 10/30: 2:00-7:00PM
Saturday 10/31: 10:00AM-7:00 PM

Students who can go to the Downtown Flower Market to buy and deliver flowers to SPARC, and all volunteer assistance, will be greatly appreciated and given extra points.

Tuesday October 27

- Class will not meet on campus today. Instead, those who can will meet at SPARC during class time to work on set up. Students who will go to SPARC will need to make sure they sign up for this day on the CCLE site, under Week 5.
IMPORTANT CLASS MEETINGS:

1. THURSDAY, October 29:
   - 5:00PM to 7:00PM: Teams will sign-in and set their altar items in their
   - A SPARC representative will greet and speak to us about the organization.
   - We will have a rehearsal from 5:30-6:00.

2. SUNDAY, November 1st:
   
   Day of the Dead Ritual at SPARC, 5:00-8:30PM
   Please arrive promptly at 4:30 and sign-in.

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.
(SPARC is close to the beach! Some students have not made it on time because they turn East on Venice Blvd. and end up at downtown.)

(This weekend will be full of community Day of the Dead celebrations, you are strongly encouraged to attend these events. Please compare and contrast these events with our ritual in your midterm paper. It is due Nov 12!)

Week Six Nov. 3-5

- Seating arrangements will be modified to allow team members to sit together.
- Article Roundtable discussions on readings begin. Tue. Tm1&2, Thu. Tm3&4
- 30 min, class time will be given for Final Creative Project planning.

Week Seven Nov 10-12
• Article Roundtable discussions on readings continue. Tue. Tm 5&6, Thu. Tm 7&8
• 30 min, class time will be given for Final Creative Project planning.

(Midterm Reflection Essay due Nov 12)

Week Eight Nov 17-19

• Article Roundtable discussions on readings. Tue. Tm 9&10, Thu. Tm 11
• 30 min, class time will be given for Final Creative Project planning.

Week Nine Nov 24 (Nov 26 HOLIDAY)

• Teams will use class time to work on their final presentations.
• T.A. and teams will schedule Final Creative project presentations.
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(There will be three days to present. Projects that require less time for presentations, such as visual arts, paper-maché sculptures, codex, or book projects can be enlarged on the LCD Projector, and will be allotted 10 min. Others, such as plays, movies, songs, poems, stories, rituals or games, that require more time will be allotted up to, 20 min. And will be scheduled towards the end.)

All Teams will hand in their five-page, double-spaced Final paper on Nov 24.

Week Ten Dec 1-3

11 Final Presentations

• Dec 1st Final Creative-Project Presentations
• Dec 3rd Final Creative-Project Presentations.

Week of Final Exam

• Dec 8th Final Creative-Project Presentations.
• Closing Ceremony, with last words and potluck celebration.