

**Course GS-02 CONTEMPORARY SPAIN: ECONOMY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT**  
(45 contact hours)

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**Brief Course Presentation**

Spain is comprised of an absolutely fascinating set of diverse places, inhabited by intriguingly diverse peoples, traditions and landscapes consequence of its rich history, cultural heritage and complex geography. The focus of this course is on learning about the country, regions and the people. In a context marked by economic crisis, the pressures from sectors such as construction, tourism, transport, energy and agriculture, high densities and pressures in coastal areas and islands determines that Spain faces important challenges in economic, social and environmental issues. The teachers will try to provide an open, critical and diverse overview of contemporary Spain using press releases, videos, reports and presentations.

**Objectives**

*The course aims to provide:*

- *A coherent content focused upon the ways in which relationships between people and the natural environment and patterns of spatial relationships vary across Spain.*
- *An understanding of how these relationships produce the distinctiveness of particular places, landscapes, and patterns of environmental and human attributes, society and identities.*
- *An appreciation of the characteristics of the urban, regional and rural environments of selected areas in Spain and the geographical processes which underlie their development.*

**Skills Outcomes:**

Students will develop a knowledge and understanding of:

- Relationships between human and physical systems in Spain.
- Main demographic, economic and environmental characteristics, threats and challenges in Spain.

Students have the opportunity to develop the following skills during the course:

- To contribute to students' understanding of important issues and problems in Spain's contemporary society
- To discuss the nature of the main social, economic and environmental problems.
- To understand some of the processes and trends shaping Spain today.
- To analyze of broader environmental, social and economic threads and challenges.
- To encourage in students a sensitive awareness of peoples, places and landscapes, both in their own country and elsewhere.

**Syllabus**

The syllabuses are presented within 9 topics, each based on a broad theme:

TOPIC 1: SPAIN'S CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY. An exceptionally diverse country: main geographical features. Spain's strategic location. The romantic and mythologized Spain.

Spanish lifestyle. Diversity of Gastronomy: From tradition to the international projection of the Spanish Cuisine. Main Popular Festivals and Religious Events around Spain.

TOPIC 2: SPAIN TODAY: POLITICAL CONTEXT. The Kingdom of Spain and Democracy: Parliamentary government under a constitutional monarchy. The country territorial divisions and political structures. Devolution processes and the Autonomous Communities' role.

TOPIC 3: THE SPANISH NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE AS ECONOMIC RESOURCE. The growth of leisure facilities and tourism in relation to the main attractions of the physical and human landscape. Environmental threats: the difficult balance between economic growth and sustainable development.

TOPIC 4: ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES: A COUNTRY WITH NO PETROL.The need for energy supplies. Spain leadership in the technological and industrial development of renewable energies: "Renewables Made in Spain".

TOPIC 5: POPULATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN SPAIN. Changes and trends. Migration: Puss-Pull factors. Population Distribution and Demographic Dynamics. Health Care System and Public Education. The crisis and budget cuts. Privatization of public services.

TOPIC 6: SPAIN IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT. The Spanish EU Integration. Spain within the Global Context.

TOPIC 7: AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES. The economic and social challenges facing rural environments. Changes in traditional agriculture: organic farming *versus* the expansion of greenhouses. The role of agribusiness. Irrigated agriculture and environmental and social conflicts.

TOPIC 8: THE SPANISH FINANCIAL CRISIS.\_The booming housing market and construction industry severe recession. Spanish Economy Strengths and Weaknesses. Spanish unemployment. The Government measures to reduce public debt. The sparking wave of social protests.

TOPIC 9: SEVILLE: brief History of the city and its geographical context. Recent urban, metropolitan and regional controversies. *Field trip*.

#### **Assignments: Individual/Group Project**

Based on the course syllabus, the students will undertake a personal or group project focus on current issues in Spain. Topics will be presented and decided during the first lectures.

Presentations will take place on the agreed dates. Students should also hand in the presentation file for assessment.

#### **Assessment and Grading**

<b>Assessment type</b>	<b>% of formal assessment</b>
Class attendance. Reading and participation	10%
Midterm exam and presentations	30%
End of term exam and presentations	30%
Group project presentation*	30%

\* Students will prepare a group project on an Autonomous Community of their choice. The results will be presented using a PowerPoint presentation which will be presented during 45 minutes each group.

### **Bibliography and Learning Resources**

ARREBOLA, A. (Dir) (2002). *Spain: Monuments and Landscapes: a complete view*, EDARA, Córdoba.

CONSTELA, X. and MIRAMONTES, A. (2006): "A note related to the model of urbanization in Galicia: does it exist?", in *Urban changes in different scales: systems and structures*, International Geographical Union, Commission on Monitoring cities of tomorrow. Annual Meeting 2006, Santiago de Compostela, Universidade, Servizo de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico. Pag. 93-105.

EUROPEAN UNION (2010): *Investing in Europe's future. Fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion*. Available on:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion5/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/cohesion5/index_en.cfm)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2007): *Key facts and figures about Europe and the Europeans*, [http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/index_en.htm)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2010): *Europe in 12 lesson*. <http://eeas.europa.eu/>

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2013): *Key figures on Europe 2013*  
[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-EI-13-001/EN/KS-EI-13-001-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EI-13-001/EN/KS-EI-13-001-EN.PDF)

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INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL UNION (2008): *Spain and the Mediterranean, a reflection from the Spanish Geography*, XXXI IGU Congress Tunis 2008: Spanish Contribution.

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FARRELL, M. (2001): *Spain in the EU: the road to economic convergence*. PALGRAVE, New York. [Recurso electrónico]

GREEN WORLD RESEARCH (2001). *Examples of European agri-environment schemes and livestock systems and their influence on Spanish cultural landscapes*, Wageningen: Alterra.

MACINNES, J., PÉREZ DÍAZ, J. (2009), "The reproductive revolution" *The Sociological Review* 57 (2): 262-284.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/122368561/HTMLSTART>

OECD (2009): *Rural Policy Reviews: Spain*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

PEREZ DÍAZ, J. (2010): "Impact of Ageing for Social and Political Processes in Spain" in *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's "Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia/Singapore", Singapore.  
Available at: [www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_20784-1522-2-30.pdf](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_20784-1522-2-30.pdf)

SOMOZA, J. (2006): "Cultural tourism and new urban centralities. Examples from Spain", in *Urban changes in different scales: systems and structures*, International Geographical Union,

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## WEBSITES

Instituto Nacional de Estadística:

<http://www.ine.es>

European Union website:

[http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm)

European Environmental Agency

<http://www.eea.europa.eu/>

Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía:

<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodeestadisticaycartografia/index.html>

Centro virtual Cervantes. Paisajes de España

<http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/paisajes/>

Mapa interactivo de España:

<http://w3.cnice.mec.es/eos/MaterialesEducativos/mem2002/mapa/>

Recursos didácticos de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles:

[http://age.ieg.csic.es/recur\\_didacticos/index.htm](http://age.ieg.csic.es/recur_didacticos/index.htm)

GAPMINDER, world statistics:

<http://www.gapminder.org/>

Blog of prof. Vinçen Navarro (Professor of Political and Social Sciences at the Pompeu Fabra University and Professor of Health and Social Policy at the Johns Hopkins University).

<http://www.vnavarro.org/>

Online map quizzes:

<http://www.lizardpoint.com/fun/geoquiz/euroquiz.html>;

<http://www.oup.co.uk/oxed/secondary/geography/atlases/quiz/europequiz/>