Learning Objectives

We believe that knowing a widely spoken language such as Spanish or Portuguese is a real asset for the twenty-first-century global citizen. Immersion in another language implies learning about the cultures of its speakers, and this intertwined linguistic and cultural knowledge can fundamentally shape the way one thinks. Therefore, from the first day students begin to study Spanish or Portuguese, they learn about the cultures of the countries – in the Americas, Europe or Africa – in which the target language is spoken. As they take more advanced courses in literature and other subjects, they continue to develop their linguistic proficiency. As a result, we teach culture in our language courses and continue to build language skills throughout the undergraduate curriculum. Our program is committed to the following learning goals:

1. Students who fulfill the language requirement are able to communicate and exchange information on familiar topics in Spanish or Portuguese; ask questions; make oral presentations; write on a variety of topics; understand visual, oral and written texts; analyze cultural topics; and, in the case of Spanish, demonstrate a greater awareness of the Hispanic communities of Los Angeles and the United States.
2. Students who major in Spanish or minor in either language develop advanced reading skills. They can analyze literature (fiction, drama, poetry), cinema, and other kinds of texts from various periods with an understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which they were produced. They become conversant with some of the critical and theoretical discourses at work in the interrelated fields of literary studies and cultural history.

3. They also develop their writing skills in the target language and can write essays and research papers on subjects related to the cultural productions of societies where the language is spoken.

4. They acquire knowledge of the structure (phonetics, morphology, syntax) of Spanish or Portuguese, and of the role and status of these languages in different societies – many of which are multilingual – around the world. As a corollary, they develop an intellectual understanding of language as an integral part of the human experience.

5. They learn to think, discuss, and write critically about such issues as gender, ethnicity, race, and politics, as well as about the place of Spanish– and Portuguese–speaking peoples in national and global contexts.

6. They develop an appreciation of the critical importance of considering other cultures in the context of how their own systems of thoughts have developed and continue to do so. They also understand how other disciplines – art history, philosophy, sociology – can contribute to their knowledge of cultural and social contexts of Spanish and Portuguese.