

“Poe and La Plata”

Professor: Emron Esplin

Course Description

In this course, we will adopt an inter-American literary studies approach to examine the influence and affinities between Edgar Allan Poe and several writers of the Río de la Plata region—Argentina and Uruguay—of South America. We will begin the course with a brief study of when and how Poe’s texts first arrived in Spanish America, a concise reading of several of Poe’s poems, and a discussion about the impact of “The Raven” on Spanish American literature in general. We will spend the majority of the semester reading Poe’s fiction alongside the works of Argentine writers Leopoldo Lugones, Jorge Luis Borges, and Julio Cortázar and Uruguayan author Horacio Quiroga. Our primary themes will include the fantastic, horror, analytic detective fiction, and revenge. We will examine how each of these writers from the Río de la Plata region was not only influenced by Poe but also influenced Poe’s reception in the Río de la Plata area and throughout Spanish America through their literary criticism and interviews on Poe, their translations of Poe’s work, and their own fiction. The course will demonstrate that influence is not a one-way street and that literature, although connected to specific national and linguistic contexts, pays no heed to the political and linguistic borders which divide the Americas.

Our transnational approach will help English majors accomplish the “global perspective” learning outcome for the B.A. in English, will provide American Studies minors the opportunity to “examine America and American cultures in context of the world,” and will allow all students enrolled in the course to be active participants in KSU’s “Get Global!” initiative.

Class Structure

Most class periods will begin with one or more short student presentations that will serve as springboards into our discussions of the day’s assigned readings. The majority of each class period will consist of my small lectures about authors, themes, and historical contexts; class and/or group discussions; and in-class writing assignments.

Required Texts

Edgar Allan Poe *Tales & Sketches* Vol. I

Edgar Allan Poe *Tales & Sketches* Vol. II

Leopoldo Lugones *Strange Forces*

Horacio Quiroga *The Decapitated Chicken and Other Stories*

Horacio Quiroga *The Exiles and Other Stories*

Jorge Luis Borges *Collected Fictions*

Julio Cortázar *Blow-Up and Other Stories*

Julio Cortázar *All Fires the Fire and Other Stories*

Calendar

Week 1 **Introductions; Inter-American Studies; Poe and La Plata**

Week 2 **Poe's Poetry and his Poetic Theory; Maintaining the Reader's Attention; Poe's Horror**

- Edgar Allan Poe "The Raven" (www.eapoe.org)
- Poe "The Bells" (www.eapoe.org)
- Poe "Annabel Lee" (www.eapoe.org)
- Poe "The Philosophy of Composition" (www.eapoe.org)
- Poe "Review of *Twice-Told Tales* (www.eapoe.org)
- Poe "The Pit and the Pendulum" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "The Masque of the Red Death" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "The Fall of the House of Usher" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)

Week 3 **The Modernistas; Poe, Lugones, and the Fantastic**

- Edgar Allan Poe "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Leopoldo Lugones *Strange Forces*

Week 4 **Obsession and Madness in Poe; Poe's Portrayals of Women**

- Edgar Allan Poe "The Tell-Tale Heart" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "The Black Cat" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "Life in Death (The Oval Portrait)" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "Berenice" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "Ligeia" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)

Week 5 **Revenge in Poe and Quiroga; Quiroga's Poe Parodies; Quiroga's Own Voice**

- Edgar Allan Poe "The Cask of Amontillado" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Horacio Quiroga "The Other Crime" (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2078/is_n1_v38/ai_15896368/?tag=content;coll)
- Quiroga *The Decapitated Chicken and Other Stories*

Week 6 **Quiroga's Fiction Continued**

- Horacio Quiroga *The Exiles and Other Stories*

Week 7 **More Revenge and Fantastic in Poe**

- "Metzengerstein" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- "Hop Frog" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- "Loss of Breath" [Including notes & appendix] (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)

Week 8 **The Fantastic and Revenge in Borges**

- Jorge Luis Borges "The Circular Ruins" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Lottery in Babylon" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Library of Babel" (*Collected Fictions*)

- Borges "Funes, His Memory" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Secret Miracle" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The South" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "Emma Zunz" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Zahir" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Aleph" (*Collected Fictions*)

Week 9 **Spring Break**

Week 10 **Poe and the Invention of Analytic Detective Fiction; Poe's Ratiocination**

- Edgar Allan Poe "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "The Purloined Letter" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "The Gold Bug" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "Thou Art the Man" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)

Week 11 **Borges' Analytic Detective Fiction; Intertextuality**

- Jorge Luis Borges "The Garden of Forking Paths" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "Death and the Compass" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "Ibn-Hakam al-Bokhari, Murdered in His Labyrinth" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges "A Survey of the Works of Herbert Quain" (*Collected Fictions*)
- Borges and Adolfo Bioy-Casares "The Twelve Figures of the World"

Week 12 **Doubling in Poe**

- Edgar Allan Poe "Morella" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "William Wilson" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "The Man of the Crowd" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe "The Imp of the Perverse" (*Tales & Sketches* Vol. II)

Week 13 **Doubling and the Fantastic in Cortázar**

- Julio Cortázar "Axolotl" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "House Taken Over" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "The Distances" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "The Idol of the Cyclades" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "Letter to a Young Lady in Paris" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "Continuity of Parks" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "The Night Face Up" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "Bestiary" (*Blow-Up*)
- Cortázar "End of the Game" (*Blow-Up*)

Week 14 **Student/Teacher Conference**

Week 15 **Peer Review; Realism and the Fantastic in Cortázar**

- Julio Cortázar “The Southern Thruway” (*All Fires the Fire*)
- Cortázar “Meeting” (*All Fires the Fire*)
- Cortázar “The Island at Noon” (*All Fires the Fire*)
- Cortázar “Instructions for John Howell” (*All Fires the Fire*)
- Cortázar “All Fires the Fire” (*All Fires the Fire*)

Week 16 Poe’s Sea Adventures; Poe’s Lighter Side; Wrap Up

- Edgar Allan Poe “Ms. Found in a Bottle” (*Tales and Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe “A Descent into the Maelström” (*Tales and Sketches* Vol. I)
- Poe “The Premature Burial” (*Tales and Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe “The Angel of the Odd” (*Tales and Sketches* Vol. II)
- Poe “Some Words with a Mummy” (*Tales and Sketches* Vol. II)

Finals Week Final Exam