

**(PALAS 420) Jorge Luis Borges:  
Visions of Culture and Knowledge**

Professor Dr. Alejandro Manara  
Program in Argentine and Latin American Studies  
Universidad de Belgrano  
Course Syllabus 2015

**Course Information**

T-Th 1:00-2.30PM  
Instruction in: English

**Contact Information**

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**Course Description**

Borges' vision of the world as a Library of Babel and an Aleph anticipated the information age and the development of the Internet by several decades. However, although Borges can be regarded as the least representative Latin American writer, not all his fictions address universal problems. This course shows how many of his short stories, essays and poems are embedded in and have contributed to the Latin American and Argentine literary traditions. The course also considers Borges' precursors (Poe, Marcel Schwob and Kafka) and his followers (Donald Barthelme, Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco, among others). Finally, it looks at Borges' presence in visual culture: film, architecture and art.

**Course Requirements**

Following UB policy, students need a minimum of 75% of attendance to be in good standing for the final exam. Sliding the ID card is the only way to track record of attendance. Classes missed for national holidays will not be recovered. Students are expected to do close readings, participate in class, and do at least one oral presentation. During the semester, students will write two short position papers. The requirements also include a midterm and a final exam. In addition to this, each student will be expected to make a significant contribution to the classroom dialogue.

**Grading Policy**

In-class Participation	10 %
Oral Presentation	20 %
Short Papers (2)	30 %
Midterm Exam	20 %
Final Exam	20 %

For a better understanding of the comparable table for grading: check the International Student Handbook (see orientation kit packet).

Required Textbooks (available at UB Bookstore)

*Labyrinths* by Jorge Luis Borges

ISBN-13: 978-0811216999

## Academic Calendar

### Week 1: 3/10-12

Tuesday: "Introduction to the course. How and when Borges became known outside Argentina. Available translations.

Thursday: Borges's "An Autobiographical Essay" (in collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni) & *The South* by Borges.

### Week 2: 3/17-19

Tuesday: "Borges's "An Autobiographical Essay" (in collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni).

Thursday: Borges's "An Autobiographical Essay" & Borges Interviews by Fernando Sorrentino (99-122) & interview by A. Manara.

### Week 3: 3/26

Thursday: *Averroes' Search* & *On the Cult of Books* by Borges & *What is a Classic* by J.M. Coetzee....

### Week 4: 3/31

Tuesday: Borges and Postmodernity. *A Universal History of Infamy*. OP: *Imaginary Lives* by Marcel Schwob.

### Short paper 1 assigned

### Week 5: 4/7-9

Tuesday: "The Aleph". OP on "Wor(l)ds Through the Looking Glass" by Beatriz Urraca

Thursday: *A Universal History of Infamy*.

OP on Freud's *The Uncanny* & Ernst Jentsch's *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*

### Week 6: 4/14-16

Tuesday: "Borges The Poet: *The Mythical Founding of Buenos Aires...*

Two versions. James C. McKegley: "Buenos Aires in the Poetry of Jorge Luis Borges". Contrast: Oliverio Girondo: Borges' review of *Calcomanías*.

Thursday: *Borges at Harvard*, the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (1967).

### Turn in short paper 1

### Week 7: 4/21-23

Tuesday: "Beatriz Sarlo: "Utopia & the Avant-Garde": (115-137) "The Adventure of Martin Fierro: the Avant-Garde & Criollismo", (95-114).

OP: Horacio Coppola: 1936 photos of Buenos Aires, art & architecture.

Thursday: Impact of Borges on U.S. writing in the 60s: Donald Barthelme's *Sixty Stories: Paraguay* 127-137 & Gene Bell-Villada's *Borges and his Fiction* 278-284. OP on above .

### Week 8: 4/28-30

Tuesday: Borges as pioneer of the Internet: "Tlon, Ukbar & Orbis Tertius"  
OP on "Orbis Tertius and Orbis Novus: The Discovery of New Worlds" by Aden Hayes

Thursday: **Mid-term exam.**

**Week 9:** 5/5-7

Tuesday: *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* by Ambrose Bierce.

Thursday: Borges' *The Waiting* & Hemingway's *The Killers*

**Short paper 1 assigned**

**Week 10:** 5/12-14

Tuesday: "Borges' *The Secret Miracle*: Literary Vanity...literature is constructed in the head. OP *Post-Lecture Discussion of His Own Writing* by Borges.

Thursday: Borges & Women: *Emma Zunz*. Lewald article: *The Labyrinth of Time and Place in Two Stories by Borges*.

**Week 11:** 5/19-21

Tuesday: Sergio Waisman's *Borges on Translation. The Translators of the A Thousand and One Nights & The Homeric Versions*.

Thursday: Poe: *The murders of Rue Morgue* & *The Purloined Letter*

**Turn in short paper 2**

**Week 12:** 5/26-28

Tuesday: "Borges, Poe and the detective story: *Death and the Compass*" by Irwin 1-12 & 30-36 OP Svend Østergård: "The Unconscious of Representation ("*Death and the Compass*")" & Borges' *The Labyrinths of the Detective Story & Chesterton*.

Thursday: "Borges, Poe and the detective story: The Garden of Forking Paths" by Irwin & Daniel Balderston's "Historical Situations in Borges": GFP. OP: Robert Gillespie: "Detections: Borges & Father Brown".

**Week 13:** 6/2-4

Tuesday: Borges and Postmodernity: *Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote* & Daniel Balderston's "Historical Situations in Borges":

Thursday: *The library of Babel* & *The Lottery in Babylon*.

**Week 14:** 6/9-11

Tuesday: "Borges' disciples: *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* by Italo Calvino: *Multiplicity* 101-124

Thursday: *Last Year at Marienbad* (film)

**Week 15:** 6/16-18

Tuesday: **Final Exam**

Thursday: Final Grade Sheet and signature of Hoja de situación (**attendance is mandatory**).

**Bibliography**

BELL-VILLADA, Gene: *Borges and His Fiction: A Guide to His Mind and Art*: University of Texas Press, Austin, 1999.

BORGES, Jorge Luis: *Collected Fictions* translated by Andrew Hurley, Penguin, New York, 1998.

BORGES, Jorge Luis: *Selected Non-Fictions* translated by Eliot Weinberger, Esther Allen, and Suzanne Jill Levine, Penguin, New York, 1999.

CALVINO, Italo: *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Vintage International, New York, 1993.

- COZARINSKY, Edgardo: *Borges in/and/on Film*
- HOFSTADTER, Douglas: *Gödel, Escher & Bach* Vintage Books, New York, 1989.
- IRWIN, John T.: *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges and the Analytic Detective Story* Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996.
- MARTINEZ, Guillermo: *Regarding Roderer* Saint Martin's Press, New York, 1994.
- NOUZEILLES, Gabriela & MONTALDO, Graciela. *An Argentina Reader: History, Culture & Politics* Duke University Press, Durham, 2002.
- SARLO, Beatriz *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* Verso, London, 2006.
- SCHWOB, Marcel *Imaginary Lives* Solar Books, Washington D.C., 2009.
- SORRENTINO, Fernando *Seven Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* Paul Dry Books, Philadelphia, 2010.
- WILSON, Jason *Borges* Reaktion Books, London, 2006.