

## Spanish Entrance 2026

Dear student,

In the coming academic year, I very much hope to be able to welcome you to Wadham or St Hugh's, where you have been offered a place to read Spanish as part of your degree on the condition that you achieve the grades stipulated in your offer letter.

This document explains the structure of the first-year course in Spanish, as well as the preparation you need to do ahead of your arrival in Oxford in October.

### **General information and reading lists**

#### ***General***

The study of Spanish in the first year of the degree in Modern Languages and in ML and Joint Schools at Oxford University comprises the study of the Spanish language and the study of topics and texts drawn from the literature of Spain and Spanish America.

The Spanish Preliminary Examination, for which you study in your first year at Oxford, consists of four papers:<sup>1</sup>

#### **Paper I:**

A translation from English into Spanish (called a 'prose') and set of sentences to translate, also into Spanish. Tuition for this paper is organised centrally and you will be taught, mainly by native speakers, in classes at the Modern Languages Faculty with students from other Colleges.

#### **Paper II:**

Two translations from Spanish into English. This paper is taught in a weekly College class in which students from my two Colleges (Wadham and St Hugh's) work together. As well as learning translation skills, you will continue to work on Spanish grammar and vocabulary. You will need the set grammar and dictionary (see below).

#### **Paper III: Introduction to Hispanic Prose**

(see below a list of set texts and preferred editions)

This paper introduces you to the study of prose in Spanish by focusing on four texts from different time periods, from both Spain and Spanish America. It is taught in tutorials in College, and through lectures given at various times during the academic year.

#### **Paper IV: Introduction to Hispanic Poetry and Drama**

(see below a list of set texts and preferred editions)

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<sup>1</sup> These four papers are taken by all students of Spanish regardless of their degree (i.e. whether they are studying it on its own, in combination with another language, or in combination with another subject as part of a Joint School).

This paper is taught, like paper III, in tutorials in College, and through lectures given at various times during the academic year.

## Reading List for the Preliminary Examination in Spanish

### Language

The following reference works are indispensable companions to the study of Spanish language. I recommend purchasing a copy of the dictionary, though you will be given access to electronic copies of both texts via Oxford libraries once you start your course:

J Butt and C Benjamin, *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2019, London, Routledge)

*The Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (Oxford, 1991, and subsequent reprintings)

### Literature

The texts listed below make up the syllabus of the two Spanish literary courses that you will be required to follow in your first year. **You will be expected to have read these texts by the time you come to Oxford** and should possess a copy of each **recommended edition**. These are normally available through Blackwells in Oxford, <http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk/bookshop/home> or Amazon and other online booksellers.

### Paper III

**Miguel de Cervantes**, 'Rinconete y Cortadillo', in *Novelas ejemplares*, vol. 1, ed. Harry Sieber (Madrid: Cátedra).

**Nellie Campobello**, *Cartucho: Relatos de la lucha en el Norte de México* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2019 ISBN-10: 8437634326)

**Alejo Carpentier**, *El reino de este mundo* (Barcelona: Austral, 2015 ISBN-10: 8432224952)

**Ana María Matute**, *Primera memoria* (Barcelona: Destino, 2010 ISBN: 9788423343591) (or, alternatively, available in Matute's trilogy *Los mercaderes* (Barcelona: Destino, 2017 ISBN-108423352781))

### Paper IV

*El romancero viejo*, ed. M. Díaz Roig (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005). Poems nos. 1,3,5,6,7,8,9, 14, 18, 38, 40, 44, 50, 52, 54, 66, 68, 72, 76, 86, 94, 97, 97a, 99, 110, 111, 117, 121, 125, 127, 128.

**Pedro Calderón de la Barca**, *El médico de su honra*, ed. D. W. Cruikshank (Madrid: Castalia).

**Golden Age Sonnets** – a selection will be made available online once you start your course.

**Federico García Lorca**, *Doña Rosita la soltera o El lenguaje de las flores*, ed. Mario Hernández Sánchez (Madrid: Alianza, 2013 ISBN: 9788420675725) [\*This is likely to be the first text we will study in tutorials]

**César Vallejo**, *Los heraldos negros*, ed. René de Costa (Madrid: Cátedra, 2004 ISBN: 9788437616698)

### **Preparation this summer**

Every term at Oxford is quite short and we will be moving at a fast pace to cover the curriculum. This schedule, and the amount of preparation, writing, and additional reading that will be required every week make it necessary to be familiar with the set texts before you engage in these activities. It is therefore **imperative that you have read all of these texts BEFORE you arrive in College**. These texts must be read **in the original**, and not in translation, and you should look up and learn the relevant **vocabulary**.

You should also take notes on the texts you read. If you don't know where to begin when taking notes on a text, one way to proceed is to prepare a summary in which you identify: 1) the (political, socio-historical, literary) context in which the text was written; 2) the overall structure of the text, its plot (for fiction and drama), and/or core images (poetry); 3) its treatment of time and space; 4) the traits of its main characters if applicable; 5) several key scenes/passages (four to six) that seem important to you, 6) its uses of language; and 7) the key themes/questions (four to six) that seem prominent throughout the text. More generally, for your studies at Oxford to be a success, it is crucial that you use every long break that precedes a term to read all the texts assigned for that term. In other words, these breaks are to be considered as **reading periods**.

### **Further guidance**

As you know the learning of a language is a gradual business. It is crucial that you **consolidate your knowledge of Spanish grammar before coming to Oxford**, since there is a gap between an 'A' at A-level and Prelims language work in the first year. You should take every opportunity to enrich your knowledge of Spanish by speaking the language when you have the chance, reading the newspapers and watching TV or Netflix series, listening to news and other broadcasts, and noting down new vocabulary or words and phrases that you don't understand as you hear and read them. Keep a **vocabulary logbook** (and use it whenever you read assigned texts, prepare translation assignments, and hear or see a new word in or outside of the classroom) and **go over it regularly**.

The Instituto Cervantes in London has many free resources to practice your Spanish, including videos and podcasts of different lengths, on topics such as poetry and cinema (as well as full audiobooks). I encourage you to have a good look on their website:

<https://londres.cervantes.es/en/default.shtm>

The literary side of the course will be new to many students and although some feel uncertain as they undertake the reading, the vast majority of students at Oxford end up relishing this part of the course and the worlds it opens up. It can take some time and hard work to come to terms with the content and the demands of the literature papers, and so it pays to be prepared. As well as **reading the texts set, in Spanish**, you should try to see and discuss Spanish plays and films and read something about the history and culture of Spain and Spanish America. Below are some suggestions that you may find helpful in this respect:

Raymond Carr, ed., *Spain: A History* (Oxford, OUP, 2000)

Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Peter Russell, ed., *Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies* (London: Routledge, 1989)

A great introduction to some key texts and authors in Spanish and Spanish American literature is provided in the Oxford Spanish Literature Podcast:

<https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/oxford-spanish-literature-podcast>

I look forward to welcoming you to Oxford in October!

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Wadham and St Hugh's