

A Don Quixote Sampler

Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, published in two parts (1605, 1615), is a complex narrative that speaks to its time and place as it points forward to the development of what has been called the modern novel.

In conceiving *Don Quixote*, which starts out as parody, Cervantes obviously saw multiple creative possibilities. His knight errant (or errant knight) suffers from a literature-induced malady, or madness, that brings readers, writers, and fiction-making into the frame. Don Quixote, accompanied by his somewhat reluctant squire, the illiterate Sancho Panza, has the best of intentions, if not the most practical of agendas. His anachronistic plan and his eccentricities give the exploits a special cast. Don Quixote ultimately shares the stage with the author himself, who undertakes adventures of his own.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the novel was not only new but was in the process of inventing itself. Cervantes breaks away from the idealism of chivalric, pastoral, and sentimental romance, as he helps to develop narrative realism. At the same time, he moves in an entirely different direction, by calling attention to the process of composition. *Don Quixote* announces itself as a "true history," but its fictional devices clearly show through. Spanish society is on display, but so are the literary forms of the day, to be acknowledged and often satirized. *Don Quixote* is, thus, a novel and a theory of the novel, brilliantly comic but profound, as well. It serves as a type of template for future works and, accordingly, for future experiments, as texts engage with other texts and challenge tradition. The term *metafiction* is often used to classify this type of self-conscious or self-referential writing.

The six-week course will consist of the reading and discussion of sample chapters of *Don Quixote*, with emphasis on Part 1, and commentary on the text as a whole, so that participants will have a vision of the comprehensive narrative. We will use the translation by Edith Grossman, available through amazon.com in Kindle and paperback. The reading for each week will be under 40 pages.

The goal of the course will be to give the participants a sense of the scope, the parameters, the artistic and conceptual brilliance, and the well-merited classic status of *Don Quixote*.

Topics to be considered include

- The content and structure of *Don Quixote*
- The contexts of *Don Quixote*
- The past, present, and future of literature
- Human nature and psychology
- History: objectivity and subjectivity
- Truth: absolute and relative
- Perceptions of reality; multiperspectivism
- Early modern Spain
- Humor
- Irony
- Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616): life and works
- The legacy of *Don Quixote*



- Session 1 Introduction to *Don Quixote* (file)
- Session 2 *Don Quixote*, Part 1: Prologue – Chapter 3 (pp. 3-35)
- Session 3 *Don Quixote*, Part 1: Chapters 4-9 (pp. 35-71)
- Session 4 *Don Quixote*, Part 1: Chapter 14 (pp. 94-102), Chapter 22
(pp. 163-172), Chapter 23 (pp.172-182)
- Session 5 *Don Quixote*, Part 1: Chapters 47-48 (pp. 405-421), Chapter 52
(ending, pp. 445-446); summary of Avellaneda “false sequel”
(file)
- Session 6 *Don Quixote*, Part 2: Prologue – Chapter 5 (pp. 455-490);
outline of Part 2 (file); closing synthesis