



**THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO: THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE
EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE AGES
ALI-Elec 4700
AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COURSE**

Description:

The Camino de Santiago is the quintessential experiential learning opportunity. Pilgrims from all over the world have been walking this historic trail from the French-Spanish border to the city of Santiago de Compostela virtually without interruption since the 9th century. The unique combination of formal study of the history, art, music, religion, architecture and urban development related to the Camino de Santiago combined with personal physical effort and an unparalleled opportunity to commune with nature and live and interact with other “pilgrims” along the way, offers participants a complete academic and personal growth experience.

Methodology:

This course is divided into three modules:

- 1) The first is formal academic preparation carried out in the classroom to introduce students to the history, art, architecture, culture and religious significance of the emergence of Santiago as one of Christianity’s three holy cities.
- 2) The second is walking the trail itself. Pilgrims must walk a minimum of 100 kilometers to earn their credentials; thus, the goal of the class is for students to walk between 100 and 125 kilometers over a 5-day period. Those who participate in this course must be physically fit and able to walk up to 25 kilometers a day, albeit at their own pace. Breakfast and dinner are communal meals, often prepared in the shelters by the participants themselves. Lunch is eaten along the trail, under the trees, by a river or stream, or wherever the pilgrim wishes to stop. Nights are spent in shelters with “pilgrims” from all over the world, and the camaraderie and sharing of stories of occurrences along the trail is one of the most appealing parts of the experience. The academic requirements for this module include keeping a daily journal and participating in all of the interactive “lectures” given along the way.
- 3) The third module consists of follow-up sessions in which the professor discusses with the students the prior research they did and what they learned on the walk in order to prepare their final paper.

Content:

1. 9th – 12th centuries: Invention of the Camino; Spreading the word; The Christian Kingdoms (Asturias, Navarra, Leon, Castilla); The *Codex Calixtinus* by Aymeric Picaud; Cluny and the Romanesque; Arabic Spain, Almanzor and the Arabic Chronicles

2. 13th to 15th Centuries: The Devotion to the Virgin Mary; The Cister Monks; The Knightly Pilgrimage: Chivalry, Pretentiousness, Substitution, Tournaments and Duels (The *Paso Honroso*, 1434); The Catholic Kings
3. 16th to 19th centuries: The Decline: The Reformation, Humanism, the Picaresque, Prohibitions, Santiago in America; The Enlightenment; Safety (or lack thereof) on the trail: Banditry
4. 20th century: Rebirth of the Camino: Francoism, nationals and foreigners, "National Day"; Tourism; Regionalism; Jubilee Years: *El Jacobeo*
5. Urban development along the Camino. The "hospital" and refuge and other services offered along the trail over the centuries.
6. The human element. How "pilgrims" have (or have not) changed over the centuries.
7. Symbols related to the pilgrimage and their significance.
8. Current attitudes about the Camino de Santiago, inside and outside of Spain. Recognition and respect.

Grading:

Students participating in this course are required to attend all pre-pilgrimage classes, read all handouts and assigned materials, keep a journal along the trail, and write a 10-page paper based on academic research and personal experience on a topic pre-approved by the professor and related to the pilgrimage experience.

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