In your first year at Oxford, you will prepare four papers for the Preliminary Examination in Spanish, which you will sit at the end of Trinity Term (the summer term):

**Paper I** will consist of:
(i) a translation from English into Spanish of a passage of about 250 words (called a ‘prose’); and (ii) a set of twenty or so sentences to translate, again into Spanish, intended principally to test your knowledge of Spanish grammar. Tuition for this paper is organised centrally and you will be taught mainly by native speakers in classes with students from other colleges.

**Paper II** will consist of:
Two translations from Spanish into English. This paper is taught by me in a weekly class. As well as learning translation skills, we continue to work on Spanish grammar and vocabulary in this class. You will need a good bilingual dictionary (i.e. Spanish-English, English-Spanish), the set grammar book (see enclosed reading list) and an exercise book or similar in which to note new vocabulary, which you must do systematically: a lack of vocabulary is one of the most common shortcomings at the end of the first year.

**Paper III:**
This paper consists of the close study of four important Spanish texts from different periods, covering the short story, the novel, drama, and poetry. You will have lectures on these texts throughout the year, not necessarily coinciding with your tutorials on them, which are taught by me. For these tutorials you will probably be in a pair or a group of three. Your lecturers will give you reading lists to help guide your secondary reading. Tutorials on these texts will begin in Michaelmas Term (i.e. October) when we shall study *El médico de su honra*, ‘Rinconete y Cortadillo’ (from the *Novelas ejemplares*) and *Campos de Castilla*. *La fiesta del Chivo* will be studied at the start of Hilary Term (i.e. January).

**Paper IV:**
This paper traces the history of the Spanish ballad (or romance) from medieval times to the twentieth century. It is taught, like paper III, in tutorials, and through lectures given at various times during the academic year. Lecturers will provide you with detailed reading lists and our tutorial study of these texts will begin in Hilary Term with the *romancero viejo* and then the *romances artificiosos* by Lope de Vega, Quevedo and Góngora. Some of the texts by these three Golden-Age poets are difficult and you should not expect to understand all of their references or fathom their linguistic complexity immediately. You will be given some sample commentaries during the first year to help you contextualize and understand them. The modern romances by the Duque de Rivas, Antonio Machado and Lorca will be studied in Trinity Term (after Easter), during which we shall also revise the year’s work in preparation for exams at the end of the academic year.
The enclosed reading list provides details of the prescribed editions. Please do try to obtain these specific editions if possible. They have been carefully selected on the basis of the quality of the scholarly apparatus they contain. If in doubt, please do feel free to get in touch with any queries.

Before coming up to Oxford, please read and familiarize yourself thoroughly with the Calderón, the Cervantes, and the Machado texts. It is important, too, to begin learning any unfamiliar vocabulary that these contain. I due course you will need to be able to translate from these works.

As you know, the learning of a language is a gradual business. You should take every opportunity to enrich your knowledge of Spanish by speaking the language when you have the chance, reading newspapers and watching or listening to news and other broadcasts, and noting down new vocabulary and words and phrases that you do not understand as you hear and read them. An active attitude to language acquisition and a willingness to go on learning is enormously helpful for a language student.

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 three texts mentioned above, 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:


If you have any questions about any of this, please do email me: roy.norton@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

I’m looking forward to meeting you again in October. In the meantime, all good wishes for a pleasant summer.

**Dr Roy Norton**
Senior Research Fellow in Spanish, Pembroke College
July 2020
Reading List for the Preliminary Examination in Spanish

There are various editions available of the texts listed below, but the particular editions specified should be obtained, if possible, as they are the most useful.

**Paper III**


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


Mario Vargas Llosa, *La fiesta del Chivo* (any Spanish edition)

**Paper IV**


[You may have trouble acquiring this text. If so, don’t worry – you’ll be able to download the relevant poems from the Modern Languages Faculty website in due course.]


Duque de Rivas, ‘El alcázar de Sevilla’, ‘El fratricidio’, ‘El conde de Villamediana’, and ‘Bailén’ in *Romances históricos*, ed. Salvador García Castañeda (Madrid: Cátedra) [Again, this text is difficult to acquire, but electronic copies of the poems will be available to you in Oxford.]

Antonio Machado, ‘La tierra de Alvargonzález’, in *Campos de Castilla* (as above)

Additionally, you should buy:

1. *The Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (the latest – 2008 – edition; the full-sized, unabridged edition, not the concise or pocket one) – although don’t worry if you already have a different full-sized bilingual dictionary (e.g. Collins); and


Acquiring foreign language books can sometimes be tricky. Here are some places to try:

- Blackwell’s on Broad Street in Oxford; they should have virtually all the texts detailed above.
- Grant & Cutler at Foyles (107, Charing Cross Road, London).
- Booksellers’ websites:
  - [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)
  - [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk) (second hand)
  - [www.iberlibro.es](http://www.iberlibro.es) (second hand)
  - [www.lacasadellibro.es](http://www.lacasadellibro.es)
  - [www.fnac.es](http://www.fnac.es)

If in doubt, please get in touch and I’d be happy to advise.

**Dr Roy Norton**

Senior Research Fellow in Spanish, Pembroke College

July 2020