

SPAN 785: Mexican Public Intellectuals

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One can argue that the term “public intellectual” is redundant in Mexico because Mexicans often mention, when defining the role of intellectuals, the importance of meaningful participation in the public sphere. A generation ago, in his 1985 book *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth Century Mexico*, Roderic Ai Camp concluded that “the majority of public figures [argue] that the intellectual can and should be a public actor. Those Mexicans most involved in public life vigorously believe the two roles not only are interchangeable, but are one. They do not believe that all public figures are intellectuals, but rather that all intellectuals *should* be public figures.”

This course focuses on people like Carlos Fuentes, Guadalupe Loeza, Octavio Paz, Elena Poniatowska, and Javier Sicilia, as well as lesser-known public intellectuals like political activist Ester Chávez Cano. After reading about public intellectuals in general (in Mexico and elsewhere), we will study these figures (their essays and fiction, their public activities) and each student will 1) present on an intellectual from the class and 2) write an essay on a Latin American, Latino, or Spanish public intellectual. Assignments will focus in large part on texts from the MA reading list.