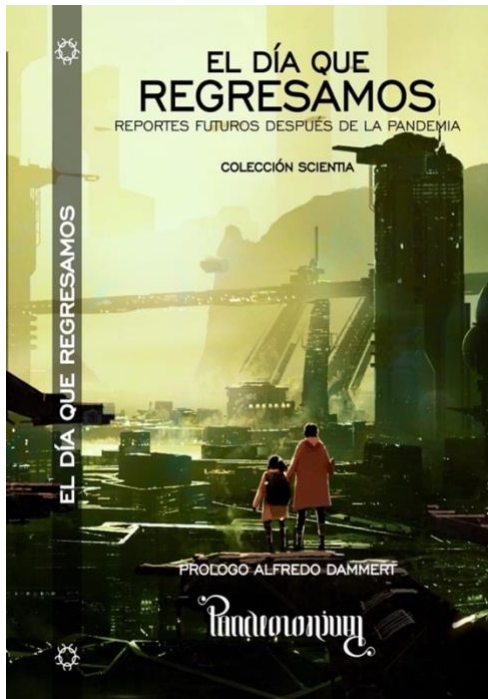


Proposal to the College of Arts & Letters  
Engaged Pedagogy and Programming Fund 2022-2023



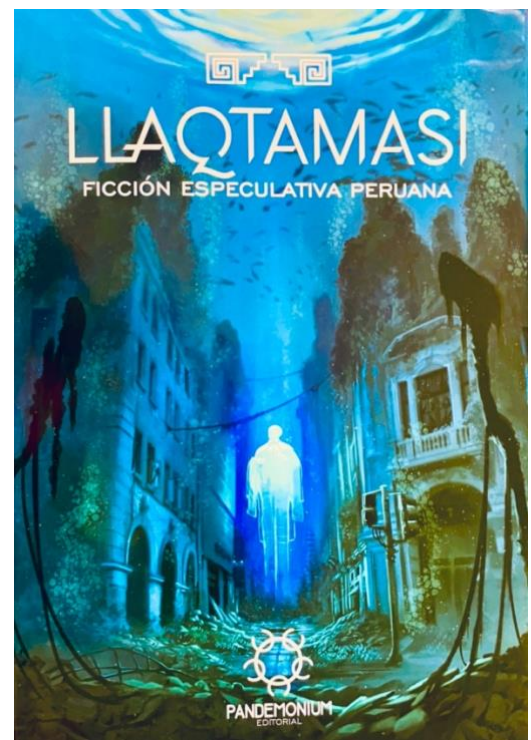
*Title: Latin American Speculative Fiction, Digital Literature, and Transmedia*

Period: Fall 2022-Spring 2023

Submitted by

- Alison Dobbins, Associate Professor, Department of Theatre
- Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, Professor of Hispanic Studies, Department of Romance and Classical Studies

April 1, 2022



# Evaluation Rubric for Unit Head(s)

Name of unit: XXX

Name of unit head: XXX

(Fill out on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being “excellent”)

\_\_\_\_\_The proposal meets the requirements as outlined in the call for proposals: Evidence of a collaborative proposal that meets the call for application standards above, including: addressing intersectionality, inviting one or more guest speakers or engaging with the community, including an event organized for the entire College community, and a complete application with clear budget page.

\_\_\_\_\_The proposal has great potential to advance course development in the proposed area and make an original and significant pedagogical contribution to the College curriculum.

\_\_\_\_\_The proposal is of high quality with regard to its clarity, methodology, scope, theoretical framework, and relevance to stated applicant and College pedagogical goals.

\_\_\_\_\_The project is feasible and the likelihood that the applicant(s) will execute the work within the proposed timeframe is high.

\_\_\_\_\_The teaching and scholarship record and career trajectory of the applicant(s) is strong.

\_\_\_\_\_ Includes an event organized for the entire College community.

**Comments:**

We seek to implement pedagogical resources to facilitate the study and reflection of Latin American speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy, horror) to enhance students' cultural understanding of present-day Latin America and foster their critical thinking about this genre beyond the canon associated with the golden age of science fiction in English. To this end, the IAH and SPN courses that we will teach in 2022-2023 will approach short stories by Peruvian and Latin American authors to reflect on the convergence of local and global art, literature, technology, and science, and discuss futuristic imagination in the works of these writers. The three main goals for the students in the classes that participate in this project are: (1) consider speculative fiction that imagine futuristic settings after the consequences of technological wars and pandemics to learn about societal concerns of Latin America and critically assess them; (2) reflect on the differences between this genre in the Global North and the Global South,<sup>1</sup> thus enhancing the student's awareness about criteria for diversity across cultures, and distinct ways to address the future from points of view similar and different from their own; and (3) engage in effective communication through the use of tools for visual/aural storytelling and production of digital formats of literary artifacts as alternatives to the printed word.

With these goals in mind, students in our classes will read short stories from two collections of Latin American speculative fiction: *El día que regresamos* (*The Day We Came Back*, 2020) and *Llaqtamasi* (*Country[wo]men*, 2021). *El día que regresamos* contains twenty short stories authored by Latin American women writers who imagine the future in their local areas after the pandemic. *Llaqtamasi* includes fifteen stories about the future of South America after the consequences of climate change and people's increasing dependence on artificial intelligence. In the prologues of both volumes, the editors indicate the urgency for Latin Americans to recover their own sense of future and use the rhetorical tools that speculative fiction provide to imagine and write beyond the myths created by mainstream media like Hollywood, Disney, Warner Bros, MTV, Apple, Google, and Facebook.

Speculative fiction has always been a popular genre among readers and is receiving increasing scholarly and pedagogical attention. Latin American speculative fiction distinguishes itself as it looks at the cultural heritage of historically underrepresented communities (Indigenous, mestizos, Africans, Afro-Latinxs) that provide thematic repertoires for writing about oppressing realities. The literary archive that writers of Latin American speculative fiction are slowly but steadily building goes beyond the conventional understandings of the genre and utilizes the coexistence of the natural and supernatural, the worldly and the otherworldly, and the incursion of magic into people's everyday life. In this way, Latin American speculative fiction departs from the uncovering of Indigenous and Afro-Latinx ancestral knowledge which has been repressed and marginalized as dangerous by the West as non-valid ways of knowing and explaining the world.

The activities of this project are arranged in three stages with our students in SPN 320 (Writing and Composition), IAH 209 (Time and Place-Based Multimedia Creation), and SPN 835 (Colonial Latin American Literature). These courses are scheduled in 2022-2023 and full or close to full enrollment is guaranteed. Students of these classes will interact among themselves, with authors of selected short fiction, and two Peruvian guest artists, César Santiváñez and Daniel Collazos, who are creative writers and specialize in teaching, design, and production of animated videos. In SPN 320, students learn to develop Spanish reading comprehension and writing skills by means of composition tools used in different textual genres. To achieve these goals, they read literary texts, write summaries, descriptions, narrations, and reaction papers on subjects related to Spanish-speaking societies. IAH 209 in

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<sup>1</sup> Global South, as opposed to Global North, encompasses spaces and peoples who have been negatively impacted by globalization, including those from the poorer regions within wealthy countries.

spring 2023 will explore time-based and place-based multimedia creation, involving undergraduate students as well as graduate students from the Theatre department. SPN 835 will focus on the literary history of wonder by studying representations of magic and the supernatural, closely linked with Indigenous and African ancestral knowledge, their intersections with science in the colonial period, and the validity of these ideas in the development of Latin American speculative fiction.

In stage 1 (fall 2022), SPN 320 students will read short stories of Latin American speculative fiction and work on the translation (Spanish to English) of one. In stage 2 (spring 2023), SPN 320 students will do a similar project and will participate in other activities along with IAH 209 and SPN 835 students. This semester, IAH 209 will explore collaborative practice through their team-based projects about creativity and discovery where science and art collide. Topics from the cited Latin American short fiction (in translation) will be the inspiration for their art creation. *In tandem* with these undergraduate classes, students in SPN 835 will study these short stories and, with the guidance of instructors and guest artists, will produce digital literary versions of selected ones. In this stage, students will have the opportunity to interview the stories' authors and work with guest artists to conceptualize the translation from written text to digital literature. They will present their work at three different moments: first, an initial pitch before instructors and guest artists; second, an advanced work-in-progress to IAH and SPN students with short lectures about the genre and the transmedia process; and third, the final product in an animatics festival open to everyone in the community who is interested in the genre and digital literature.

We request funding to support a one-week visit to MSU of César Santiváñez and Daniel Collazos who will work with us and our students remotely during stages 1 and 2, and in-person in stage 3. Both are best suited for this project given their expertise in media design, animation, edition, and as writers of science fiction. They teach at Instituto Toulouse Lautrec (ITL) in Peru which supports this collaboration and is willing to promote its outcomes in Peruvian media. The funds will be used towards their travel expenses, a modest honorarium, and costs associated with the final presentation to students and the MSU community. Both artists have expressed the benefits of this project on their careers and those of their ITL students who will assist (remotely) ours with the creation of visual designs for the projects' storyboards. Such benefits include enriching cultural and institutional exchanges, expanding their knowledge about new digital resources, and the promotion of speculative fiction in Spanish and beyond national and linguistics borders. We have secured the availability of authors, whose short fiction will be studied, to hold conversations with students at no cost. Other resources provided by MSU include using B310 Wells Hall or MSU museum Art Lab for the final presentations, the resources at the MSU Library Digital Scholarship Lab, and the CAL podcast studio at B270 Wells Hall.

The proposed topic and teaching activities will also bring our students' attention to intersectionality and diversity. We consider this a seed project to learn about Latin America and the Global South through their literary imagination of the future. Speculative fiction is an ideal space for the convergence of science, arts, literature, and the decolonization of the role of ancestral knowledge in each of these areas. Projects like ours aim to foster the student's search for questions about power relations, economic and social (in)equalities, tolerance towards gender and sexualities in a futuristic setting, the use of ancestral knowledge to solve climate issues and diseases, and the dynamics of the written word and digital literature.

Next projects that will build upon this one and contribute to the expansion of the curriculum include an Honors Seminar, a project on the intersections of literature and science in the Global South, and the construction of a digital repertoire of Latin American speculative fiction with a Digital Humanities grant in collaboration with colleagues from MSU and other institutions.

Abstract

Professors Quispe-Agnoli (RCS), Dobbins (THR), and Santiváñez and Collazos of Instituto Toulouse Lautrec (ITL) in Peru seek funding to create a cross-institutional course-led collaboration exploring Latin American speculative fiction and adaption to digital literature. Project goals include: Introduction to speculative fiction of the global south to students in SPN320, SPN835, and IAH209; Investigation of the impact of creative empowerment on student understanding of imagined futures; Creating a lasting partnership between MSU and ITL. Students will engage with local and global art, literature, science, technology, and the futuristic imagination in Latin American literature through the creation of animated stories.