

THE ROSENBACH MUSEUM AND LIBRARY (<https://rosenbach.org>)

Virtual Course: *Reading Borges with Luciano Martínez*

Fall 2024

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Join us in commemorating the 80th anniversary of Jorge Luis Borges's groundbreaking work, *Fictions* (1944-2024). Explore the profound impact of Borges, a towering figure in twentieth-century literature, whose works revolutionized modern fiction and scientific thought. Born on August 24, 1899, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and passing away on June 14, 1986, in Geneva, Switzerland, Borges dedicated his life to literature, both as a writer and as an irreverent reader. Every line and declaration by Borges was deliberate, shaping his enduring legacy that continues to be quoted and debated.

In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom lists key Western authors and ranks Borges highly, calling him the most universal Latin American writer. Viewing Borges as a writer without nationality is deemed fair because he excels in working within all cultural traditions. However, this universalistic perspective overlooks his connections to Argentinean and Latin American cultural heritage. This course aims to explore Borges from both angles: as a universal writer and as one who reinvents his own cultural history.

Through a close examination of his masterful storytelling in *Fictions* (1944) and other seminal works such as *A Universal History of Iniquity* (1935) and *The Aleph* (1949), we will unravel Borges's adept fictionalization of theoretical and philosophical dilemmas while preserving the aesthetic brilliance of his narratives. In addition to exploring Borges's fiction, we will delve into some of his renowned non-fiction essays, providing valuable insights into interpreting his short stories.

By the course's conclusion, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of Borges's literary vision and the evolution of his central themes, including labyrinths, infamy, crime fiction, memory and time, identity, and history.

Required Text: *Collected Fictions* by Jorge Luis Borges, Penguin Books, 1999, 565 pages.

- <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/330909/collected-fictions-by-jorge-luis-borges-translated-by-andrew-hurley/>

All the short-stories referenced in the course description are contained in *Collected Fictions*.

Recommended Texts: *Selected Non-Fictions* (edited by Eliot Weinberger) and *Selected Poems* (edited by Alexander Coleman) serve as companion volumes to *Collected Fictions*. Together,

they are the closest approximation to Borges's *Complete Works* available in English, one of the few languages that lacks the renowned four-volume collection of his complete writings. These books can be found in most public libraries.

READING SCHEDULE

FIRST CLASS: Thursday, October 24 (6:00-7:30 p.m. EST)

- "On Exactitude in Science" (*Collected Fictions* [CF], *The Maker*)
- "The Wall and The Books" (*Selected Non-Fictions*)
- "The Argentine Writer and Tradition" (*Selected Non-Fictions*)

- "The House of Asterion" (CF, *The Aleph*)
- "The Cruel Redeemer Lazarus Morell" (CF, *A Universal History of Iniquity*)
- "The Disinterested Killer Bill Harrigan" (CF, *A Universal History of Iniquity*)

- **Recommended Reading:** *Borges, A Life* by Edwin Williamson (chapters 1-4)

SECOND CLASS: Thursday, October 31 (6:00-7:30 p.m. EST)

- "Kafka and His Precursors" (*Selected Non-Fictions*)
- "The Detective Story" (*On Writing*)
- "The Labyrinths of the Detective Story and Chesterton" (*Selected Non-Fictions*)

- "The Garden of Forking Paths" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "Death and the Compass" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "Emma Zunz" (CF, *The Aleph*)

THIRD CLASS: Thursday, November 7 (6:00-7:30 p.m. EST)

- "Pierre Menard, author of *Quixote*" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "Shakespeare's Memory" (CF, *Shakespeare's Memory*)

- "The Library of Babel" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "Funes, His Memory" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "The Circular Ruins" (CF, *Fictions*)

FOURTH CLASS: Thursday, November 21 (6:00-7:30 p.m. EST)

- "The Lottery in Babylon" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "The Secret Miracle" (CF, *Fictions*)
- "The Ethnographer" (CF, *In Praise of Darkness*)

- "Ulrikke" (*CF, The Book of Sand*)

FIFTH CLASS: Thursday, December 5 (6:00-7:30 p.m. EST)

- "On the Classics"
- "The Form of the Sword" (*CF, Fictions*)
- "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" (*CF, Fictions*)
- "The South" (*CF, Fictions*)