

# Spanish House Constitution

## I. STATUS AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THE SPANISH HOUSE

**A. Status.** The Spanish House is an academic Theme House, located in Newport House, on the Amherst College campus, which can accommodate about fifteen students plus three Spanish Language Assistants. It is governed by the faculty of the Spanish Department, chartered by the College Council as part of the College's system of social and residential life, and administered by the Dean of Students through the Residential Life Department. In addition to the Spanish House, Newport House also hosts the French House.

**B. Statement of Purpose.** The primary purpose of the House is to provide its residents with a supportive and enthusiastic environment that encourages and facilitates the exchange of the Spanish language, and promotes the Hispanic culture. The House also seeks to enrich the life of the campus by serving as a forum in which all Spanish-speakers at Amherst can engage in activities that are conducted in Spanish, and are related to the Spanish language and Hispanic culture.

## II. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SPANISH HOUSE

**A. Department of Spanish.** As an academic Theme House, the Spanish House is governed by the faculty members of the Department of Spanish. The faculty of the Department may, at any time, alter any provisions of the Spanish House Constitution, and must formally approve any changes to the Constitution proposed by the residents of the House.

**B. The Faculty Advisor.** Each year the Spanish Department will choose from among its members a Faculty Advisor to the Spanish House. When no one member of the Department is able to serve the entire year, separate Faculty Advisors will be appointed for each academic term. The Faculty Advisor to the Spanish House shall:

1. Serve as the primary liaison between the Department of Spanish and the Spanish House.
2. Determine, each year, in consultation with the Residential Life Department, the floor distribution between the Spanish House and the French House.
3. Coordinate the application process for the Spanish House and select all Spanish House residents. The Faculty Advisor may ask the President of the House to assist in carrying out the application process, but the Faculty Advisor makes the final decision about admissions.
4. Ensure all activities of the Spanish House are being carried out efficiently.

**C. The Resident Counselor.** The Resident Counselor (hereafter referred to as “RC”) of Newport House is assigned by the College Council, and is an employee of Amherst College, appointed by, and reporting to, the Residential Life Department. The RC is not subject to the requirements of a regular House resident. The events proposed or led by the RC are undertaken as part of the duties assigned by the College, and the RC’s budget is separate from the Spanish House budget. The RC of Newport House shall:

1. Authorize the use of the physical space occupied by the Spanish House; all residents and the Language Assistants must discuss and clear any programming arrangements involving the use of the House’s space with the RC.
2. Maintain communication with the physical plant, custodial staff, etc. to ensure that the physical aspects of the house are maintained.
3. Keep the house and dorm informed about relevant Amherst College residential life programs and assistance.
4. Understand and promote the objectives of the Spanish House.
5. Act as an unbiased mediator between the Spanish and French Houses.
6. Attend important Spanish House meetings as designated by the President of the House.
7. Deal with conflicts that may arise that are outside the realm of what is relevant to the Spanish House (i.e. roommate conflicts, alcohol and drug related issues, property damage, etc.).

**D. The Spanish Language Assistants.** The Spanish Language Assistants (hereafter referred to as “TAs”) are employed by the Spanish Department and they reside in the Spanish House. The TAs shall:

1. Encourage and promote the active use of the Spanish language in everyday interaction among House residents.
2. Supervise Spanish House events; assist residents in developing events, serving as co-organizers of these events. The events must be related to the Hispanic culture, and their main goals are to promote the use of the Spanish language and culture in the Spanish House and among the Amherst community. Some examples can include: celebrations of the Spanish-speaking countries, movies, board games, cooking workshops, dance workshops, karaoke, readings, conversations, etc. These events are open to all Spanish-speakers on campus. All residents (including the Officers of the House) should take a leading role in organizing one House event each semester, individually or in pairs.
3. Create and publish a calendar of all Spanish House events. This calendar must be posted on the Spanish House website by the second week of each semester, with all events listed, including date, time, location, name of the event, and name of the organizers. This calendar must be updated at all times. It is desirable that every week there is an event. The maximum number of weekly events will be two.
4. Create and publish an attendance record of the residents to the Spanish House events. This attendance record must be posted on a bulletin board in a common area of Newport House, must be updated at all times, and must be regularly shared via e-mail with the Faculty Advisor. The residents should attend at least five events each semester, including the one organized by them. Because the Spanish Table is an activity organized by the Spanish Department, and not by the Spanish House, attendance to the Spanish Table by residents (although is highly recommended) doesn't count as one of the five mandatory events.
5. Work with the RC to coordinate logistical support for all Spanish House events.
6. Work with the Treasurer to obtain a budget for each event.
7. Create a reasonable shopping list for each House event, and assist residents with the purchase of material.
8. Ensure that sodas, snacks, music, movies, etc. are available at all events.

***E. The Officers of the House.***

The residents of the Spanish House will elect during the first week of fall semester the Officers who will serve in that capacity for that academic year. The election will take place during a Spanish House meeting that is attended by all Spanish House residents. Names will be placed in nomination by the residents. No resident will be elected an Officer of the Spanish House without his/her consent. The Officers will be elected by a majority vote of the residents. If there are more than two nominees and no nominee receives a majority of the votes cast during the election, a second round of voting will be held. During the second round of voting, the two nominees who received the most votes during the first round of voting will be the only remaining candidates.

Officers may be dismissed from their positions at any time by a 2/3s vote of all residents of the House; or by the Spanish Department. House members who wish to dismiss an Officer must contact the Faculty Advisor to hold a meeting about their complaint. If the Faculty Advisor finds that the Officer in question is not fulfilling their responsibilities, as either a house member or Officer, then the Faculty Advisor will give out a warning to the Officer in question and allow a two-week probationary period for the officer to remedy the issues brought up. If an Officer is dismissed or resigns, a replacement will have to be voted upon by all the House members within two weeks of the Officer's resignation. The election will follow the same protocol as all official elections within the house.

***The President.*** The President of the Spanish House shall:

1. Act as a representative of the Spanish House on and off campus as necessary.
2. Serve as a liaison between House residents, the Spanish Department and the Residential Life Department.
3. Coordinate and facilitate meetings, keep minutes of all House business, and share those minutes regularly via e-mail with the RC, the TAs, House residents, and the Faculty Advisor.
4. Work with the RC to coordinate logistical support.
5. Take a leading role in organizing one major House event each semester, in cooperation with the Treasurer, under TAs supervision (i.e. "Día de la Hispanidad", "Día de los Muertos", "Carnaval", etc.). This event shall be submitted in the Event Calendar of

Amherst College. All faculty members of Spanish Department will be invited to attend this event.

6. Organize and lead an Open House evening in mid-February, during the application period, in cooperation with the Treasurer. The purpose of the Open House is to show the House to interested students and answer any questions. The President should encourage all Spanish House residents to participate in the Open House evening.
7. Answer emails inquiring about living in the House.
8. Assist the Faculty Advisor in the application process, if necessary.
9. Ensure that every House member receives a copy of this Constitution, reads it, and fully understands its meaning.
10. Ensure that every House member receives a copy of the Compliance Agreement and signs it, no later than one week after the list of accepted applicants is posted. Hand over to the Faculty Advisor a file with all the Compliance Agreements signed by all current residents of the Spanish House.
11. Supervise the progress of the House and its members, as established in this Constitution, and share this information with the Faculty Advisor.
12. Notify the Faculty Advisor, the RC, and Residential Life Department if a House resident intends to move out of the House before the end of the year, or moves out of the House without additional warning.
13. Submit an annual report of the Spanish House to the Department of Residential Life.

***The Treasurer.*** The Treasurer of the Spanish House shall:

1. Manage Spanish House funds.
2. Approve and distribute House funds for the organizing of House events.
3. Support the residents and the TAs in organizing House events by creating a reliable and realistic budget for each event. Submit budget requests as required by the Residential Life Department.
4. Keep a written record of all financial transactions, and regularly let the President of the House know about the budget balance.
5. Take a leading role in organizing one major House event each semester, in cooperation with the President, under TAs supervision.
6. Organize and lead an Open House evening in mid-February, during the application period, in cooperation with the President.

7. Determine whether or not it will be necessary to raise additional funds, and to assist in the organization of fundraisers. Submit applications for supplemental funding to the Department of Residential Life.
8. Cooperate with the President of the House when he/she asks to do so.

### III. THE RESIDENTS OF THE SPANISH HOUSE

**A. Eligibility.** Residence in the House is open to full-time Amherst College students in their second, third and fourth year who are actively engaged in Spanish Department courses at Amherst College, speak the language fluently or are native speakers. As a rule, first-year students are ineligible for residence in the House. Because the primary aim of the House is to create more opportunities for its residents to practice Spanish, and because residents need to be able to function at a certain level of competency in order to be able to carry on conversations with each other, proficiency in Spanish must be at least equal to two semesters of college-level (Spanish I & Spanish II). Students who do not have an intermediate level in Spanish are not eligible for residence in the House. As a rule, no student may live in a particular Theme House for more than two years. Years spent in the House as an RC are not counted under the four-semester rule due to their appointment by the Dean of Students.

**B. Admission.** The Faculty Advisor coordinates the application process for the Spanish House and selects all Spanish House residents. All decisions regarding admission to the House are made by the Faculty Advisor.

**The application.** All prospective residents must submit an application for admission to the House. The application process is administered by the Residential Life Department. Copies of the application submitted online are shared with the Faculty Advisor and current Officers of the House. Current residents must re-apply for admission each year. Priority in admission will be given to declared Spanish majors who will be ranked by the year at the College. Students who gained preference in admission to the House by declaring Spanish major and subsequently drop the major will be dismissed from the House. The selection of non-majors is done at the discretion of the Faculty Advisor. Students whose length of residence in the House will exceed four semesters may submit an application and will be considered for admission last. If vacancies

become available during the academic year, they are announced in the Amherst Notes. Admission criteria can include, but are not limited to:

1. The applicant's proficiency in Spanish.
2. The number and level of courses taken in Spanish Department.
3. The applicant's willingness to speak Spanish in the House and to participate fully in House activities.

***The interview.*** After the applications are read, some applicants could be asked to be interviewed by the Faculty Advisor, especially students who have not taken any Spanish language courses at Amherst College, but claim to possess native or near-native fluency. They should be prepared to demonstrate such fluency in speaking Spanish. Since many Spanish House applicants are studying abroad during the application period, interviews of applicants will not be mandatory for admission to the house. The Faculty Advisor could ask the Officers of the House to conduct interviews of some applicants who are currently residing on campus. Their assessments of the applicants will be taken in consultation with the Faculty Advisor during the selection process.

No later than one week after the conclusion of the interview process, the Faculty Advisor will submit a list of accepted residents to the Residential Life Department. Should there be more qualified applicants than spaces available, and a prioritized waiting list will be created and accessed in the case of voluntary or involuntary departure from the Spanish House of any member. The due date for the applications and for the submission of the House roster shall be determined by the Residential Life Department. However, the process is usually completed during the second half of February and early March.

***Selection process for the spring semester.*** Due to the nature of the House and the fact that many House members choose to study abroad during the spring semester, there will be a special selection process to fill the vacancies left by House members who choose to leave Amherst College for the spring semester. The procedure for the spring semester selection will be completed during the prior fall semester and will follow the same format as the regular selection process.

**Compliance Agreement.** Before accepting a space in the Spanish House, every applicant must sign a Compliance Agreement of the Spanish House Constitution. The Compliance Agreement will be given by the President of the House, and shall be signed by each resident no later than one week after the list of accepted applicants is posted. Students will be highly encouraged to obtain and review a copy of this Constitution before they begin the application process so they can determine beforehand if they will be able to commit to House responsibilities.

**C. Room Draw.** Selection of rooms will take place within the month after the acceptance list is completed. The RC of the dormitory, who has been placed by the College Council, will pick one room in the dorm before any other room assignment is made. The Faculty Advisor will select the rooms for the TAs, in consultation with the Residential Life Department.

To determine the distribution of remaining rooms, the Faculty Advisor establishes a priority list for the Spanish House Room Draw that is forwarded to a member of the Residential Life Department, who is responsible for housing in the Spanish House. That member of the staff will coordinate the students' selection of rooms according to the order established on the priority list during the week following college-wide Room Draw. The Faculty Advisor will rank all House residents by a point system, using the following considerations:

- + 2 points for being a declared Spanish major.
- + 2 points for each semester in residence at Amherst College.
- + 1 point for each semester residing in Spanish House.
- + 1 point for each course taken in the Spanish Department at Amherst College.
- + 1 point for each semester spent studying Spanish abroad.

The Faculty Advisor will confirm the information that led to the calculation of this score with House residents, and can further verify the information about coursework and major declaration by consulting the Registrar's Office; any misinformation supplied by House members in order to secure a higher priority on the room ranking list will move the resident in question to the bottom of the list and can lead to a dismissal from the house, at the Faculty Advisor's discretion.

There is a limit of four semesters of residency in the Spanish House. Students who have already lived in the Spanish House for four semesters may apply to stay longer. They will be accepted last, after all the other applicants, and only if there are rooms available. The regular point system will apply to these students, but the points for semesters in the Spanish House



cannot exceed 4. A student who has lived in the Spanish House three semesters at the end of an academic year may apply to the House again for the fall. If accepted, he/she will be allowed to remain in the House the entire academic year and thus will be granted permission to exceed the four semester rule by one semester.

If a student moves in during the middle of a semester, that student will receive one point for that semester for room selection the following year if he/she chooses to reapply. This procedure will extend to first-year students at Amherst College in the unusual event that a dedicated first-year student is selected to move into the Spanish House during the middle of either fall or spring semester.

There are two double rooms in the Spanish House. The Residential Life Department requires that these double rooms are occupied by two students. These rooms, then, will be removed from the regular room selection process and accepted applicants will be asked to volunteer to live in a double. If there are no volunteers for the rooms, all freshmen and sophomore accepted applicants will arrange themselves into pairs. If there are not 4 freshmen and sophomore students, students with lower score shall live in the double rooms.

If two or more residents have the same room-priority score, their priority will be determined by a coin flipping. Once the residents have been ranked, they can pick rooms in order the ranking.

If two residents wish to exchange rooms, they must secure the permission of the President of the House before making such a request to the Residential Life Department, which has the ultimate authority in these matters.

If a room in the House becomes vacant during the year, the President of the House must communicate this fact to the Faculty Advisor, the Resident Counselor, and the Residential Life Department immediately. If current House residents wish to move into the vacant room, they must petition the Faculty Advisor in writing. The Faculty Advisor will then rank them according to the point system described above, consult with the President of the House, and determine who should occupy the vacated room; there is no guarantee that the room will be made available for such transition. If rooms become vacant during the course of the year and there are other students who wish to join the House, they have to submit an online application and, upon their admission to the House, will be assigned a room by the Faculty Advisor using the point system described above.

Circumstances and eventualities not addressed by the provisions of this section will be considered by the Faculty Advisor, who may seek the opinion of the President of the House, the RC, the Residential Life Department and the faculty of the Spanish Department in reaching the final decision.

***E. Responsibilities.*** The College Council requires that residents of Theme Houses adhere strictly to all responsibilities specified in the House Constitution. As the College Council stipulated, “Individual Theme Houses are responsible for developing workable ways of alleviating individual differences and resolving conflicts so that the rights of each student and the rights of the community are protected.” In furtherance of these principles, and in accordance with the Spanish House’s purpose as defined by this Constitution, residents of the Spanish House, who are expected to abide by all regulations issued by the Dean of Students through the Residential Life Department, shall, in addition:

1. Speak Spanish among themselves as much as possible according to their level of proficiency in the language. TAs, native speakers, and advanced language students should take the initiative to uphold the purpose of the house and encourage residents who are less confident about their Spanish language skills.
2. Attend all Spanish House meetings, required by the President of the House.
3. Take a leading role in organizing one House event each semester, individually or in pairs, under TAs supervision. The events must be related to the Hispanic culture, and their main goals are to promote the use of the Spanish language and culture in the Spanish House and among the Amherst community. Some examples can include: celebrations of the Spanish-speaking countries, movies, board games, cooking workshops, dance workshops, karaoke, readings, conversations, etc. These events are open to all Spanish-speakers on campus. It is desirable that every week there is an event. The maximum number of weekly events will be two.
4. Attend at least five events each semester, including the one organized by them. Because the Spanish Table is an activity organized by the Spanish Department, and not by the Spanish House, attendance to the Spanish Table by residents (although is highly recommended) doesn’t count as one of the five mandatory events.
5. Clean common areas after use.
6. Respect all aspects of the Amherst College Student Code of Conduct.

***F. Dismissal and Replacement.*** House residents who fail to fulfill their duties, as described above, and as determined by the Officers of the House or the RC, shall receive one formal written warning from the Faculty Advisor and allow a two-week probationary period; if the problems identified when the warning is not issued are not resolved by the time the probationary period ends, the resident shall be dismissed from the House and will not be eligible to reapply to live in the House the following year. The room of the dismissed resident shall be considered vacant and shall be reassigned according to the procedures described above.

#### **IV. AMENDMENTS TO THE SPANISH CONSTITUTION**

Proposals to amend the Spanish House Constitution may be submitted to the Faculty Advisor providing that at least 2/3s of the current residents of the House have approved of the amendment in a vote that includes all current residents. All amendments to the Spanish House Constitution are subject to the approval of the Spanish Department, and shall take effect at the start of the next semester. The Spanish House Constitution may be amended by the Spanish Department at any time.

All Residents must read this Constitution and sign a Compliance Agreement, prior to joining the House.

*Revised on May 2015*

# Compliance Agreement

FULL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS ACADEMIC YEARS LIVING IN THE SPANISH HOUSE:  Fall \_\_\_\_  Spring \_\_\_\_

CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR LIVING IN THE SPANISH HOUSE:  Fall \_\_\_\_  Spring \_\_\_\_

CURRENT ROLE IN THE SPANISH HOUSE:  Resident  President  Treasurer  TA

All Theme Houses are expected to enrich the life of the campus by undertaking outreach programs that educate students about the particular theme which is used to organize the residence.

Each member of the Theme House is expected to adhere to all responsibilities that are required of House members. The effectiveness of the House rests firmly on an accepted code of behavior in which cooperative living and consideration for others are the keynotes. Residents who do not adhere to the expectations of the Theme House they are living in may be removed to other campus housing on the recommendation of the Advisor of the House, the Director of Residential Life, or the Dean of Students.

The College Council requires that residents of Theme Houses adhere strictly to all responsibilities specified in the House Constitution.

By signing below, I certify that I have read and understood the Spanish House Constitution, and I accept and agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this Compliance Agreement.

(Signature): \_\_\_\_\_