

Cuba: From Spanish Colony to Socialist Republic (HILA 122)

Spring 2008, Tu/Th 2-3:30
WLH 2111
Office: HSS 4063

Professor Daniel Widener
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Our course explores the “modern” history of Cuba, using the analytic categories of race, culture, and politics as windows into the contested process of Cuban nationhood. Our principle focus will remain on two central contradictions of *cubanidad*, the struggle for self-determination in the shadow of the United States, and the contested search to forge, define, or comprehend a single peoplehood from the fires of migration, slavery, colonialism, revolution, socialism, austerity, and war.

Assignments:

Midterm Examinations (2)	60%
Film Reviews (2)	20%
Reading Quizzes (2)	20%

Film reviews are due Tuesday of the week following the screening. Reviews should be on the order of 500-700 words, and should assess the films within the context provided by the lecture and the readings. **Films will sometimes be shown out of class. On these occasions, you may either attend the screening or see the films on reserve.**

Required Readings:

A number of articles will be placed on electronic reserve at the library. They, like the assigned reading from the books, should always be completed prior to the course in which they are referenced. You are to buy all of the books. At Groundwork, ideally. The course texts are:

1. Miguel Barnet/Esteban Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*
2. Louis Pérez, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy*
3. Marifelli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, Legacy*

Course Outline

Week I: Categories of the colony:

- April 1 Course Introduction and Themes
April 3 prelude to revolt: colonial Cuba in comparative perspective
- Read: 1. Barnet and Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, pp. 1-158

Week II: Cuba Libre!

Film: *La Ultima Cena*

- April 8 3 for Martí: Cuba's struggle for independence [*Elpidio Valdes*]
April 10 Tanto Negro, Tanto Chino: revolutionary dialectics of race and power
- Read: 1. Pérez, *Cuba and the U.S.*, chapter 4-7
2. Barnet and Montejo, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, pp. 159-end

Week III & IV: the sober reality of domination

- April 15 "Our Islands & Their People:" from *Cuba Libre* to *Yanquilandia*
April 17 "En Cardenas, Funerario:" from "race war" to racist peace
- April 22 Wizards and Scientists: the theory and practice of Afro-Cuban culture
April 24 Entre Rumba y Danzón: competing views of national culture
- Read: 1. Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, chapter 1 and 2
2. Pérez, *Cuba and the U.S.*, chapter 4-7

Week V: an end and a beginning

- April 29 Cuban Counterpoint: the revolution of 1933 & the Second Republic
May 1st **midterm examination #1**
- Read: 1. Pérez, *Cuba and the U.S.*, 7
2. Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, chapter 3

Week VI & VII: cuándo lo extraordinario se vuelve cotidiano

May 6 Last Call: the fall of Batista
May 8 The Youngest Revolution

Film: *Death of a Bureaucrat*

May 13 Con Azúcar No Hay País: The Political Economy of Tropical Socialism

May 15 Notes on the Imperfect Cinema of the New Budgetary Man

- Read: 1. Pérez, *Cuba and the U.S.*, chapter 8 and 9
2. Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, chapter 4-6

Week VIII: from the island to the world

Film: *Fresa y Chocolate*

May 20 Memories of Cuito Carnavale: Cuba's African Dream

May 22 Visions of Calle Ocho: Cuba's Florida, Florida's Cuba

- Read 1. Gabriel García Márquez, "Operation Carlotta."
2. Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Smorkaloff. *The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, Section VII, pp. 517-594

Week IX: el "período especial"

May 27 The Political Economy of Collapse
May 29 Race and Culture during the Special Period

- Read: 1. Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution*, chapter 7 and 8
2. Sujatha Fernandes, "Fear of a Black Nation: Local Rappers, Transnational Crossings, and State Power in Contemporary Cuba," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76.4 (2003) 575-608
3. Ivor Miller, "Religious Symbolism in Cuban Political Performance," *TDR: The Drama Review* 44.2 (2000) 30-55

Week X Return to the Source

June 3 the repeating island: "patria o muerte" in the incredibly long run
June 5 **midterm examination #2**