

University of Florida
Fall 2017, LAH 3931

The History of Cuba and Puerto Rico

Introduction:

When the U.S. military invaded the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898, the U.S. government promised to grant them liberation from Spanish colonial rule as well as to respect their right to political independence. As Cubans and Puerto Ricans quickly discovered, however, U.S. intervention into their political and economic affairs did nothing of the kind. As Puerto Rico became an official "territorial possession" of the United States ruled by U.S.-appointed governors for most of the Twentieth Century, Cuba saw its political evolution shaped by repeated U.S. military occupations and diplomatic "mediations" meant to protect U.S. investments in Cuba. In both cases, protecting the expansion and rights of U.S. business interests came at the cost of the local citizenry's right to make and enforce its own laws and state agendas.

Cubans and Puerto Ricans reacted to foreign domination in divergent ways: by the mid-Twentieth Century, Cuba had launched a stridently anti-imperialist socialist revolution that ruptured all ties to the United States while Puerto Rico accommodated to a U.S.-conceived model of political and social dependence. Similarly, despite their radically divergent historical paths—Puerto Rico toward greater dependence on the United States, Cuba toward greater isolation from the United States—both experiences prompted a massive exodus to the United States in nearly the same period (1950s to the 1970s). One million Cubans would arrive in the United States between 1959 and 1980. By the early 1980s, the same number of Puerto Ricans would live in the United States as lived on the island. Yet, Cubans and Puerto Ricans are, in many ways, equally "nationalist", just as U.S. approaches to their societies, whether political, economic or cultural, are equally imperialist. Moreover, in each case, both the diasporic and the national communities on the island are deeply relevant to U.S. domestic and foreign policy-making.

In part, these differences were due to Cuba and Puerto Rico's distinctive colonial paths of development under Spain's rule from the sixteenth century through the mid-nineteenth: while Cuba's emergence as a fabulously wealthy sugar colony in the late eighteenth century ensured it would become the jewel of the Spanish Crown, Puerto Rico retained its character as a colonial backwater, even after experiencing a relative degree of prosperity thanks to booms in both sugar and coffee. Yet, as we will find, Cuba's legendary image as the "rebel" and Puerto Rico's reputation for political "passivity" do not derive from differences in national character, as traditional myths maintain. Elites in both places were equally repressive of their poor majorities, particularly in the rural areas where slaves once produced many "cash crops" and large estates prevented non-enslaved workers from advancement by acquiring land; in turn, Cuba and Puerto Rico's oppressed majorities were equally rebellious. However, both before and after the US invaded in 1898 and forever altered Cuba and Puerto Rico's destinies, struggles for achieving democratic freedoms and a greater share of wealth

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tended to succeed in Cuba where in Puerto Rico they failed. Since the 1950s, however, each island's political culture responded to Cold War pressures in surprising ways: while Cuba transformed into a Communist state over the last sixty years, Puerto Rico's renegotiation of the US colonial "pact" has seemingly made Puerto Rico even more colonial. Today, although their political and economic paths appear to have diverged radically—with Cuba seeming to teeter on the verge of another revolution and Puerto Rico poised to become the 51st state—Cuba and Puerto Rico still have far more in common than they have differences. Analyzing these common denominators, especially internal struggles over race, class and the role of imperial power, is a primary focus of this course.

Goals

This course has three goals. First, it seeks to transform the way students understand concepts that they take for granted, helping them to recognize the relevance of historical, often violent social struggles over definitions of freedom, "nation", national sovereignty, economic justice and equality to their daily lives. Second, this course will provide a deep knowledge of the complex realities of Cuban and Puerto Rican societies, helping to reveal how the past (especially slavery and imperialism) affected what was—and is—politically and economically possible to achieve in these countries. Finally, this class promises to challenge students at every level, honing their intellectual creativity and forcing them to use it.

Course Requirements:

Participation: Attendance, discussion of readings and films, 2-page film review: 25%
Two analytical papers (each 4 pages in length) on readings: 25%
In-class midterm exam: 25%
Final exam: 25%

Pedagogical Approach & Evaluation of Students:

Professor Guerra will teach all aspects of the course, acting as discussion leader and lecturer. As the class activity schedule conveys below, this class combines regular lectures, in-class discussion of readings as well as film viewings and group analysis of primary documents. *Heather Gonyeau will be serving as our grader in the course and will schedule a writing workshop shortly before each paper is due. He will also announce his office hours on the first day of class.*

As with all history classes, this class should be relevant to explaining the events, culture, distribution of power and popular ideas of the present day. What you learn in the class should be surprising, enjoyable, challenging and not easily forgotten.

1. Class Attendance and Lectures: Attendance is (obviously) mandatory since most of the information, analysis and building-blocks for the class are acquired live and in person.

- *Lectures are particularly important for two reasons: first, because they provide the framework for understanding the chronology and historical struggles at play; and second,*

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because students learn how to write good papers and make strong arguments from listening to good lectures and practicing their own skills.

- *Because students have different styles of learning, Professor Guerra uses a variety of teaching methods and materials that will serve the strengths of some students one day and those of other students another.*

2. Discussions of Readings, Film Analysis & Participation Grade: *Much of the success of this class will depend on the willingness of students to engage issues raised in the readings as well as each others' perspectives in the time allocated for discussion and collective reflection on complex or politically challenging subjects.*

- **Discussion:** Professor Guerra's **evaluation of student participation** will balance the quantity of each student's intervention with its quality. That means that while "chattiness" will not guarantee you an A for participation, silence will definitely not serve you (after all, how can Prof. G know that you have even read that week's assignment if you don't speak?).
- **Required Film Viewings:** Students will write a one- to two-page analytical reflection on one of the following three films required for discussion. The dates for discussing these films are embedded in the weekly calendar of this course syllabus.
 - "La Ultima Cena [The Last Supper]" (Cuba, 1976) [*on library reserve*] and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_CPbHIgnF4
 - "Fresa y Chocolate [Strawberry & Chocolate]" (Cuba, 1993) [*on library reserve*]
 - Manos a la Obra: The Story of Operation Bootstrap (Puerto Rico, 1983) [*on library reserve*] and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtDbwqW294c>

3. Short analytical papers: *The paper required for this class must be at least 4-6 pages long, double-spaced and typed in 12-point. Intended to help you reflect on and process the readings, the paper will respond to one of a variety of questions, by providing an argument that takes a position and substantiates its validity through documented evidence and original interpretation.*

- A set of thematic questions from which students will choose to answer one will be provided one before each paper is due.
- **Evidence for the argument in each paper should derive exclusively from course materials, especially from the readings assigned.**
- Students **required to underline their thesis statements** so that there will be no problem in determining the argument's clarity.

All papers must be handed at the front desk of Latin American Studies in Grinter Hall, 3rd floor by the due date and before 4 PM on that day. You may also place under my door in

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Grinter, 507. NO DIGITAL PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. ALL PAPERS MUST BE TURNED IN ON PAPER, HARD COPY. (Please do not email me your paper!) **Late papers will be penalized by half a grade for every day they are overdue**, unless an extension has been requested in advance and granted.

- FIRST PAPER DEADLINE: Monday, **October 16** by 4:00 PM
- SECOND PAPER DEADLINE: Tuesday, **December 4** by 4:00 PM

4. Midterm and final exam: Midterm and final exams will follow the same format, although the former will obviously be much shorter than the latter. Each exam will consist of a **blank map** with historically relevant locations for the student to mark, a set of **historical items for the student to fully identify** (to be explained in greater length as we approach the midterm), and **one to three questions to be answered in essay form**. Prof. Guerra will provide a **detailed study sheet to aid in your preparation for each exam**. There are no “trick” questions. Knowledge in this class is cumulative and students who attend lectures and read consistently will do well—guaranteed!

- IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION: Thursday, October 26, in class
- FINAL EXAMINATION: Friday, December 15, 10AM-12PM

Course Materials: There are two required books for this course available at the UF Bookstore or through on-line book providers. *Unless otherwise indicated, specific readings that do not derive from these books will be available through email or will be provided by Prof. Guerra through a shared folder on Dropbox.* Students do not need a Dropbox account to access the shared folder. Prof. Guerra will place materials on the shared folder and students will receive notification through email of a link that allows them to download all material in that shared folder.

Three Books to Buy for this class:

1. **Aline Helg**, Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality. (UNC Press, 1995).
2. **Solsiree del Moral**, Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
3. **Jorge Duany**, Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Grading Scale:

93-100	A	89-87	B+	79-77	C+	69-67	D+	Below 60	Failing
92-90	A-	86-83	B	76-73	C	66-63	D		
		82-80	B-	72-70	C-	62-60	D-		

Letter Grade with GPA equivalent:

A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33

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B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
D-	0.67
E	0

ADDITIONAL CLASS POLICIES

Attendance is a must, as students who do not attend lectures will fail to comprehend the individual histories of each country studied or the chronological order of events that drives the process of change connecting these countries as a region. Students who have an unexcused absence and do not attend discussions on Thursday (when attendance is taken at the beginning of class) will receive a failing grade for that week's participation. *Consistent with the policy of the UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, repeated absences from the course may result in Professor Guerra preventing a student from attending the class or dropping the student from the course with a failing grade.*

Note-taking is also a must. Knowledge of key events, locations, historical figures, organizations and movements is the basis of all historical analysis. History in this course (as in any course offered by UF's history department) is **not** the study of generalizations but contingences: *being able to explain why something happened is as important as explaining what happened. One cannot be achieved without the other.*

Excused Absences: Students who will not be able to take an exam at the scheduled time, need an extension of the due date for a paper or were unable to attend class due to illness **must** provide medical documentation of their condition at the time. Students who have other conflicts that will prevent them from being able to complete an assignment on time must notify Professor Guerra in advance and discuss whether or not the extension or make-up exam is merited. Students must also notify Professor Guerra if they will incur absences due to UF-sanctioned activities (such as participation in UF teams, etc.).

Academic Honesty: Violations of academic honesty standards include but are not limited to cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of another's work as one's own, bribery, conspiracy and fabrication. The criteria for assessing whether student behavior meets one or more of these violations as well as the sanctions imposed may be reviewed at the website: <http://www.aa.ufl.edu/aa/Rules/4017.htm>

Students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to Professor Guerra when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resource Center through their website: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

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Make-up Policy and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit. There is no way to make-up for missing discussions of the weekly reading assignment. These will normally take place before or after lecture on Thursdays, unless otherwise noted below in the course schedule. Unexcused absences from discussion will result in a participation grade of zero for that week. Evaluation of oral participation in discussion is based on the criteria described immediately below this section.

Other Course Policies: All cell phones must be turned to vibrate at the beginning of class. *Internet web surfing, texting, checking of email, or other tasks unrelated to note-taking during lecture, discussion or other classroom activities is not permitted.* **Professor Guerra will confiscate the cell phone or laptop of any student found engaging in these activities during class for an indefinite period of time** and s/he may be asked to leave the classroom. A second violation will result in disciplinary sanction.

Unit I. From Colonial Backwaters to Imperial Meccas: Cuba & Puerto Rico in the 15th to 19th Centuries

T 8/22 *Lecture 1:* Why Study Cuba and Puerto Rico? An Introduction

Th 8/24 (double class period) *Lecture 2:* Cultures and Counter-Cultures of Early Colonial Cuba, 15th Century to 1760s

Reading for discussion: Letter of Columbus & Journal of Columbus in Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day. An Anthology. Peter Hulme and Neil Whitehead, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 9-28. [available through Dropbox]

T 8/29 *Lecture 3:* The Cuba that Might Have Been and the Cuba that Was: From Tobacco & Free Labor to Sugar and Slavery, 1710s to 1830s

Th 8/31 (double class period) *Lecture 4:* From Fortress Frontier to Royalist Refuge: Puerto Rico from the 15th Century to 1840s

Reading for discussion: "The Costly Colony", "Criollos and Blancos" and "The Xivaros" in The Puerto Ricans: A Documentary History. Kal Wagenheim and Olga Jiménez de Wagenheim, eds. Maplewood, NJ: Waterfront Press, 1973, pp. 27-44. [available through Dropbox]

NO CLASS TUES 9/5 OR TH 9/7 Prof. Guerra will be in Cuba with UF Dean of Libraries on official UF business.

ASSIGNMENT: Watch "La Última Cena" (Cuba, 1976). Note: You may choose to write the 2-page film reflection for this film. It is one of 3 required films in the class. Reflections for this film are due Tuesday, 9/12 in class.

Tu 9/12 *Lecture 5:* Cuba, 1844: Sugar, Slavery, Free Coloreds, Planter-Aristocrats and the Year of the Lash

Th 9/14 (double class period) *Lecture 6:* Cuba's "Abolitionist Planters"? The Tropical Wing of Manifest Destiny and the Ten Years' War, 1840s-1870s

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Reading for discussion: Franklin Knight, Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970, two chapters to be assigned. [available through Dropbox].

Film for discussion: "La Última Cena" (Cuba, 1976)

Unit II. Crucibles of Nation in Cuba & Puerto Rico Before 1898

T 9/19 Lecture 7: El Grito de Lares and the Rise of Accommodationism in Puerto Rico

Th 9/21 (double class period) Lecture 8: "More than Black or White": Independence, José Martí & the Making of Revolutionary Cuba, 1880s-1890s

Readings for discussion:

- Aline Helg, Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality. UNC Press, 1995, pp. 23-90 [Required book to purchase]
- José Martí, "My Race (1893)" in José Martí: Selected Writings, translated by Esther Allen. Penguin Classics, 2002, pp. 318-319 [available through Dropbox]

Unit III. The Age of Americanization in Cuba & Puerto Rico, 1898-1940s

T 9/26 Lecture 9: US Imperialism and the Invasion of Puerto Rico, 1898

Th 9/28 (double class period) Lecture 10: Americanization: The Political & Economic Transformation of Puerto Rico, 1898-1918

Readings for discussion:

- Truman R. Clark, "Educating the Natives in Self-Government': Puerto Rico and the United States, 1900-1933," The Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 42, No. 2. (May, 1973), pp. 220-233 AND [available through Dropbox].
- Eileen J. Findlay, "Free Love and Domesticity: Sexuality and the Shaping of Working-Class Feminism in Puerto Rico, 1900-1917" in Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago, eds. Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 229-259. [available through Dropbox].

T 10/03 Lecture 11: Poverty, Imperial Pacts and the Paradox of the Political System in Puerto Rico, 1920s-1930s

Th 10/05 (double class period) Lecture 12: Silencing Nation, Recrafting Colony in Puerto Rico, 1920s-1930s

Reading for discussion: Solsiree del Moral, Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), Chapters 1, 2, and 3. [Required book to purchase]

T 10/10 Lecture 13: US Imperialism and the Problems of "Plattist Cuba", 1898-1906

Th 10/12 Lecture 14: Stillbirth or Birth of the Cuban Republic? 1906-1912

Reading for discussion: Aline Helg, Our Rightful Share, pp. 141-226. [Required book to purchase]

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20-min Film clip for discussion: "The War of 1898" [available through Dropbox]

FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE ON MONDAY 10/16 by 4:00 PM.

T 10/17 *Lecture 15:* Renewing the Republic and Reviving Revolution in Cuba, 1912-1933 **MIDTERM EXAM STUDY SHEETS WILL BE HANDED OUT AND Ms. Gonyeau WILL LEAD A PREPARATION WORKSHOP, DATE AND TIME TBA.**

Th 10/19 (double class period) *Lecture 16:* Renegotiating US Colonialism, Neutralizing Revolution in Puerto Rico, 1932-52: Triumph of the *Estado Libre Asociado*
Reading for discussion: Solsiree del Moral, Negotiating Empire: The Cultural Politics of Schools in Puerto Rico, 1898-1952 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), Chapters 4, 5 and Conclusion. **[Required book]**

T 10/24 *Lecture 17:* From Batista to Batista, 1934-1952

Th 10/26 (double class period) *IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION.*
BRING IN 2 BLUE BOOKS.

T 10/31 *Lecture 18:* Making Revolutionary Cuba, 1952-1959

Th 11/02 (double class period) *Lecture 19:* Revolution, Unanimity & Social Change, 1959-1961: Fidel Castro's All-Or-Nothing State
Reading for Discussion: Jorge Duany, Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know (Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapters 3, 4, 5. **[Required book]**
Film for discussion: "The Story of Operation Bootstrap" (1983).
Note: If you did not write a 1-2 response to the previous film, you must write one for this film.

Unit IV. Anti-Imperialism, the United States and the Struggle for Revolutionary Change in Cuba, 1959-1989

T 11/07 *Lecture 20:* Internal Struggles for Freedom in Cuba, 1961-1968

Th 11/09 (double class period) *Lecture 21:* Disciplining the Masses: Sovietizing Cuba: From the Revolutionary Offensive to the Era of the Fat Cows, 1968-1970s
Reading for discussion: Thomas Paterson, Contesting Castro. (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 150-264 **[on-line library resource; also on library reserve]**

T 11/14 *Lecture 22:* Cuba in the Soviet Age and Beyond: Communism, "Coercive Persuasion" and the Struggle against Unanimity, 1970s-1980s

Th 11/16 (double class period) *Lecture 23:* Cuba in the Special Period: Capitalist Communists and the Legacies of Fidelismo.

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Reading for discussion: Carolee Bengelsdorf, The Problem of Democracy in Cuba (Oxford University Press, 1994), Chapters 4 and 5. [available through Dropbox]

Tu 11/21 GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Jorge Duany, "Puerto Rico Today: The 51st State, Eternal Colony or Transnational Nation?" Dr. Duany is Director of the Cuban Research Institute, FIU and author of many books, including *Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/22-11/26.

WATCH "Fresa y Chocolate" (Cuba, 1993)

Note: If you did not write a 1-2 response to previous two films, you must write one for this film.

Unit V. Dependent Development and the "None of the Above" Nation in Puerto Rico & Cuba Today

Tu 11/28 Discussion of "Fresas y Chocolate"

Th 11/30 (double class period) Lecture 24: Reclaiming the Nation: Unarmed Guerilla Warfare in Today's Cuba & Puerto Rico

Reading for discussion: Cuban hip-hop songs by various artists and slam poetry by Willie Perdomo [audio, bilingual transcript of lyrics, music video by Escuadrón Patriota and Perdomo poems available though Dropbox]

SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE ON TUESDAY 12/04 by 4:00 PM.

Tu 12/04 Final Lecture: Why Study Cuba & Puerto Rico? Lessons of the Class

STUDY SHEET FOR FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT IN FINAL LECTURE.

FINAL EXAM DECEMBER 15, 10:00-12:00 NOON. BRING YOUR BLUE BOOKS!