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Film, Image & Revolution in Cuba

Course Description: Using archival footage, documentaries, feature films, shorts and photographs as well as traditional readings and primary historical sources, this class examines how the role of images plays a central role in the consolidation of Cuba's revolutionary state, the endurance of one-party rule as well as the everyday perception and consciousness of citizens. Until recently, study of the Revolution has mostly focused on top-level political players in the Cuban and US governments: this an approach leaves the majority of Cubans in the role of by-standers to their own history and reduces the fascinating social history after 1959 to political calculations alone. This class examines the origins and experience of revolution "from within". Covering 1959-2019 primarily, we explain how a process of democratization transformed Cuba into a Soviet-supported Communist state and then, from 1991-present, a paradoxically Communist Party-led government dependent on capitalism, tourism and foreign investment. Highlights of the class include the messianic cult to Fidel Castro, Cuba's radical programs that "rehabilitated" prostitutes and peasants, its enforcement of ideological discipline, homophobic policies and gender policies. We will also study the role of Black consciousness and of everyday citizens' resistance in demanding and achieving greater degrees of freedom over time.

Methods of the Class & How Film Serves the Study of Cuban History:

This class does not offer a history of Cuban film. Rather, we use films, photography and art in dialogue with readings and lectures to analyze how images of "revolution" and perceptions of Cuban identity allowed for the consolidation of a one-party state since 1959. Led from 1959 to 2006 by Fidel Castro and subsequently his brother Raúl, the Cuban government has managed to survive 60 years of US hostility,

the collapse of the Soviet bloc and repeated generational challenges from within. Images and their impact on Cubans' sense of what was possible to achieve clearly accounted for the legitimacy of the Cuban government and its small cadre of leaders at the height of its power and popularity from 1959-1979. During these decades, the material promise of generalized prosperity under Communism mostly failed to meet expectations.

Nonetheless, Soviet aid enabled socialist Cuba to achieve a generalized quality of life and a degree of class egalitarianism previously unknown in Latin America (and most of the post-colonial "Third World") in the 1970s and 1980s. During this period of Soviet-supported social transformation in Cuba, the United States supported the rise and repression of multiple military dictatorships across Latin America. Consequently, the image of a heroic, nationally united Cuba whose government faced (allegedly) no internal opposition *thrived*. Ironically, that image and the international support that Cuba's socialist policies generated have served to reinforce the credibility of the Cuban government long after that credibility disappeared among islanders themselves, from the 1990s to the present.

Despite the binary that the US-Soviet Cold War created, Cuba's citizenry was never the ideologically homogeneous, pro-government monolith that Fidel Castro and the Communist Party wanted it to be. Key examples of this could always be found in Cuba's film industry as well as the world of art, despite the fact that both were technically "weapons of the Revolution" and government-run. On the one hand, international defenders of the Revolution often cited Cuban film as *evidence* that the freedom to criticize and influence the state's policy-making applied in Cuba, despite Communist rule. And on the other hand, the Cuban state *benefitted* from the popularity of Cuban films among Cubans, many (perhaps most) of whom saw and believed that their government (like its film industry) might be more responsive to their demands than it actually was.

And then came the end of the Soviet bloc in 1991 and the Cuban government's swift, pragmatic adoption of capitalist reforms. **While a desperate need to generate revenue through the adoption of capitalist reforms did not end Communist Party rule, it *did* create the possibility for independent thought, self-employment and a new (less state-controlled) cultural space.**

From the 1990s to the present, filmmakers, other artists and average citizens contributed directly to the growth of public outrage and opposition to the government: no longer could the government contain, let alone control, how Cubans saw their country, their past or the world in the same way. Thus, since 1989, a time Fidel Castro labeled "A Special Period in a time of peace", image-making and struggles over images of Cuba in the international arena—from those of daily life in Cuba to those about Cuba's revolutionary past—have become a primary pre-occupation of government agencies and citizens. In Cuba from 1959 to 2021, images and films have been the building-blocks of historical narratives as well as the material of individual and national identity. **If the unprecedented mass protests of July 11, 2021 are any indication, these alternative ways of interpreting Cuba's past and present have now inspired an island-wide consensus on the need for freedom of expression and the right to freedom of assembly.**

Yet the roots of the recent protest run deep. Decades ago, artists, filmmakers, actors, rap musicians, writers and intellectuals took the lead in democratizing Cuba. Starting in 2018, they staged sit-ins, created independent journalism on-line, documented their own detentions and interrogations, and formed movements (like the San Isidro Movement and 27th of November Movement) meant to represent the voices and views of change. By studying them, we will learn how Cubans within and outside of Cuba resisted the binary of a "with-us-or-against-us" reality, and, in some cases, subverted government control to force changes, negotiation, greater freedom or quite simply, the course of history itself.

Course Policies, Grading and Student Resources

COVID-19: Get vaccinated so we can all stop wearing masks and achieve collective immunity to this disease. Professor Guerra is fully vaccinated but will wear a mask in order to protect against the transmission of the disease in case she or anyone in her proximity becomes a carrier. All students, even if vaccinated, are asked to wear a mask for the same reason.

Course Delivery: This class will meet twice a week in a large group setting with Professor Guerra. **Tuesdays we meet for a single period and Thursdays we meet for double period.** Attendance is required at every class session and participation is a key part of your grade (see “Attendance” in the Policies section below, and “Participation” in the “Assignments, Requirements, and Expectations” section. Prof. Guerra will grade all assignments.

- ***A Note on Discussions, Assigned Readings and Films:*** Dr. Guerra will often “warm up” the **discussion** by having students write down an idea, question, or one-line reaction to the reading assigned for that day and collect the answers. Sometimes she will organize discussion around these student-generated contributions. If necessary to check on or ensure that students are completing the reading and viewing assignments, Dr. Guerra reserves the right to **administer pop quizzes**.
 - When you are assigned to read a section of a book or a whole article, **you must bring the book or article in print form to class.**
 - When you are required to have seen a film prior to class, **you must see the film prior to class.**
 - Unless otherwise noted, **all films are available through Prof. Guerra's private Vimeo with a link and password only provided to members of the class the first week of class.**
 - **Books are required for purchase.** Scanned articles and portions of books will be **posted** to Canvas.

- ***Books required for purchase:***
 1. Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption & Resistance, 1959-1971* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
 2. Anna Veltfort, *Goodbye, My Havana: The Life & Times of a Gringa in Revolutionary Cuba* (Redwood Press, 2019).
 3. Laura Zoë Humphreys, *Fidel Between the Lines: Paranoia and Ambivalence in Late Socialist Cuban Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

Turning in assignments: Students are also required to **provide all assignments in hard copy** form by the date and time they are due, to the place noted below in each case.

Academic Honesty: *UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge:* “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

- **The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>)** specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

- **Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course.** Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

Making Up Work: Papers turned in late on the day due drop 1/3 of a grade (from A to A-). Papers turned in a day after the due date will be subject to a full grade penalty (from an A to a B) for each 24-hour period it is late. Extensions will be granted if they are requested at an appropriate time (that does *not* include the day the assignment is actually due!).

Use of laptops & digital devices: All cell phones must be turned OFF at the beginning of class. Laptops may only be used to take notes or when prompted, to access research needs on-line. Internet websurfing, texting, checking of email, or other tasks unrelated to note-taking during lecture, discussion or other classroom activities is not permitted. Dr. Guerra will confiscate the cell phone or laptop of any student found engaging in these activities during class and s/he may be asked to leave the classroom. A second violation will result in disciplinary sanction that includes the deduction of 5 points from the student's final grade for the class.

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/>

Counseling and Wellness Center: Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Writing Studio: The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Lectures in this course are designed to explain and contextualize the history we are studying; at times, lectures will focus on explaining and contextualizing the methods for gathering sources and interpreting them. All lectures will be interactive; some will be socratic.

Taking notes is not only a requirement of learning in history classes, it is a requirement for becoming a skilled historian:

- **You will not do well in the class if you merely listen and do not take notes.**
- **You are required to know and rely on the information provided in lectures in writing your papers and other assignments.**
- **If you do the reading, you will be able to fully engage** the professor, your peers and the learning tools (such as film clips, archival footage or images) presented in class. Your participation grade relies on your ability and willingness to discuss the readings in dialogue with other materials and ideas in real-time and in-person for this class. Do the reading. Be prepared.

Class Demeanor: Students are expected to arrive to class on time, stay the full class period, and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be kept to a minimum.

Grading Scale

A 94-100%	A- 90-93%	
B+ 87-89%;	B 84-86%	B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%	C 74-76%	C- 70-73%
D+ 68-69%	D 66-67%	D- 64-65% F >64%

Assignments, Requirements & Expectations

Class Requirements:

Attendance	10%
Participation	20%
Three Short Essays	45%
Final Essay	25%
_____	100%

Attendance (10%) is required at every class meeting; each class meeting is worth 3 points Requirements for attendance conform to university policies. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation.

Participation (20%): *All assigned reading for particular class time is required in order for individual learning and the class's overall success. Luckily, these are all great books!* **Participation in discussion is required of each student.** Students are expected to come prepared for each class, to engage of Dr. Guerra and others' ideas, to contribute comments and generally play an active role in generating or assessing knowledge. The readings assigned for this class, films for analysis and after-hours class meeting at UF's Special and Area Studies Collections at Library East are designed to be intellectually exciting, useful and provocative. *In the event that students fail to read for discussion, Dr. Guerra may administer pop quizzes in order to ascertain who has completed their reading and enable a fair assessment of each student's work.*

Participation in this class is defined and based on the following three elements:

- **active listening and willingness to respond** to comments, both from the instructor and/or class peers
- **vocal contributions to class discussions** of the assigned readings on days designated as such in the schedule. **Students must make specific references to the book, article or film we are discussing** for two reasons: first, in order to demonstrate that they have completed the work and second, because the study of history depends on close analysis of texts.
 - Failure to do the reading or to watch an assigned film will be apparent in the quality of the contribution: you should not try to get away with commenting on a book or article that you have not read as it will be obvious and you will receive fewer points that day as a result.

- Dr. Guerra will assign a maximum **weekly grade of 3 points per “discussion”** of the readings or films assigned below in the Course Schedule. Students who are quiet at the start of the semester, perhaps for a lack of experience speaking in public or other reasons, will be rewarded if they show a marked "up tick" in discussion participation. Points will be assigned **according to these criteria**:
 - **3 points: sustained engagement, clear evidence of having completed reading or reviewed materials assigned for discussion**
 - **2 points:** limited contribution, abstract or general reference to reading or materials assigned for discussion that shows the student has not completed the assignment or did not engage it carefully
 - **1 point:** limited contribution [including limitations created by late arrival to class] that shows that the student did very little of the assigned reading/viewing and is being careless
 - **0 points:** silences

Three Short Essays (45%): Students will submit three short essays of **650 to 900+ words, due Friday 9/10, Monday 10/11, and Monday 11/22**. Specific instructions and essay questions apply to each case and are given in the Course Schedule below. All essays must meet the criteria explained below and should use either the parenthetical form of citation or the footnote form, according to the Chicago Manual of Style.

- **Note on Writing:** For students unfamiliar with how to write and organize an essay, this course highly recommends that you buy this guide: Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing History. Written by an expert in liberal arts training, the book will not only help you write better essays and achieve better grades in this class but in all your classes with a writing component at UF.

Final Essay (25%): The final essay for the class will respond to a list of question options that Professor Guerra will provide in the last week of the course. Students **will respond to one of the three or more "prompts" or options** in the form of a 1200+ word-page essay that relies *especially* on evidence and examples drawn from the last weeks of class (this material is not covered by earlier writing assignments). One option of the prompts invites students to view the film "Juan de los Muertos" by Alejandro Bruges (Cuba, 2010) and read the corresponding Chapter 4 of Fidel Between the Lines, a required text in the class. We will not have reviewed either the film or the chapter prior to the exam/essay. Other options invite students to revisit prior material in the last Unit of the course and draw broader narratives for interpreting the meaning and legacies of the Cuban Revolution. **This exam-essay will serve as a kind of "take-home final" and will need to be submitted in hard copy form before or on the day assigned by the college for our Final Exam: December 14th by 5:30 PM.** Delivery should be made to Professor Guerra's office (218 Keene-Flint Hall) or by prior arrangement with her.

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE

Fidel Castro, Anti-Imperialism, the War against Batista and the Role of the United States

Note: Remember that all Mondays are double class periods.

Tu 8/24 Images & Imaginaries of the Cuban Revolution

Introduction: Syllabus, Expectations & Key Questions of the Course

Th 8/26 Period 1: Lecture. Rubrics of Identity: Race, Class, Gender, Anti-Imperialism, Nationalism & Revolution, 1868-2021

Period 2: Ideas Workshop. Reading assigned:

- Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption & Resistance, 1959-1971 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), pp. 1-36 [required book]
- Lisa B. Y. Calvente and Guadalupe García, “Image in Revolution: Articulating the Visual Arts and Becoming Cuban” in Imprints of Revolution, edited by Calvente and García (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 65-86. [Available as scanned document on Canvas]

Questions for discussion: 1. The introduction of Visions of Power argues that the book is an effort to overturn and interrogate “grand narratives” that traditionally explain the Cuban Revolution. What are these grand narratives? Do they need to be overturned? Why?
2. How do García and Calvente explain the impact and role of images in maintaining a stable revolutionary state in Cuba? How did imagery make Cubans “Cuban” under the Revolution?

Tu 8/31 Lecture. The Theft of Cuba's Democratic Destiny & the Rise of an Anti-Imperialist Nation

- **Reading assigned (3 historical documents):** *The Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution* (1901); Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (1955) and *Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement* (1956) in The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society, edited by Philip Brenner, et al (Grove Press, 1989), 30-41. [Available as scanned reading on Canvas].

Th 9/02 Period 1. Ideas Workshop. Reading assigned: Lillian Guerra, Heroes, Martyrs and Political Messiahs in Revolutionary Cuba, 1946-1958 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), Chapter 6 and Epilogue, 224-301. [Available as a scanned reading on Canvas]

Questions for discussion: Guerra uses a lot of photographs, taken in the Sierra Maestra and circulated by 26th of July Movement *clandestinos*, to argue that they created a living, breathing image of nation in the middle of a brutal war against the Batista dictatorship. On what strategies did this image of nation rely to succeed? Who made the case for it better, Fidel and the guerrillas, or the *clandestinos*?

Period 2. Discussion of film: “The Forgotten Revolution” directed by Glenn Gebhard (USA, 2015)
[Watch **before** class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: Why is this film titled “the forgotten revolution”? What is forgotten and why?

Tu 9/07 Lecture. Radicalization, US Hostility and Mass Support for Agrarian Reform, 1959-60

Th 9/09 Period 1: Ideas Workshop. Reading Assigned Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba, Chapters 2 & 3, pp. 75-134. [required book]

Questions for discussion: The Cuban government did not adopt Communism—either as the basis of its economic policies or as the basis of an alliance with the Soviet bloc against the United States—until the fall of 1960 through May of 1961. However, as Guerra shows, Cuba did begin to adopt a “with us or against” political culture long before then, as early as the fall of 1959. These two chapters cover precisely the process of those months, from July 1959 through May of 1960. *Looking carefully at that period as Guerra does, what factors would you argue are the most responsible for the radicalization of the Revolution and the creation of Cuba’s two-sided, political culture of siege?*

Period 2: Discussion of film. “Fidel” directed by Adriana Bosch (USA, 2000) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo]

Paper #1 DUE FRIDAY 9/10 BY 4 PM TO PROF. GUERRA (drop off in hard copy under Guerra’s office door or put in box marked for our class in front of door, 218 Keene Flint Hall).

- **Instructions:** Respond to the following prompt and its questions in essay form. Essay should be three to five pages in length. You must have a clear argument in your thesis statement and cannot

simply rely on a descriptive thesis. You must underline your thesis. Your essay should be at least 4 to 6 pages (650-900) words in length, double-spaced and typed in 12-point font. Only printed copies will be accepted.

- **Prompt:** Both Glenn Gebhard's film "The Forgotten Revolution" and Guerra's historical account of the war against the Batista dictatorship in Heroes, Martyrs and Political Messiahs rest on a similar argument. Gebhard and Guerra contend that the revolutionaries achieved a *moral* victory over the regime rather than a tactical, military defeat of Batista. *How did images play a role in this process? What images of Cuba and Batista did the revolutionaries attack and what images of Cuba and Cubans did they promote in order to gain support for the war?*

UNIT TWO

Turning the World Upside-Down, Building a Grassroots Dictatorship: The Revolution's Pivotal First Decade (1961-1971)

Tu 9/14 Lecture. The "New Man", Class Warfare and Consolidating a Communist Nation-State

**Th 9/16 Ideas Workshop. Period 1: Mini-Lecture. Literacy, Youth and the Fidel Generation
Period 2: Reading and short film assigned:**

- Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba, Chapters 4 & 5, pp. 135-197 [required book].
- "Maestra" directed by Catherine Murphy (2012). [Watch before class by streaming through UF Library at <https://ufl.kanopy.com/video/maestra-0>; if watching from off-campus, follow instructions on the library website to download a VPN / Cisco system software that will allow for the same degree of access]

Questions for discussion: 1. Guerra's chapters point out the contradictions between the image and the reality of Cuba's liberation process from 1961 to the mid-1960s. What are those contradictions? *Did* the image matter more than the reality of the revolutionary experience? (If so, to what end?)
2. How does Murphy's *Maestra* portray the 1961 Literacy Campaign? *Are Guerra and Murphy's portrayals at odds with one another?*

Tu 9/21 Discussion of film: "Memories of Underdevelopment" directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (Cuba, 1967) [Watch before class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: This movie was widely considered a break-out film for Cuba's government film industry (known as ICAIC, founded in March 1959, as discussed in Visions of Power). It also immediately gained international traction for the Revolution's claims of opening up—rather than shutting down—cultural freedom and artistic expression in Cuba. Today, *Memories of Underdevelopment* remains iconic of a time when, in fact, Cuba's youngest generation of creative thinkers and artists challenged the political expectations of *both* those of the Communist leadership and those of anti-Communist (mostly American) naysayers. *Indeed, ICAIC's filmmakers saw the film as promoting revolutionary values. How does it do this?*

Th 9/23 Period 1. Ideas Workshop. Lecture and discussion of short film. From "PM" to *Negrismo*: Race, Black Consciousness & the Problem of Unintended Dissidence among Revolutionary Youth, 1961-1968 ["PM" is available on Vimeo; Watch before class--it's only 20 minutes long!]

Period 2. Discussion of film: "Death of a Bureaucrat" directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (Cuba, 1966) [Watch before class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: This film is a study in the absurdity of Cuba's massively expanded bureaucracy. Once again, Gutiérrez Alea seemingly gave voice to voiceless citizens and got away with it: both the Communist Youth and the Communist Party-led state found similar complaints, when lodged

elsewhere in the public or private sphere, intolerable and even counterrevolutionary. *What are the critiques that this film launches against the state? Why do you think they were officially acceptable in the revolutionary context of the mid-1960s?*

Tu 9/28 Ideas Workshop. Reading assigned: [Available as uploaded files or scans in Canvas]

- Rachel Hynson, "Count, Capture and Re-educate: The Campaign to Rehabilitate Cuba's Female Sex Workers, 1959-1966," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24: 1 (January 2015), 125-153.
- Lillian Guerra, "Gender Policing, Homosexuality and the New Patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965-1970," *Social History* 35: 3 (August 2010), 268-289.
- Denise F. Blum, Cuban Youth and Revolutionary Values: Educating the New Socialist Citizen (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), pp. 41-71.

Questions for discussion: Why did the revolutionary state identify homosexuals and sex workers as national security threats? How did their elimination, from Cuban officials' perspective, ensure the triumph of "The New Man in Socialism"?

Th 9/30 Period 1: Lecture. The Revolutionary Offensive to "El Caso Padilla" & Beyond: 1968-1971
Period 2: Discussion of film: "Compañeras y Compañeros" directed by David C. Stone (USA, 1971).

[Watch before class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: Made and financed by both the Weather Underground and the Cuban state, Stone's film "takes a side" in the Cold War and breaks with the norms of traditional documentary films by refusing a pretense of objectivity. Thus, it makes an argument about the Cuban Revolution. *What is that argument? Is it convincing? Why or why not?*

Tu 10/05 Ideas workshop. In-class film viewing of archival films made by David C. Stone in 1969, Cuban Revolution Collection, Yale University Manuscripts & Archives. Clips edited, subtitled by Guerra. [Available for consultation upon request]

Th 10/07 Period 1: Discussion of reading: Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba, Chapters 9-10, pp. 290-352 [required book].

Questions for discussion: Today, most scholars of Cuba and most Cubans agree that the 1970 *Zafra de los Diez Millones* set Cuba back economically by more than three decades. Its political effects were so vast that discussing them remains largely taboo on the island. In these chapters, Guerra contends that at no other point did image matter more than reality to the stability of the Communist State than during the Revolutionary Offensive and the Zafra: the failure of reality to match Fidel's inflated image of Communism's potential precipitated an unprecedented political and ideological crisis. *What do you think the lessons of the Zafra were?*

Period 2: Ideas Workshop. In-class viewing and discussion: "Fidel" directed by Saul Landau (USA/Cuba, 1969).

Paper #2 DUE MONDAY 10/11 BY 4 PM TO PROF. GUERRA (drop off in hard copy under Guerra's office door or put in box marked for our class in front of door, 218 Keene Flint Hall).

Instructions: Respond to the following prompt and its questions in essay form. You must have a clear argument in your thesis statement and cannot simply rely on a descriptive thesis. You must underline your thesis. Your essay should be at least 4 to 6 pages or 650-900+ words in length, double-spaced and typed in 12-point font. Only printed copies will be accepted.

- **Prompt:** As Professor Guerra argued in her lecture on Agrarian Reform, unanimity behind the Revolution's leader, Fidel Castro, soon replaced unity as precondition for inclusion as a revolutionary citizen. Yet intrinsic to the successful consolidation of the revolutionary state under Fidel Castro was the belief that the participation in the Revolution was redemptive, rehabilitative, even religiously purifying. The majority of Cubans, at least until 1968, found sufficient evidence

of this in either the *image* of change or the *reality* of societal transformation that they experienced in a positive way. Using the assigned readings from Unit Two and one or more films, explain how the Revolution “turned the world upside down” for supporters and empowered them to believe its promises would be fulfilled. *Who (young people, blacks, workers, women, peasants, etc.) most supported the Revolution in your view and why? How do the readings, archival, documentary and/or fictional films we have studied reveal this?*

Tu 10/12 Discussion of film: “Conducta Impropia” directed by Nestor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez (France, 1984) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo].

Questions for discussion: The film “Conducta Impropia” links the repression of homosexuality to a generalized system of censoring and policing knowledge of Cuban reality, arguing that both are essential to maintaining the Cuban state. What aspects of this film most surprised you? Are there aspects of Cuban reality that it deliberately left out? How does Veltfort’s memoir contribute to or contradict its portrayals?

Th 10/14 Period 1 & 2: Ideas Workshop. Reading Assigned: Anna Veltfort, Goodbye, My Havana: The Life & Times of a Gringa in Revolutionary Cuba (Redwood Press, 2019), ALL [required book]

Questions for discussion: Unlike most memoirs, Veltfort has created a graphic novel in order to bring to life her experiences as a revolutionary and unintended dissident in Cuba. *How does her use of graphic art provide a sense of experience that word-based, traditional forms of memoir and story-telling do not?*

UNIT THREE

Sovietization, Gender Struggles & the Mariel Boatlift, 1972-1989

Tu 10/19 Lecture. Los Años Rojos: Cuba Enters its Soviet Age, 1971-1980

Th 10/21 Period 1. Lecture. Women, Education, Sexuality & Culture in the Soviet Age, 1972-1980

Period 2. Discussion of film: “Portrait of Teresa” directed by Humberto Solás (Cuba, 1979) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo].

Questions for discussion: Unlike many of his ICAIC counterparts, Solás became known for making films that were not only critical but much more contemplative of life under the Revolution. *How does this film depict daily life for women in 1970s Cuba? Is the “state” a character in this film or is it absent? What is the image of Cuba that this film imparts? Is it a different image than that of the movies by Gutiérrez Alea that we have seen?*

Tu 10/26 Ideas Workshop. Reading assigned: Michael Bustamante, Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), Chapter 6 [[Available as uploaded files or scanned document in Canvas]

Questions for discussion: Bustamante takes on the extremely painful and touchy era of the first visits of Cuban exiles to revolutionary, fully socialist Cuba in the closing years of the 1970s. What surprised you about the stories of these “returns”? What does the inclusion of this once taboo and still largely unknown history teach you about the Cuban Revolution that you didn’t know before?

Th 10/28 Period 1: Lecture. “We are happy here”: Marielitos, Cuban Exiles & Identity as a Site of Trauma

Period 2: Discussion of film: “Beyond the Sea” directed by Lisandro Pérez Rey (USA, 2003) [Watch **before** class at: <https://www.lisandroperezrey.com/cuba-trilogy>]

Questions for discussion: Despite the many traumas endured by the nearly 125,000 mostly young Cubans who courageously decided to leave Cuba over the five-month course of the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, *marielitos* were largely stigmatized both in Cuba and in the United States, especially among their would-be peers in South Florida. How does this film capture the diversity of these experiences? How does the

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Class Meetings: Tu 10:40-11:30 & Th 10:40-12:35

Office: Keene-Flint 218
Class Location: MAT 0006

medium of documentary filmmaking, in this case, provide entry points to the past that would otherwise remain hidden?

Tu 11/02 Ideas Workshop. Lecture. Cuban Art and the Craft of Resistance, 1970s-1980s

UNIT FOUR

The Special Period and Cuba's Permanent Condition of National Crisis, 1989-2016

Th 11/04 Period 1: Discussion of film: "Alicia in Wondertown" directed by Daniel Díaz Torres (Cuba, 1991) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: Censored almost immediately upon completion, the film's allegories are multiple and rich readings of how most Cubans might well have understood their lives in the late Soviet era. *What are these allegories? What images are the most memorable and symbolic? What do they explain?*

Period 2: Discussion of reading: Laura Zoë Humphreys, Fidel Between the Lines: Paranoia and Ambivalence in Late Socialist Cuban Cinema (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), Chapter 3, pp. 90-126. [required book]

Questions for discussion: Humphreys characterizes Cuba's late socialist policy toward filmmaking as "repressive toleration". *What limits did Alice in Wondertown defy? Is Humphreys' term useful?*

Tu 11/09 Lecture. Culture, Art and Cuba's Internet Nation: Sites of a New Imaginary, 1991-Today

Th 11/11 NO CLASS. Veterans' Day.

Tu 11/16 Discussion of film: "Strawberry and Chocolate" directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (Cuba, 1993) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo]

Questions for discussion: Critically and internationally acclaimed, this film was also the first Cuban movie to receive an Oscar nomination for picture of the year. Considered a radical, frontal attack on the state's myths and historic taboos against discussing its own repression (of gays, writers, etc.), the film also represented a turning point: afterward, the Cuban government began a process of coopting—rather than condemning—the past, in part because this film's revelations and truths had become (by 1993) hard to deny. Indeed, some would argue that it could not be made in Cuba today. *What makes this film radical? Does it also conform to the limits of criticism that past movies by Gutiérrez Alea (such as "Memories of Underdevelopment" and "Death of a Bureaucrat") uphold?*

Th 11/18 Discussion of reading and short films: Humphreys, Fidel Between the Lines, Chapters 1-2, pp. 27-89 and "Monte Rouge" directed by Eduardo del Llano (Cuba, 2007) [Watch **before** class on Vimeo]

Paper #3 DUE MONDAY 11/22 BY 4 PM TO PROF. GUERRA (drop off in hard copy under Guerra's office door or put in box marked for our class in front of door, 218 Keene Flint Hall).

Instructions: Respond to the following prompt and its questions in essay form. You must have a clear argument in your thesis statement and cannot simply rely on a descriptive thesis. You must underline your thesis. Your essay should be at least 4 to 6 pages or 650-900+ words in length, double-spaced and typed in 12-point font. Only printed copies will be accepted

Tu 11/23 Lecture. Blackness, Slavery and Obama: A New Transnational Imaginary, 1997-2021

Note: Subtitled music videos by Escuadrón Patriota used in class can be consulted on Canvas.

11/24-11/28 THANKSGIVING BREAK. DON'T FORGET TO WATCH *BARRIO CUBA* and *BUSCANDOTE HAVANA* OVER BREAK!

Tu 11/30 Discussion of films: “Barrio Cuba” directed by Humberto Solás (Cuba, 2005) [Watch before class on Vimeo] and “Buscándote Havana” directed by Alina Rodríguez (Cuba, Colombia 2007) [Watch before class at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2-IvT0ORnw>]

Questions for discussion: Both of these films depict the massive phenomenon of illegal migration within Cuba’s borders, mostly to Havana, by residents of Oriente, Cuba’s poorest province. Havana residents hatefully mock them as “*palestinos*” [Palestinians]. Yet while “Barrio Cuba” was made by ICAIC and distributed, the student-made documentary “Buscándote Havana” was banned. *How differently do these films reflect the “otherness” of Palestinos? How does “Barrio Cuba” attempt to link the marginality of all its characters from revolutionary society and redeem them in the end?*

UNIT FIVE

Cuba Today and Tomorrow

Th 12/02 Period 1: From Fidel to Raúl to...Miguel Díaz-Canel? The Return of the Security State

Period 2. Discussion of short film: “Camionero” directed by Luis Najmías (Cuba, 2013) [Watch before on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1YritXHA2E>]

Questions for Discussion: In 2009, when Raúl Castro formally took power, the Cuban government ended the use of “country schools”, a staple of the Soviet Age of the 1970s and 80s, ostensibly meant to develop “a communist personality in every child”. This short, independent film indicts their purposes and their impact in often horrifying ways. Like most independently made Cuban films, it is censored and taboo in Cuba. *What is the role of the audience of this film? Having now seen many Cuban films both censored and officially sponsored, what do you think its purpose is? This film, like virtually all the films we watched, was not intended for commercial gain. How does that effect its content? Does the fact that this film and other films are not commercial make them different from Hollywood films?*

Tu 12/07 LAST DAY OF CLASS! Artists' Precedents and the Mass Protests of 2020 to July 11, 2021: Alternative and Hidden Images of Cuba Today and Tomorrow

FINAL ESSAY OPTIONS WILL BE PROVIDED ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS. ESSAYS ARE DUE IN HARD COPY BY 5:30 PM TO PROFESSOR GUERRA'S OFFICE ON DECEMBER 14TH.