

LAH 5933
The Modern Caribbean
Graduate Seminar
Winter 2022

Introduction and Scholarly Goals

By nature, a graduate seminar seeks to generate discussion and debate on a variety of approaches to the research, study and writing of history. This class provides opportunities for specialists of Latin American history to gain comparative knowledge of Caribbean history and historiography. One of the key goals of the class is to prepare current graduate students to take their doctoral qualifying exams and consequently, to master the “narrative archs” sufficiently that they can go on to teach or research relevant history and themes.

First launched in the 1940s and 50s professionally and conceptually by anticolonial intellectuals (many of whom hailed from the Caribbean itself, such as Eric Williams and C.L.R. James), scholarship on the Caribbean has since become a central axis for studying a wide array of historical realities and systems. These include the roots of European-led capitalism in the system of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism as well as radical thought and political change. In the last thirty years especially, historians have increasingly identified the Caribbean as a critical space for the development of revolution and ideas of freedom, unshackled to the euro-centric premise that Liberalism first emerged among white intellectuals and anti-monarchists in Europe or among the mostly pro-slavery or slave-owning elites who launched anti-imperialist revolution in the Thirteen Colonies.

As this course’s list of selected works for assignment reflects, scholars of the Caribbean have generally adopted interdisciplinary approaches to analyzing the past as much as the present. Increasingly committed to accessing the unwritten, undocumented, destroyed or deliberately forgotten archives of slaves, people of color and the Caribbean’s other marginalized majorities, historians have adopted and incorporated both the methods and theories of other disciplines, especially literature and anthropology, since the 1970s. Today, historians of Caribbean societies shaped by contemporary authoritarianism, US military interventions, the Cold War and twentieth-century dictatorships are beneficiaries of these efforts. In the absence of open access to state archives (or, in some cases, the archives themselves), we have broadened the definition and scope of our approaches to primary sources—becoming detectives, journalists and midwives to a past whose resilience in everyday life has made its importance impossible to deny.

Expectations and Seminar Requirements

Students are expected to know the broad historical chronologies of the countries studied as the purpose of our meetings is to examine scholarly approaches to events, people, periods and contexts, not to discuss a particular sequence of events. (For this reason, the recommended texts of Caribbean political and economic history listed below should serve as points of reference to the larger concerns of later assigned readings.) However, no-one should be “ashamed” or worried about raising issues of chronology or clarification of events and their importance in class. We are all here to learn and the first step in that process is humility before the vast knowledge and exciting revelations about contemporary realities that the study of history entails.

Participation

Expectations for active, engaged participation and listening are high; silence is not an acceptable response to the readings or to peers' or Professor Guerra's questions. We shall strive, however, to develop an intimate, dynamic but also intellectually contemplative community based on mutual learning and relaxed discussion, not competition for space on the stage. Students called on to lead or warm up discussion at the start of a class should rely on the notes that they took (or the writing that they did) in advance to present their thoughts. There is neither a "trick" nor a "formula" to doing this well and the seminar format is how we develop our speaking, organizational and improvisational skills, often through "on-site experimentation". The quality of students' oral presentations, when called on or during the course of a discussion, should improve over the semester. Any concerns students have they should address to Prof. Guerra outside class or, if helpful to all, in class.

Attendance is mandatory at all seminar meetings. Absences without medical or other relevant documentation will result in the student receiving a mark of zero for the missed class. Violations of the honor code, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from the program and/or university.

Assignments: Writing and Participation

There are **fourteen meetings** and thus fourteen reading assignments for this class:

- Students must write a **600-900 word response** paper to **nine of these assignments** and will choose which weeks on which to write.
- We will **sign up for preferred weeks** at the first meeting.
- On weeks for which a student has chosen to write, the **student should be prepared** to warm up the discussion **with a 5-10 minute presentation** on the book: for this activity, the student will rely on what they have written. No additional work is expected.

Response papers are about 2.5 pages in length. These response papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point font with 1" margins. Only hard copies are accepted. Regular response papers are due at the time of class when the reading on which the student has written will be discussed. The goal of writing responses before class (rather than after) is to produce independent thought in advance of communal discussion, not a composite of ideas derived from class.

Because there should be plenty of time and opportunities for students to plan the dates when they will be reading and writing for class, there will be no extensions unless an emergency, illness or unexpected crisis comes up. That said, the purpose of this seminar is not to "test" an already existing set of analytical skills but to develop those skills. Consequently, Professor Guerra will evaluate students' progress and anticipate increasingly sharp, creative and improved writing over time. Barring unexpected obstacles or external distractions (such as obligations to the department or a conference), Professor Guerra will return students' responses the week after students submit them. This will ensure that the students can return to their original response essays and "fill in" analytical, theoretical or other gaps on their own as well as revisit—using their notes from

seminar—the material. This will help them to create an archive of reference notes for future study.

Criteria for Evaluation of Response Papers

Excellent response essays should creatively and selectively critique as well as engage a scholarly work's approach or content. They should:

- first, begin with a summary of the book's arguments and highlights;
- second, discuss its findings in relationship to the quality and type of sources used;
- and third, critically determine the book's contributions to the field and/or its limitations.

As analytical responses to the reading, essays should be well-written, grammatically clear and representative of what the student considers essential, provocative, exceptional or remarkable aspects of the author's evidence, use of evidence, method of analysis, argument and/or narrative style. While students may not rely on published book reviews to supply them with models of how to write these responses, exploring and learning how the profession evaluates and frames its scholarship is greatly encouraged. Feel free to research how the field framed or received any particular assigned work prior to writing response essays.

Grades

- nine 2-3 page response essays 50%
 - attendance 10%
 - participation in seminar 40%
- TOTAL: 100%

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: CUBA

1/05 Introduction to Caribbean History: Goals, Paths & Aspirations

1/12 Revolutionary Paths & Promises in the 1890s

Reading: Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, Racial Migrations: New York City and the Revolutionary Politics of the Spanish Caribbean (Princeton University Press, 2021).

1/19 Black Consciousness, Equality & the Limits of the Nation

Reading: Aline Helg, Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912 (UNC Press, 1995).

1/26 Black Consciousness, Equality & the Limits of Revolution

Reading: Alejandro de la Fuente, A Nation for All (UNC Press, 2001).

2/02 Cuba "From Within": Communism and Fidel's Grassroots Dictatorship

Reading: Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption & Resistance, 1959-1971 (UNC Press, 2013).

NOTE: Prof. Guerra will be traveling to the Cuban Research Institute Conference in Miami and will not attend seminar. Leaders will be selected in advance of the class to discuss the book.

2/09 Liberation through Repression? Investigations into Inconvenient Histories of Cuba

Reading: Rachel Hynson, Laboring for the State: Women, Family & Work in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959-1971 (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

2/16 Archival Workshop: Spanish Republican Exiles: Two Perspectives

Reading: Ariel Lambe, No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Anti-Fascism and the Spanish Civil War (UNC Press, 2019), Introduction (pp. 1-22), Chapters 2-4 (pp. 54-130).

NOTE: Daniel Fernández, Candidate for the Doctorate in Latin American History at UF, **will join our class** from 2:00 to 3:30 to discuss his research and selections TBA from his dissertation, titled *Weaponizing Solidarity: Spanish Exiles, Identity and the Cuban Revolution, 1902-1976*.

2/23 Memory vs. History and History as Memory in Transnational Cuba

Reading: Michael Bustamante, Cuban Memory Wars: Retrospective Politics in Revolution and Exile (UNC Press, 2021).

NOTE: Dr. Michael Bustamante, the Bacardí Chair in Cuban History at the University of Miami, **will join our seminar**, answering questions and guiding the discussion.

3/02 Archival Workshop: Holy Grails of Cuban History? Communist Records

Reading: William Kelly, a Candidate for the Doctorate in Latin American History at Rutgers University, will be leading a discussion of his research experience (15 months in Cuba!) and selected chapters from his dissertation, titled *Revolución es Reconstruir: Housing, Everyday Life and Revolution in Cuba, 1959-1988*.

Spring break 3/05 to 3/13

UNIT TWO: THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

3/16 Trujillo and the Theatre State

Reading: Lauren Derby, The Dictator's Seduction (Duke University Press, 2009).

3/23 Trujillismo, Violence, Racism and the Anti-Haitian Nation

Reading: Richard Turits, Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime and Modernity in Dominican History (Stanford University Press, 2004).

3/30 Self-Hate or Self-Empowerment: Race Denial and Nationality in the DR

Reading: April Mayes, The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race and Dominican National Identity (University Press of Florida, 2015).

UNIT THREE: PUERTO RICO

4/06 Colonial Continuities, Radical Communities: Labor & Gender Struggles

Reading: Eileen Findlay, Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920. (Duke University Press, 1999).

4/13 US Imperialism & the Silencing of the Puerto Rican Nation

Prof. Lillian Guerra

Keene-Flint 218

Office Hours: Mondays 11 AM-1 PM

Reading: Nelson Denis, War Against All Puerto Ricans (Bold Type Books, 2016).

Seminar Mtgs: W 3:00-6:00

lilguerra92@gmail.com

4/20 New Approaches, New Archives: Culture & the Unsilencing of Racism

Reading: Yeidy Rivero, Tuning Out Blackness: Race and Nation in the History of Puerto Rican Television (Duke University Press, 2005).

YOU MADE IT!!!

¡¡¡FELICIDADES!!!