



Jubilant Sandinistas in Managua, July 17, 1979

Research Seminar on Central American Revolutions

LAH 4930

Fall 2024

Monday, 1:55-4:55pm (Periods 7-9) / TUR 2350

Dr. Heather Vrana

Office: 364 Grinter Hall

Email: hvrana@ufl.edu

Zoom meeting ID: 487 640 3433

Office hours: Monday, 11:30am – 12:30pm, Weds 2 – 5pm, and by appointment

This research seminar explores the revolutions that occurred in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador between 1960 and 1996 by studying the groups and individuals who formed the many organizations who waged them and those who opposed them. We will explore questions like: Who joined revolutionary movements? Why? How were military and paramilitary groups organized? What roles did civilians play in these conflicts? When and why did the wars end? What roles were played by international actors? How are the wars remembered today and what roles do these memories play in contemporary politics? We will come to understand how and why revolutions occur and explore the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and place in the course of revolutions. Along the way, we will introduce the historiography of social movements and revolutions and you will produce a substantial research paper based on primary source evidence. This paper will be related to a topic within the scope of social movements and revolution in Central America (or the Central American diaspora in the United States). This research project will provide experience in analyzing documents and in developing historical interpretation and argument.

The goals of the course are:

- To study the causes, historical contexts, and effects of revolutions in Central America and the Americas, more broadly.
- To write a major research paper using historical methods and theories of history.
- To gain and share insight into the uses of history in contemporary politics.

The course is designed to satisfy the senior seminar requirement for history majors. In addition to learning about the subject matter of the course, students will gain experience in the philosophy, methodology, and practice of history. By studying primary and secondary documents and by writing a short paper as well as a longer research paper, students will become equipped to undertake advanced work in history or in other research-related fields.

Required Books

- Joaquin Chavez, *Poets and Prophets of the Resistance: Intellectuals and the Origins of El Salvador's Civil War*
- *Matilde Zimmermann, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*
- Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954–1985*
- *Mateo Jarquín, *The Sandinista Revolution: A Global Latin American History*
- *Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*
- Jennifer Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*
- *Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers*
- Roberto Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas*

* Denotes books that are available as E-Books through UF Libraries (You may still wish to buy paper copies, but these are available in a pinch or if you prefer to read on screen.)

Format

This course is designed to be more demanding than the average lecture-based history course. As a seminar, the course requires consistent preparation and active participation by students before and during class every week. Because class meetings are relatively few in number, attendance is required. You must arrive to class on time. Late arrivals are disruptive and conspicuous.

Periodically, we will do small workshops in our class meetings. You will determine what workshop topics you think will most helpful. In the past, students have chosen: How to research effectively, Personal statements and abstracts, How to structure big assignments (chronological, thematic, others), How to learn the historiography of a subject, Alternative methodologies like oral histories, Applicable skills from history to other disciplines... you can choose these and others. We will talk about this in Week 1 and 3.

Like all classes at university, the assumption is that you are here to learn from the material, the professor, and your classmates; disagreement and lively debate are to be expected—please be mindful of the effect of your actions and words on others.

A significant portion of the semester will be devoted to individual research. There is no midterm and no final exam. I will assess your engagement with the reading by the quality of your contribution to class discussion and the quality of your weekly pre-circulated Discussion Questions.

[Note: If necessary, I may update the syllabus in the course of the semester. If changes are made, the updated syllabus will be announced in class and on the course Canvas site.]

Course Requirements

<u>Attendance and Participation (including Discussion Board & Presentation)</u>	20% (total)
Attendance and Participation	10% (100 pts)
Pre-Circulated Weekly Discussion Questions (8 x 5pts)	4% (40 pts)
Presentation	6% (60 pts)
<u>Oral history interview OR Object of memory analysis</u>	10% (100 pts)
<u>5-pg. Primary Source Analysis Paper</u>	15% (150 pts)
<u>Research Project</u>	55% (total)
3-pg. Prospectus	10% (100 pts)
Draft	20% (200 pts)
Final Paper	25% (250 pts)

Assignment Descriptions

Attendance and Participation

Read the book each week and come to class ready to talk about it.

Discussion Board [or Other Alternative TBD]

We will have a robust Discussion Board on Canvas that runs parallel to our class conversations. Every week when we are reading a book, you are responsible for posting by Sunday, 6pm. Every post should include a comment on the reading connected to a quote or passage (with page number noted in parentheses) and a question for your classmates OR a detailed response to a question posed by one of your classmates.

Presentation

Every student will lead a class discussion (in groups of two) of an assigned book. Your presentation should include some background on the author, a summary of the book's argument, a summary of the book's chapters, a discussion of the book's sources, and connection to other books that we have read or prior discussions. We will sign up for presentations on Week 1.

Oral history interview

If you choose this option, you will draft 5 questions for and conduct a 15-minute interview with someone in any language about an historical event they witnessed.

Object of memory reflection (600 words)

If you choose this option, you will find an item from your life and connect it with broader historical events, using it as a material primary source.

Five-page Primary Source Analysis Paper

See pg. 8 of the syllabus for a detailed discussion of this assignment.

Prospectus

For this assignment, you will draft a 3-page proposal for your final research paper. See pg. 9 of the syllabus for a detailed discussion of this assignment.

Paper Draft

This is your first draft of the final paper. It should be a nearly complete draft of your final paper with complete sentences, clear paragraphs and organization, footnotes, and bibliography. The better your first draft, the easier your work in finishing the final paper. See pg. 9 of the syllabus for more detail.

Final Paper

This is your final draft of the final paper. It should follow the guidelines described in the assignment for the final paper. See pg. 9 of the syllabus for more detail.

Grade Scale

A	930	C	730
A-	900	C-	700
B+	870	D+	670
B	830	D	630
B-	800	D-	600
C+	770		

Course Policies

Accessibility and accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 or www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which should be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students should initiate this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

We will work together to make this classroom and syllabus accessible. Please let me know how I can support you by increasing accessibility and I, too, will proactively seek opportunities to make assignments, discussion, the classroom itself, and technologies more accessible.

Cell phones, etc.

Cell phone use during class is distracting. Please also refrain from computer use that is not related to the course, as it distracts you and your classmates. Of course, I understand that emergencies arise.

Honor Code & Pledge

In 1995 the UF student body enacted an [honor code](#) and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students. Undisclosed (that is, uncited) use of ChatGPT or other LLM-based chatbots and Generative AI amounts to plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, and academic dishonesty.

The Honor Pledge

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be notified when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

Course Schedule

Week 1: August 26: Intro

In-Class Readings from W. George Lovell, Ignacio Martín-Baró, and Roger Lancaster

Week 2: September 2 (Labor Day Holiday): Origins

Read Joaquin Chavez, *Poets and Prophets of the Resistance: Intellectuals and the Origins of El Salvador's Civil War* to discuss in Week 3

Week 3: September 9: Ideology and Leadership

Read Matilde Zimmermann, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*

Week 4: September 16: Labor – 5 pg. Primary Source Analysis Due

Read Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954–1985*

Week 5: September 23: The Military

Read Jennifer Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy*

Week 6: September 30: No Class – Individual Meetings – Oral History or Object of Memory Due

Week 7: October 7: Solidarity

Read Mateo Jarquín, *The Sandinista Revolution: A Global Latin American History*

Week 8: October 14: The Cold War and the Role of the US – Prospectus Due / Prospectus Peer Editing Workshop

Read Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Updated Ed.)

Week 9: October 21: Historical Memory

Read Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala*

Also read Heather Vrana, “Revolutionary Transubstantiation in ‘The Republic of Students’: Death Commemoration in Urban Guatemala from 1977 to the Present,” *Radical History Review* no. 114 (2012): 66-90.

Week 10: October 28: No Class – Research

Week 11: November 4: No Class – Research

Week 12: November 11: Veterans’ Day Holiday (Individual Meetings as needed)

Week 13: November 18: In-Class Film TBD – Rough Draft of Paper Due

THANKSGIVING

Week 14: December 2: Legacies of War / Guest Speaker Panel

Read Roberto Lovato, *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas*

Final Exam Period: Presentations

Final Papers Due by the end of the Final Exam Period (Check UF Schedule)

Tips for Effective Book Discussions in History Classes

1. Organization
 - Start big, then go small
2. Presentation
 - Start big, then go small (again)
 - Who is the author? Where do they work? What else have they published? Where did they do their PhD?
 - What kinds of primary and secondary sources did the author use in their research?
 - Do they refer to any key theoretical terms or frameworks?
 - How is the book organized and what is each chapter about?
 - How are they similar or different to other books/authors we've read?
3. Asking Good Questions
 - Avoid yes/no questions if possible
 - Make connections across the readings
 - Include page numbers or otherwise specifically refer to the text
4. Answering Questions Well
 - Answer with more than yes/no
 - Find examples or illustrations of your answer in the text
 - Answers can also include follow-up questions
5. Building Community
 - Everyone will get something different out of a book, so learn from each other
 - Listen and respond to each other's questions and comments
 - Refer back to questions by your classmates, even from other weeks
 - If you usually talk a lot, remember to step back and make room for others
 - Likewise, if you are usually quiet, take the opportunity to step up and say more
6. Returning to the Text
 - Go back to a passage that sparked your interest (include a pg. #)
 - Go back to a passage that seemed really important
 - Go back to a passage that you didn't understand
7. Not all books are created equal
 - The same question might create a great discussion of one book but not another
 - Sometimes books do not lend themselves to good discussion
8. Curiosity
 - Let curiosity guide your questions and discussion
9. Taking breaks
 - If a discussion topic is not getting a lot of interest, let it go
 - Call for a break when you think it's time – we'll usually break halfway through
10. Practice
 - Good discussions take practice and trust over time with a group

Primary Sources for 5 pg. Primary Source Analysis Paper

This paper will address one major primary source or a few shorter primary sources on revolutions in Central America. There are numerous sources in English, Spanish, Mayan languages, and Nahuat that are available online for you to use. To simplify the process and focus your attention on analysis (rather than research), I have gathered some good sources for you here. You may also write on a primary source that you find (with my approval).

For this assignment, you should choose one (1) long primary source or a few short primary sources and analyze it/them using the 5Ps (Person, Place, Plan, Public, and Purpose), ultimately illustrating how and what it can tell us about revolutions in Central America.

English

- Various sources in translation from *The Guatemala Reader* (available online through UF Libraries)
- Manlio Argueta, *One Day of Life* (a novella in translation, also available in Spanish)
- Newspaper reporting on the revolutions in *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*
- Joan Didion, *Salvador* (a novella by a famous US author)
- Various texts in translation from *Anti-colonial Texts from Central American Student Movements* (UF Libraries)
- *The Nicaragua Reader: Documents of a Revolution Under Fire* (UF Libraries)
- Ignacio Martín-Baró, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology* (UF Libraries)

Spanish

- Roque Dalton's poems (also widely available in English translation)
- Speeches by or interviews with Daniel Ortega, Tomás Borge, Sergio Ramírez, Dora María Tellez, or other Sandinista leadership
- Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), Archivo de Inforpress Centroamericana, Recortes de periódicos y documentos:
<https://cirma.org.gt/glifos/collection/GT-CIRMA-AH-002?nav=GT-CIRMA-AH-002-002-001>
- Documentales en línea sobre El Salvador o Nicaragua, Archivo Mesoamericano > Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (MUPI) o Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica (IHNCA)

Research Paper & Project

3-pg. Prospectus	10% (100 pts)
Rough Draft	20% (200 pts)
Final Paper	25% (250 pts)

Prospectus: For this assignment, you will offer an initial overview or proposal of your final research project. You will write a short prospectus of about 3 pages (roughly 900 words) that achieves all these basic tasks: proposes a working title for your project, compiles a beginning bibliography with primary (3) and secondary sources (5), situates your research within existing scholarship through a brief historiography/literature review, asserts your sense of the importance of your project, and outlines your research methodology.

Be sure to include the following in your Prospectus:

- a working title for your project;
- a statement of your research question(s);
- a beginning bibliography with primary (3) and secondary sources (5);
- a brief historiography/literature review:
 - o the relationship between your project and published scholarship;
 - o your sense of the importance of your project;
- a statement of your research methodology

Rough Draft: For the Draft paper, your submission should be the better part of your paper (say around 4,000 words), include a correctly formatted bibliography, and comprise complete sentences in large part and, if necessary, a detailed outline of unwritten sections.

Final Paper: For the Final paper, your submission should be approximately 6,000 words (a little bit longer is fine; shorter is not ideal) and include all the elements listed below. Please include a word count at the end of your paper.

Be sure to include:

- a title for your project;
- an introductory paragraph that states clearly:
 - o your research question(s);
 - o a statement of your research methodology;
- a section of your paper with historiography/literature review:
 - o the relationship between your project and published scholarship;
 - o your assessment of the importance of your project;
 - o reference to at least two of the books we've read together;
- a detailed engagement with your research question(s) and an answer to it/them;
- a bibliography with primary and secondary sources, divided into these sections, and organized alphabetically by author's last name.