

Transnational History of Gender & Sexuality

LAH 5934, AMH 5930, EUH 5934, WHO 5932

University of Florida, FALL 2024

INTRODUCTION: *Sexuality, like gender, is both intensely individualistic and intimate. Still, no individual expression or understanding of either is ever genuinely free of the framework of "honor" (code of cultural valorization) or power structure that surrounds us.* Honor forms the fabric of daily life in different socio-political systems of power that reward conformity in both symbolic and material ways. This course defines gender as a central, fundamental way of signifying relations of power and ascribing not just meaning, but value and importance to sexual difference and ways of being. Similarly, this course defines sexuality as an active, rather than passive, means of expressing identity, creating an individual's place in social units like the family and connecting to imagined concepts of community such as empire and nation.

This seminar assumes that neither gender nor sexuality is a palpable reality but an individually and collectively invented idea that we constantly construct in our daily lives and interactions. The same can be said of the nation. A nation can be understood as the process by which different groups of people, often with conflicting interests and radically different goals, imagine a sense of belonging to a larger "whole" and then, proceed to develop criteria for limiting, policing and admitting new members to that whole.

While anchored in Latin American histories, this seminar adopts a "transnational approach" in two main ways. First, we will be studying the emergence of the cultural expressions and legal, social and political policing of gendered identities, starting with the binary of femininity versus masculinity, **in comparative historical and geographic contexts.** These include colonial Mexico, US Empire-building at the turn of the twentieth century, modern Cuba, Brazil, the Soviet Union, South Africa and Nicaragua. Second, we will also study the dialectical flow of certain gender identities and concepts **through ideological exchanges, institutions and the marketing of goods.**

Why study both imperial and post-imperial contexts? Race is the simple answer. Much of the modern geographic division of power developed hand-in-hand with the enslavement of 12 million Africans and the attending expansion in commodity production (like sugar) that laid the foundations of European and American wealth. Many of our readings trace the origin and expression of false but useful beliefs about the inferiority of peoples of non-European or mixed racial heritage. They also demonstrate how racialized notions of inferiority or superiority became embedded in hierarchies of access to power based on gender—specifically legal and social notions of shame, honor, and degrees to which non-whiteness carried an indelible stain of sexual immorality or simply, chaos.

Without understanding how pre-colonial and colonial gender identities developed in relationship to racial hierarchies and empire, we cannot understand what changed with independence, movements for sovereignty or the legacies of both in the contemporary period of the Cold War to the present.

Consequently, this course looks carefully at the honorific cultures of the colonial period as well as the role of gender in political struggles that the systemic convergence of Iberian Catholicism, African and indigenous cultures generated. In the modern era (nineteenth century to the present), policies that attempted to stop political and social change were often promoted as a means for “saving the nation”, an imagined community that was racially and gender exclusionary.

Finally, we will study how revolutionary challenges and the rise of Communism in Cuba during the Cold War polarized everyday life, identity, politics and sexuality in Latin America from the 1960s to the 1990s. Considering how violence can take the form of poverty, state terror and homophobia, we will ask how much racialized systems of patriarchy have evolved from colonial times in tandem with the loosening of gender binaries, abandonment or inversion of codes of “honor” by men and women as well as the construction of alternative “genders” defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

Evaluation of student performance:

- Discussion & Oral Presentations 35%
- Three Analytical Essays 30% (6-10 pages each)
- Final Research Paper 35% (25-45 pages) [a historiographic paper may be an accepted alternative depending on student needs and consultation with mentors]

Part I: Discussion of Readings and Oral Participation (35%) This is primarily a reading and research seminar. That means our primary activity will be reading and analysis (both written and oral) of the reading that we do. The goal will be to discover new methods for interpreting history and new views of how history “works” as dialectical process between past and present. **Attendance at every class meeting is mandatory. Coming to class, doing the reading and having something relevant to say in class discussion is not enough: you are leaders of the field now! Developing your own analytical voice and engaging with others will allow you to gain authority over the texts, methods and knowledge of history.**

Excellent performance is measured according to the following factors, measured on a seminar-by-seminar basis:

- intellectual engagement of the material and others’ comments
- analytical creativity
- willingness to listen and learn from others to reformulate or expand one’s own thoughts
- the desire to take risks in questioning or criticizing the research methods and arguments of the authors in order to develop your own approach

IMPORTANT “SECRET” TO SUCCESS: After 24 years of teaching at the university level and leading discussions of undergraduate students, I can guarantee that students who use print and **hard copies of assigned readings** rather than relying on digital copies DO MUCH BETTER in all aspects of the course. Downloading materials, printing them and / or simply buying the books allows you **to take notes in the margins, stick post-its on key parts with comments and learn what stands outs** as well as how to come up with an original analysis of it.

- When you annotate a text for your personal use, you are developing your own ACTIVE intellectual and personal narrative. This is the goal and the secret to learning and retaining knowledge of history

Doing all of your thinking “aloud” in formal discussion is not the goal. A student’s ability to do well in the course will not only depend on doing the reading, but on being able to demonstrate that she has prepared for discussion by thinking through the concepts and arguments presented in the reading on her own, before class. Nor is the goal to present only your ideas in the class to show that you have done the work and have organized your own interpretation. **The goal is to create a community of thinkers—one that doesn’t necessarily achieve consensus, but that learns from exchanging and revising one another’s views.**

REGULAR IN-CLASS ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

The first day of class, students will sign up to write three essays on readings assigned for subsequent class meetings. [Instructions and requirements for the essays appear below.]

- *On those weeks, students who wrote essays will be expected to “warm up” class discussion by speaking for 5 minutes or so on a certain aspect of the reading that they found surprising, enlightening or with which they disagreed.*
- *Presenters should also bring in a hard copy of no more than two or three questions for potential use in that class’s general discussion in addition to the essay that s/he wrote.* Professor Guerra will share these questions with the class but may elect to “derive” a different question or set of questions in order to refine an initial path or drive a broader/narrower discussion.

Part II: Three Analytical Essays (30%) Students will sign up on the first day of class to write three analytical essays on the readings. Essays are due at the start of class on the day that the selected reading is assigned and will be discussed. Students are **encouraged to write on more than one book** that we have read in these essays, conceiving them **NOT as “book reviews”** but rather an opportunity to reflect on or debate a particular scholarly approach, style, method or use of evidence. **All papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point font; only hard copies will be accepted.**

- **Excellent papers** will be those that show independent, original thought in engaging the history itself and historiographic contribution of the author. *They must not be summaries of the reading.*
 - The purpose of these essays is to help students refine their analytical writing skills and learn how “historiography” differs and itself changes over time to reflect the changing methods, values and narratives of time in which historians work.
- Although students may adopt a personal voice in writing, **essays must be have a clearly identifiable thesis statement and cohesive argument that cites and discusses examples.**
- **Footnotes** or parenthetical citations (especially useful when only a single-authored book is cited) are required.
- Students are encouraged to criticize the authors’ approach, use of evidence or argument; they are also encouraged to use the authors’ evidence to make their own, entirely independent case.

Part III: Final Research Paper (30%) A fundamental goal of this course will the presentation of a formal paper that investigates a gendered aspect of history and interrogates the historical expression of gender and/or sexuality in the historical record for a particular society and time frame. An equally important goal will be to develop one’s own “tool kit” for analyzing evidence of the role of gender, often in relationship to race, class and culture, in primary sources that can convey new knowledge of the past.

Professor Lillian Guerra
Office: 218 Keene-Flint Hall

Office Hours: Wed 9:30-12:00
Mtg: Tue 4:05-7:05 PM

Note that this paper must be entirely original and not a “revised” or “improved” version of a research paper, thesis or other work a student has already completed in the past—at UF or at any other institution.

In some cases, students *may* be allowed to write an extensive historiographic paper covering the major and emerging secondary sources in their field instead of an original research paper. Doing so will require the approval of Professor Guerra and the active consultation with Professor Guerra of the student’s advisor or advisory team on the nature of the historiography selected for analysis, particularly when this falls outside the field of Modern Latin America.

In both the case of those writing research papers or historiographic studies, the student’s advisor(s) will be required to be an active part of the process for selecting a research subject or list of works. The advisor(s) will also be consulted in the determination of a grade for this portion of the class at Professor Guerra’s discretion (that is, “as needed”).

COURSE MATERIALS: Readings for this course are drawn from on-line library sources whenever possible. Books are the main reading assigned, however. Textbooks were ordered and are available through UF Bookstore’s textbook division. **You must bring all assigned readings to the class or you will not be able to find examples, quote from the text to contribute to discussion and receive a failing grade for non- participation.**

REQUIRED BOOKS IN ORDER OF ASSIGNMENT:

Steve J. Stern, The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men & Power in Late Colonial Mexico (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Kristin Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine American Wars (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

Lamonte Aidoo, Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power and Violence in Brazilian History (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

Erika Denise Edwards, Hiding in Plain Sight: Black Women, the Law and the Making of a White Argentina Republic (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2020).

Anna Krylova, Soviet Women in Combat: A History of Violence on the Eastern Front (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Anasa Hicks, Hierarchies at Home: Domestic Service in Cuba from Abolition to Revolution (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

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

Lynn M. Thomas, Beneath the Surface: A Transnational History of Skin Lighteners (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

Professor Lillian Guerra
Office: 218 Keene-Flint Hall

Office Hours: Wed 9:30-12:00
Mtg: Tue 4:05-7:05 PM

Benjamin A. Cowan, Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

Cymene Howe, Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

COURSE SCHEDULE

27 August *Introduction to the Course*: Please read the syllabus and be prepared to ask questions.

3 September *Origins: “Doing” and “Undoing” Gender Theory*: **Reading is easily found using “Journals” in the search engine of the UF Library Catalog or the database JSTOR.** Be sure to **bring copies to class**, just as you would a book.

Part 1 of class: Theory

- Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91: 5 (December 1986), 1053-1075.
- Joanne Meyerwitz, “A History of ‘Gender’,” *American Historical Review* 113: 5 (December 2008), 1346-1356.
- Candace West and Don Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 1: 2 (June 1987), 125-151.
- Francine M. Deutsch, “Undoing Gender,” *Gender and Society* 21: 1 (February 2007), 106-127.

Part 2 of class: Practice

- Lillian Guerra, “Gender Policing, Homosexuality and the New Patriarchy of the Cuban Revolution, 1965-1970,” *Social History* 35: 3 (August 2010), 268-289.
- Lillian Guerra, ed. “Pilar Amores Rodríguez, 1921-2021,” *Cuban Studies* 55 (2026), forthcoming. NOTE THAT GUERRA WILL EMAIL MANUSCRIPT TO YOU. DO NOT SHARE.

10 September *Honor and Shame in Colonial Latin America: Axis of Gender*. Reading assigned: Stern, Secret History of Gender, pages 11-213.

17 September *Could Gender Politics Cause Imperial War?* Reading Assigned: Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood, pages 1-86; 133-155; 180-208.

24 September *Hidden Histories of Gender, Race & Control* Reading Assigned: Aidoo, Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power and Violence in Brazilian History, *ALL*.

1 October *Whiteness and Argentina's Liberal National State* Reading Assigned: Edwards, Hiding in Plain Sight, ALL.

8 October *Martializing Maternity? "Women's Lib" under Stalin* Reading Assigned: Krylova, Soviet Women in Combat, 1-120; 144-235.

Note: Prof. Hicks will be joining us via Zoom to discuss her book next week! WE WILL PREPARE FOR HER PARTICIPATION at the end of PART 2 OF THE SEMINAR on 8 October. Please look over the book and familiarize yourself with its themes and structure by 8 October.

15 October *Invisible Labor, Invisible Subjects: Maids in Cuba* Reading Assigned: Hicks, Hierarchies at Home, ALL.

22 October *Liberation through Authoritarianism: Communist Cuba in the 60s* Reading Assigned: Hynson, Laboring for the State, ALL.

29 October *Transnational Consumerism and the Racializing of Beauty* Reading Assigned: Thomas, Beneath the Surface, all except Chapter 4.

5 November *"Morality" Wars behind the Latin American Cold War* Reading Assigned: Cowan, Securing Sex, pages 1-20; 50-179; 211-238.

12 November *Far Afield? Lessons from Anthropology* Reading Assigned: Howe, Intimate Activism, 1-127; 160-171.

13 November-12 December: *RESEARCH PAPER WRITING PERIOD*. All students are required to consult with Professor Guerra during the regular class time on Tuesday, November 19th. A sign up list of 15-30 minute slots will be available for consultations on Professor Guerra's office door as of November 13.

13 DECEMBER ALL FINAL PAPERS DUE. ¡Felicidades in advance!

Professor Lillian Guerra
Office: 218 Keene-Flint Hall

Office Hours: Wed 9:30-12:00
Mtg: Tue 4:05-7:05 PM