

LAH 3931
The Cuban Revolution, 1946-2025

Introduction to the subject and the course:

Possibly no other event of the latter half of the Twentieth Century was as meaningful in its short- and long-term consequences for much of global political history, especially in this hemisphere, than the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

After multiple opposition movements forced the flight of General Fulgencio Batista in January 1959, a United States-backed dictator, only a small number of leaders who claimed victory then retained the reins of state power over the next two years. The goals of a nationalist but pro-capitalist democracy were thus quickly eclipsed by these leaders' alliance with Cuba's tiny but well-organized Communist Party and their eventual adoption, by 1961, of a Communist-led state.

Despite massive economic pressure and overt as well as covert programs that the United States hoped would provoke its overthrow or decline, the Cuban government under Communist Party rule has nonetheless survived. Led by Fidel Castro for most of the last (now) *sixty-six years* of what Cuban officials have called "the Revolution", Cuba's state has nonetheless evolved internally. It has also faced near constant citizen-led struggles—some of them violent—that remain virtually unknown to the outside world and, until recently, unexamined by historians.

Since the Republican administration of Richard Nixon in the early 1970s, the United States has regularly considered, advanced or, under President Barack Obama, endorsed the normalization of ties with the Cuban state and ending the US Embargo on trade and financial exchanges with Cuba, in place since roughly 1961. In doing so, proponents and opponents of opening diplomatic relations have voiced their contrary positions with similar justifications: engagement in one case and hostility in the other is invoked for the purposes of "change in Cuba". What does change in Cuba mean? Is it possible to change Cuba through the United States' foreign policy? Or, for that matter, is it possible to change Cuba from Washington, D.C., Miami or anywhere else *outside* of Cuba? This course takes a different approach.

Rather than focus on the nature or effects of US policy toward the Cuba, we are mostly interested in the history of Cuba that has been unknown and unexamined, for whatever reasons. We want to examine the contradictions, complexities and compelling collective and personal experiences of Cubans themselves. Principal protagonists of this course are thus not only those *with the most power* on the island, but also *those with the least power—and the millions who lived their lives in between* the political and ideological extremes that defined the period between the 1950s and the 1990s, known as the Cold War.

After nearly seven decades of continuous rule by the Castro regime and its current successor state under Miguel Díaz-Canel, Cuba is *as much defined by totalitarian ideals and agents of national security as by the apparent absence* of internal dissent. At the same time, Cuba’s internal political stability has seemed to depend on the repeated mass exodus of Cubans, a process historically facilitated by the United States.

Since 2022, more than one million Cubans have fled Cuba—more than at any other moment in the history of Cuba, including the 1960s when at least 650,000 left Cuba for what they thought was temporary “exile” in the United States. Today, in 2025, this class’s central questions explore the interrelated realities that together explain the origins, evolution, experiences and trajectory of Cuba’s Revolution. They are:

- *To what degree was the socially radical turn of the Cuban Revolution rooted in the democratic political culture of the 1940s?*
- *Was support for Fidel Castro and support for communism the same thing?*
- *To what degree were citizens active in the process of consolidating communist rule in the 1960s?*
- *How did Cubans experience and interpret “Communism” in the 1970s and 1980s when Soviet influence was at its height?*
- *Was there a time when citizen discontent might have toppled the regime?*
- *What forms did dissent take in different decades?*
- *To what extent has protest, resistance and critique succeeded in subverting the power of the state? To what extent have they failed (and why)?*
- *How has the post-Soviet/post-Communist era (1993-present) evolved in terms of its economic and political policies? How US policy toward Cuba affected the power of citizens over their government—or disempowered them even more?*
- *What role has the Cuban community in the United States played in the internal political and economic development of Cuba since the first great exodus of the 1960s to the present?*

The most important activities in this class are:

- active learning: that means **taking notes** in lectures and discussions
- completing weekly **reading assignments** and contributing to discussions in class
- **making intellectual connections** between readings and lectures **through writing**: papers, start-time responses to questions, in-class examinations—and notetaking which is foundational to *all of these tasks and the skills you will develop in doing them*. **RULES FOR SUCCESS ARE DESCRIBED BELOW FOR EACH REQUIREMENT OF THE COURSE.**

Requirements (described below), totalling 100%:

In-Class Discussion of assigned readings and films	15%
Pop quizzes and other unannounced “reading checks” at start of class	10%
2 Analytical essays on assigned readings (minimum of 5 pages each)	25%
Midterm Exam in class	20%
Final Exam scheduled by the college	30%

I. In-Class Discussion of Readings and Films 15%
Unannounced In-Class Writing on Assignments 10%

RULE #1. Doing the reading or other assigned work that requires outside preparation (like watching a film) affects your ability to understand themes and facts developed in lectures. *You will not be able to complete in-class writing and examinations without having done the assigned readings.*

- **This class requires that you acquire all books and assigned readings in paper form and does not allow you to rely solely on digital e-copies.**
 - **WHY?** Nobody can effectively retain information read from a screen without reproducing that information and reactions to it *in writing*. This is foundational to the historical method and this is a *history class*.
 - **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO TO SUCCEED?** Take detailed notes and/or simply write responses to the reading in the margins of a book or printed article. This active method of learning allows you to create your own internal narrative and thoughts independently of the text.
 - **WHY DOES TAKING NOTES ON LECTURES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS MATTER?**
 - **First, there is virtually no way to reproduce the information** that you receive in Professor Guerra's lectures; it is not repeated in the reading and is a separate body of knowledge from which you need to draw.
 - **Second, note-taking means creating your own narrative punctuated by facts and interpretation.** That is precisely what historical writing enables you to do and these skills are transferrable to all fields of the professional workforce. *If you do not create your own narrative parallel to those of an author, a lecturer or others, you are not learning effectively, retaining knowledge or creating new ideas, but simply parroting other people's ideas. That is not the goal of a history course.*

RULE #2: You will **not be allowed to consult your laptops (or phones) during class discussions or examinations** but must have your book or paper copy of an article or document in front of you.

- **WHY? Two reasons.**
 - **First,** the reliance of some students on artificial forms of intelligence like Chat GPT or the internet to do their work for them forces all of us to find ways to eliminate this behavior. *Relying on AI to do your work for you is cheating, not learning. It also makes a college degree meaningless.*
 - **Second, the internet is NOT an accurate or reliable way to learn history:** the methods of professional historians rely on years of research in archives, libraries, and personal interviews. This research forms the

bedrock of valuable historical interpretation and accurate representations of the past. In this class, *we learn from the writing and research of scholars as well as primary source evidence*, NOT influencers, bloggers, politicians, Meta, X or any form of AI.

- **Due dates** for readings, films, videos and audio files assigned for study in advance of class are all noted below in the course schedule. “Discussions” and “Idea Workshops” are, for the purposes of grading and evaluation, the same thing, though Prof. Guerra conducts them differently.

RULE #3: Students will be **required to sign an attendance sheet every class meeting day**. Professor Guerra will keep track of the number and quality of verbal interventions that each student makes in each class so as to ensure that the assignment of a participation grade is fair and not based on subjective concerns.

- 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.
- Professor Guerra reserves the right to hold “pop quizzes” on the readings whenever it may be needed to assess class members’ completion of assignments, as already noted above.

Course Materials: There are 3 required books for the class, all of which are available for purchase from the UF Bookstore, through an on-line retailer and on reserve at Library West so that you can scan sections of them and print them. *Again, success in this class depends in many ways on accessing hard, paper copies. One, Anna Veltfort’s memoir, Goodbye, My Havana, is a graphic novel.*

Unless otherwise indicated, other **essays, documents and articles assigned for this course are available for download through links to Canvas** UF’s on-line course website under “FILES” and unavailable to the general public. **In the case of most assigned films including rap videos, Professor Guerra will provide access via email** through a link her personal film archive or Dropbox account by invitation to the entire class.

Required books for purchase are listed in order of discussion:

1. Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption and Resistance, 1959-1971 (UNC Press, 2013).
2. Anna Veltfort, Goodbye, My Havana: The Life and Times of a Gringa in Revolutionary Cuba, 1959-1971 (Redwood Press, 2019).
3. María de los Ángeles Torres, In the Land of Mirrors: Cuban Exile Politics in the United States (University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Films: There are **several films assigned for viewing before class for discussion in class**. With the exception of one film that is currently streaming on PBS, none of the films are available for streaming by yourself. **PLAN AHEAD:**

- While they will be **on reserve** at the library from the start of the semester, beware that there **are only one or two copies available** of each. Reserve copies provide a back-up to streaming options provided by link via email as noted above or through the link, in one case, given in the Course Schedule below.
- You must view all films or videos assigned **before the class** in which they are going to be discussed.
- **Viewing the films in small groups** before class for certain discussions indicated below **is always recommended** and, in some cases, may be required at Professor Guerra's discretion.

Organization of discussions and unannounced writing / quizzes: Discussion questions are provided below with each assigned reading. These questions are meant to guide your reading and spark ideas. Professor Guerra may use exactly the same questions in class or refine them for the purposes of socratic learning.

- Students should **read** the assigned reading for the week **over the course of the week**; waiting until the night before is not recommended.

II. Two Analytical Essays, 25% of Final Grade

Because this class seeks to be both **intensive** as well as **intense on an intellectual and emotional level**, students will be asked to analyze the myriad of ideas, knowledge and diverse historical sources we will use. **Rules for success** are as follows:

RULE #1. Writing prompts options for each of the two essays appear in the Course Schedule below. See deadlines below.

RULE #2. You will write an original argument that uses evidence drawn from the assigned readings—NOT sources external to the class.

- Essays should **NOT** be written in a "stream-of-consciousness" fashion but clearly provide an underlined thesis statement and supporting evidence cited from class-derived sources alone.
- Citation method should rely on the parenthetical method (the social science method) or footnotes. Because the sources are limited to those assigned in class, the parenthetical method, with a List of Sources Cited at the end of the essay, is recommended.

RULE #3: Essays must conform to the following criteria:

- *They must be a minimum of 5 pages to a maximum of 6-7 pages in length, double-spaced, typed in 12-point font and submitted in hard copy (printed on paper) in class on the day that an essay is due or, in case of emergency or for another arranged reason, to Professor Guerra's office (you can slip it under the door). No electronic submissions over Canvas or email are accepted, except in case of emergency or prior arrangement with Dr. Guerra.*

III. Midterm Exam (20% of Final Grade) & Final Exam (25% of Final Grade)

Examinations are administered in class as determined in the schedule below for the midterm or by the college during final exam period. Both the midterm and the final will consist of three, straightforward sections. Students are required to bring 2 blue books for each exam:

- **a map quiz** in which students will locate **8 out of 10 items** of extremely important historical significance on a map of Cuba (for example, Havana, the Sierra Maestra, etc.)
- **an identification section** in which students will completely describe and explain the historical significance of **3 out of 5 items** in short sentences (for example, the 26th of July Movement) **for the midterm and 5 out of 6 items for the final.**
- **an essay section** in which students will write **one interpretive essay** of the historical processes they have been studying **for the midterm and two interpretive essays for the final.** *Students will receive possible essay questions in advance of the exam and will choose one for preparation by the date of the exam.* Students will write only one essay for the midterm using their memory alone and without the use of notes or an outline.

Because the final exam is double the length with regard to time, students will write two essays, rather than one. An outline for each essay will be allowed only for the final exam.

How will exam essays be graded? Just as with the analytical papers written for this class, the quality of exam essays will be determined by the student's use of evidence for the creation of an argument as well as the quality and accuracy of that evidence. Sharpness of argumentation and grammatical clarity are just as important. Students must write their exam essays in complete sentences and respond to the exam questions in as complete a manner as possible.

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
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

Other Course Policies

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>

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 and/or the films assigned to be viewed in advance of class. **Due dates for readings, films, videos and audio files to be studied in advance of class are all 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 above.

Use of laptops & digital devices:

- **All cell phones must be turned to vibrate** at the beginning of class.
- **Notetaking on paper is MOST recommended as a method of learning, documentation and knowledge collection.** Typing one's notes, unless you can type fast, will not render as detailed or accurate a documentation of lectures.
- **As explained above, laptops may not be used for in-class writing** assignments (such as brainstorming sessions or pop quizzes) nor for examinations. Students are required to purchase and bring "blue books" for the midterm and the final examinations.
- **Internet surfing, texting, checking of email, or other tasks** unrelated to note-taking during lecture, discussion or other classroom activities is **prohibited**. **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. A third violation may result in expulsion from the classroom and a grade of F.

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: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty: One of the key skills this class teaches is how to cite documents, publications, other people's ideas, quotations, and other sources in writing papers or other assignments. **ANY USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMS for ANY ASSIGNMENT IS PROHIBITED.**

Dr. Guerra will evaluate cases of plagiarism:

- A minimal violation resulting in an F for that assignment and a report to the College.
- Egregious violations will garner an F for the class and possible dismissal from UF pending administrative investigation.
- 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. Please visit the UF policies on this at: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/#:~:text=A%20Student%20must%20not%20represent,paraphrasing%2C%20or%20patch%2Dwriting>

Course Schedule

UNIT I:

Democracy vs. Dictatorship in the Context of US Imperial Control, 1940s-1960

M 1.13 Introduction to the Course & Why Taking It Matters

W 1.15 Lecture 1. Cuba's Democratic Interlude of the 1940s & the Martyrdom of Eddy Chibás

F 1.17 Discussion. READ Ada Ferrer, *Cuba: An American History* (New York: Scribner, 2022), 218-274 [available under "Files" on Canvas]. **Discussion questions:** *In this part of her Pulitzer Prize-winning book, Ada Ferrer explains the period between 1933 and 1952 as a struggle to democratize Cuba and consolidate its national sovereignty. What made this a struggle? What obstacles did Cuba face?*

Monday January 20th: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. No Class.

W 1.22 Lecture 2. Cuba After the 1952 Coup: Race, Class & Batista as "El Hombre"

F 1.24 Lecture 3. Forgotten Revolutions against Batista & the Return to Armed Struggle

M 1.27 Ideas Workshop. Fidel Castro, *Fidelismo* & the Greatest Legacies of the Revolution

READ "The Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution (1901)"; Fidel Castro, "History will absolve me"; and "Program Manifesto of the 26th of July Movement" in *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, edited by Philip Brenner, et al (Grove Press, 1989), 30-41. [available under "Files" on Canvas] **Discussion question:** *Above all, the 26th of July Movement appealed to Cuban nationalism. How do these documents define this "nation" and its ideals?*

W 1.29 Lecture 4. *Clandestinos*, Fidel as Messiah & the 26th of July Guerrilla, 1956-1958

F 1.31 Ideas Workshop. WATCH "The Forgotten Revolution," directed by Glenn Gebhard

(2015) [available at <https://www.pbs.org/video/cuba-the-forgotten-revolution-nkfkkg/> and library reserve for in-library viewing] **Discussion question:** *Who or what do you find the most "unforgettable" or significant part of this film? Who or what was the most surprising aspect?*

ADVICE FOR SUCCESS: READ AHEAD! YOU HAVE 2 CHAPTERS DUE NEXT WEEK!

M 2.03 Lecture 5. David vs. Goliath: Cuba's "Greek Democracy" and the New State of 1959

W 2.05 Lecture 6. Standing Up to Empire: The Power of the People, the Defeat of the US & Political Radicalization in Cuba, 1960

F 2.07 Discussion. READ Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Chs. 2-3 (pp.75-134) [required book] **Discussion questions:** *In these chapters, Guerra argues that a majority of Cubans willingly surrendered many rights for which they had long fought (such as freedom of the press and the right to strike or protest) in support of Fidel Castro and the vision of revolution he represented. This, she argues, happened as civil society—that is, the university, the press, labor unions and other expressions of citizen control—lost their autonomy to the state. How did this happen? What does a "loss of autonomy" mean? What was at stake?*

FIRST ESSAY DUE WEDNESDAY 2.12. SEE BELOW.

UNIT II:

"In a war, there can be no neutrals":

Nationalist to Communist Revolution & the Role of the United States, 1961-1969

M 2.10 Lecture 7. Was the Revolution Popular? US Policies, the National Security State & the Rise of a Class War, 1961-1964

FIRST ANALYTICAL ESSAY DUE 2.12 IN CLASS: Why and how the Cuban Revolution took an increasingly radical political turn are the two questions that have most haunted scholars, observers, critically minded Cuban citizens and US political actors alike. Although the view that Fidel Castro conspired with the Soviets to “betray everyone” might have acquired the status of “truth” for many, that story reduces the complex history we have studied to a simple caricature. It also makes the outcome of the process leading up to 1959 through 1961 inevitable, rather than dependent on human decisions and historical conditions. *If Cuba’s radicalization and adoption of communism was not inevitable, then how do you explain what factors were responsible for this outcome by 1961? Anchor your explanation in three factors, dedicating a portion of your essay to each and providing evidence for each. Use only the readings by Ferrer, Guerra and the documents provided for the ideas workshop on 1.27. [see required criteria for essays on page 5 of this syllabus]*

W 2.12 Lecture 8. *Juventud Rebelde*: Humor, Homosexuality & the Beatles’ Threats to the State
F 2.14 Lecture 9. The Rehabilitation of Prostitutes, *Negrismo* & the Crime of Social Dangerousness, 1964-1968

M 2.17 Discussion. READ Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Ch. 8 (pp. 256-289) [required book] **Discussion questions:** *Is “self-styled revolutionaries” a useful term to describe the Cubans whose lives Guerra analyzes in this chapter? Were they complicit with an unjust state? Were they actively trying to redefine “revolution”? What about their lives in these years did you find most surprising?*

W 2.19 Lecture 10. *Ofensiva Revolucionaria*: The Crucible of 1968-1970

F 2.21 Film Workshop. WATCH “Fidel,” directed by Saul Landau (USA, 1971) [available through Professor Guerra’s personal Vimeo account; stay tuned to email for link] **Discussion questions:** *Saul Landau is a longtime public supporter of the Revolution. Yet this portrait of Fidel Castro is often unflattering. Who is Fidel in this movie?*

ADVICE FOR SUCCESS: Note that you have an in-class midterm Monday 3.03!

UNIT III:

Los Años Rojos [The Red Years]: Communist Cuba from Within, Late 1960s-1980s

M 2.24 Archival Film Workshop: What was it like to grow up in a Communist state? Views from the Archive of David C. Stone. Original selected clips, edited, translated and subtitled by Professor Guerra from the Cuban Revolution Collection, Yale University Manuscripts & Archives. **MIDTERM EXAM STUDY SHEET WILL BE HANDED OUT. No outline is allowed for the midterm, nor is it an “open book” exam. Buy blue books now!**

W 2.26 Lecture 11. Lost Generation: Poets, Musicians, Former-Slum Dwellers & *Santeros*
LISTEN TO 2 SONGS AND READ LYRICS PROVIDED: Silvio Rodríguez “Debo Partirme en Dos” and “Ojalá” [audios available in “Files” on Canvas]

F 2/28 Discussion. Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Ch. 9 & Epilogue, pp. 290-316; 353-368 [required book] **Discussion questions:** *Many scholars, including Guerra, argue that the Ten Million Harvest of 1970 and its impact in 1971 were a critical turning point in the Cuban Revolution. Some have even argued that the failure and people’s sense of betrayal was so great that the Cuban state came close to collapse. What evidence does this reading provide for that possibility? How did the Cuban state emerged from the crisis? Was it stronger after 1971 than ever before? Or was it weaker?*

MONDAY 3.03 IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION.

W 3.05 Lecture 12. Women, Sex Education & the “Revolution within the Revolution”

F 3.08 Film Workshop. WATCH “Retrato de Teresa/Portrait of Teresa” (1979) [available through Professor Guerra’s personal Vimeo account; stay tuned to email for link] **Discussion questions:** *Is this film a portrait of the Cuban Revolution? Or is it an individual portrait of the limits to women’s liberation that its protagonist faces?*

M 3.10 Discussion. READ Veltfort, Goodbye, My Havana, Chs.1-4 [required book]. **Discussion questions:** *Unlike most memoirs, Veltfort has created a graphic novel in order to bring to life her experiences as a young person who identified with the Revolution but became an unintended dissident in Cuba. Her use of visual imagery and color allows her to convey three different “narratives” at once: together they tell what happened to her then, what she might have thought about it then, but also now, decades later. How does her use of graphic art provide a sense of experience that word-based, traditional forms of memoir and story-telling do not? Where did you “read” these multiple narratives visually?*

W 3.12 Lecture 13. The Soviet Age: Forming a “Communist Personality” & Cuban Youth

F 3.14 Discussion. READ Veltfort, Goodbye, My Havana, Chs. 5-7 [required book]. **Discussion questions:** *For Anna Veltfort, the Cuban regime’s policing of gender became emblematic of a culture—not just a policy—that valued repression over liberation. Yet one of the more interesting aspects of the book is its portrayal of power. How does she portray the power of average Cubans? As the child of foreign Communists, how does she portray her own power versus theirs?*

SPRING BREAK SATURDAY 3.15 TO SUNDAY 3.23. READ TORRES, IN THE LAND OF MIRRORS (pp. 1-21, 43-104) OVER BREAK!

M 3.24 Lecture 14. “We are Happy Here”: The Mariel Boatlift & the Theatre State Revealed

W 3.26 Lecture 15. The Exile Effect: Exceptionalism, Terrorism & the Cold War, 1960s-1980s

F 3.28 Discussion. READ Torres, In the Land of Mirrors, Intro, Chs. 2-4 (pp. 1-21, 43-104) **Discussion questions:** *Published 24 years ago, Torres’s pioneering book on the history of the “Cuban exile movement” is still virtually unique in the field. As the child of exiles herself who also formed part of the very first group of exiles to return and visit Cuba in the late 1970s, Torres argues that the authoritarian dictatorship of Fidel Castro was actually strengthened rather than weakened by its “mirror” in Miami. How does she explain this? What does Torres identify as evidence of this political “mirroring”? Were Cuban exiles being used by both sides (that of Castro’s regime and the United States) for their own ends?*

UNIT IV:

New Crucibles, New Challenges, New Beginnings? The Special Period, 1990s-Today

M 3.31 Lecture 16. Shock and Awe: The Start of the Special Period, 1993 and Beyond

W 4.02 Lecture 17. *La Lucha*: Communist State-Sponsored Corporate Capitalism & Paradox as Everyday Life, 1993-2006

F 4.04 Discussion. Torres, In the Land of Mirrors, Chs. 6-7 (pp. 105-175). **Discussion questions:** *From the 1980s when the Cuban American National Foundation [CANF] made Cuban exiles a major force through the end of the Cold War, little changed in US policy toward Cuba: instead, the potential for a change in direction with attending consequences for the island were “missed”. Even the decline of CANF’s power did not have a major impact. Nonetheless, Torres argues that what it meant to be Cuban in the United States—and in Cuba—changed. Her book obviously ends*

in 2001, its publication date. What lessons do you derive from her discussion and analysis of evidence today?

SECOND ANALYTICAL ESSAY DUE 4.09. SEE BELOW.

M 4.07 Film Workshop. WATCH “Barrio Cuba” (Cuba, 2005). [available through Professor Guerra’s personal Vimeo account; stay tuned to email for link] **Discussion questions:** *Directed by Humberto Solás and produced by ICAIC, this film could hardly be seen as a “triumphant” portrayal of the Cuban Revolution. Indeed, it focuses on the personal, pain-filled lives of individual protagonists and weaves their stories together into a kind of parable about life in Cuba. What arguments do you think the film makes about Cuba’s past? What arguments does it make about what Cuban national identity?*

SECOND ANALYTICAL ESSAY OPTION DUE 4.09 IN CLASS: In the 1970s until the collapse of the Soviet bloc (and its aid to Cuba) in the early 1990s, interpretations of the Cuban Revolution outside of Cuba mostly reflected extremes and the zero-sum game on which Fidel Castro’s rise to power and consolidation of a Communist state had long depended. Most often, one was either “with the Revolution” or against it; “with freedom” (and therefore a proponent of US policies toward Cuba) or against it. Although we have studied the Cuban regime’s undeniable and relentless authoritarianism, we have also learned how people resisted authoritarian values, tried to change the Revolution or transcended polarization altogether by championing ties between individuals, the family or the personal human right to express themselves without “taking a side” in the Cuban-US Cold War. *Using the books we read by Veltfort and Torres as well as the films “Portrait of Teresa” and “Barrio Cuba”, explain how island Cubans and those of the diaspora resisted political polarization. Did they succeed? If so, how and why? If not, why not?*

W 4.09 Lecture 18. Cuba under Raúl: Prospects and Betrayals of “Papá Estado”, 2006-2014

F 4.11 Lecture 19. Barack Obama & the Probability of a Space Ship Landing in Cuba
Read President Obama’s Statement on Cuba Policy Changes, 17 December 2014 at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/statement-president-cuba-policy-changes> OR **Watch** <https://www.c-span.org/video/?407090-1/president-obama-address-cuban-people>

Read President Obama’s Speech to the Cuban People, 22 March 2016 at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/22/remarks-president-obama-people-cuba> OR **Watch** <https://www.cspan.org/search/?searchtype=All&query=Obama+statement+on+Cuba+policy+17+December+2014>

M 4.14 Ideas Workshop. Being Black, Being Cuban: The Rising Revolution of Rap
READ 1. Geoffrey Baker, “Hip Hop, Revolución! Nationalizing Rap in Cuba,” *Ethnomusicology*, 49, no. 3 (Fall, 2005): 368-402. [electronic version available on library reserve website] AND 2. Sujatha Fernandes, “Fear of a Black Nation: Local Rappers, Transnational Crossings, and State Power in Contemporary Cuba.” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 76, no. 4 (Autumn, 2003): 575-608 [available in “Files” on Canvas]
WATCH music videos and song lyrics by Escuadrón Patriota, “Decadencia / Decadence” 2009 and “No Discriminación / No Discrimination” 2010 [available in “Files” on Canvas]
Discussion questions: *Why was the expression of Black identity so threatening to the Cuban state?*

Professor: Lillian Guerra, Ph.D.
Office: Keene-Flint 218
Office Hours: MON 2:00-3:30 PM

Class Meetings: MWF 12:50-1:40 PM
Class Location: Keene-Flint 113

W 4.16 Lecture 20. From Obama to Chanel, Trump to the Death of Fidel and More: 2016-2020

F 4.18 GUEST LECTURE by Dr. Michael Bustamante, Emilio Bacardí Moreau Chair of Cuban History and Cuban Studies at the University of Miami. “COVID, J11 and an Unprecedented Exodus, 2021-2024.” **PLEASE ARRIVE ON TIME.**

M 4.21 Final Discussion. Ferrer, Cuba: An American History, Chs. 32-33 (pp. 435-466) [available in “Files” on Canvas] **FINAL EXAM STUDY SHEET WILL BE HANDED OUT. MAKE SURE TO BUY BLUE BOOKS FOR THE EXAM.** Questions are welcome.

W 4.23 Final Lecture. Memory, History and the Power of the Imperial Witness in Cuba Today

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED BY COLLEGE: APRIL 30, 10:00 AM TO NOON.

- Bring blue books. A one-page outline will be permitted for each of the two essays on the exam. The exam is not open book and no use of laptops or electronic devices will be allowed. Using your cell phone during the course of the exam will be considered cheating and you will fail.
- **GOOD LUCK AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK!!!**