

LAH 3470: Introduction to Caribbean History

Spring 2026

T 10:40AM-11:30AM & TR 10:40AM-12:35PM

Keene-Flint 119

Instructor: Dr. Fernanda Bretones Lane, Assistant Professor of History

Office Location: Grinter Hall 333 Email: f.bretones@ufl.edu

Student Hours: T 3-4:30 & W 11-12:30 (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course introduces students to some of the main issues and debates in Caribbean history from the Pre-Columbian period to the twentieth century. The Caribbean was the entry point for Europeans in the New World, and as such, it played an important role in the history of imperial expansion in the Americas more broadly. It has been described as “the cradle of the modern world” due to its role in shaping the structures of the globalized capitalist economy. The region was also the site of two major Revolutions that dramatically affected the history of the West—the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the Cuban Revolution (1959). Topics covered in this survey include slavery and abolition; the Haitian Revolution; indentured servitude; US imperialism; the Cuban Revolution; the Panama Canal; epidemic disease; and tourism.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, in addition to familiarity with the broader historical contours relating to the Caribbean region, students will also be equipped to:

- -Classify and distinguish between primary and secondary sources;
- -Criticize historical records documents and specialized literature;
- -Analyze historical events;
- -Improve oral and written communication skills;
- -Improve abilities to work in group;

Required Readings and Other Course Materials:

Please obtain a copy of the following required books (available at the Campus Bookstore and through various online vendors):

- Gad Heuman, *The Caribbean: A Brief History* Third Edition (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019). Please make sure to obtain the correct edition. This will be referred throughout the schedule as *CBH*.
- Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000)

There will be additional readings assigned, such as chapters from E-books, printed primary sources, and articles provided on Canvas.

Course Assignments & Grade Breakdown

Map quiz	2%
Primary Source Analysis	15% x 2
Test 1	25%
Test 2	25%
Collection Visit Reflection	5%
Participation *	10%
Self-Assessment	3%

* How I assess participation: Students are expected to show up for class having read the assigned materials and ready to engage with the professor and with other students. That includes asking relevant questions during lectures; actively participating in small and large group discussion; submitting assignments on time. Unpreparedness (including failure to bring readings to class), recurrent breach of class etiquette/policies (i.e. use their phones/laptops without authorization, repeated tardiness, disruptive behavior), unexcused absences, and uncourteous behavior will affect participation grades negatively, while energetic and informed participation will raise final participation grades. “Energetic and informed participation” includes engaging in productive conversations, posing pertinent questions, and generally contributing to advance our collective knowledge in class.

Grade Scale

A	100 %	to 94.0%	C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%	C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%	D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%

B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%	D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%	D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%	E	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

Grading in this class is consistent with UF policies available at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Policy on Late and Make-up Work

All deadlines are dully noted on this syllabus, so plan accordingly. If issues arise that impact your ability to attend test days or submit other assignments on time, please be pro-active in communicating with the Professor ahead of time to make an alternate plan. Late work after deadlines is accepted at the discretion of the Professor.

Communicating with the Professor

1. Student Hours

The best way to reach me is during Student Hours (also known as “Office Hours” which are listed at the top of this syllabus as well as on the course Canvas site). During those hours, the door to my office is open to you, students, to discuss any issues pertaining to the class (content questions, clarifications, requests for extensions, etc), or any other topics you may wish to talk about (for example, request for recommendation letters, questions about going to graduate school, your general interests in Latin American and Caribbean history, my current and future research projects, etc). There is no need to make an appointment—I see students on a first-come first-serve basis. If you want/need to meet with me but your schedule conflicts with my Student hours, please send e-mail to request an appointment

2. Electronic Communication (Email)

If you have questions/concerns that have not been addressed in class and cannot be answered by consulting the syllabus, come see me during Student Hours. If you are unable to attend Student Hours, you can send me an e-mail to request at appointment at a different time. For questions/concerns that cannot wait for appointments, you may send your query via e-mail, but please note I may take 24-48 hours to respond (longer if over the weekend or official holiday).

Please keep in mind that emailing your professors or TAs is not the same as emailing (or texting) your friends. For some useful tips on how to avoid unprofessional electronic communication (not only for this class, but also for all professional communication that

happens online), see “How to Email Your Professor (Without Being Annoying AF)” at <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087#oe41y9s16l>

3. Canvas Messages

I do not read or respond to individual Canvas messages, but I will occasionally send out Canvas messages when there is a need to address the whole class (i.e. reminders, updates, etc).

4. Communicating About Grades

Students who wish to discuss their grades must wait 24 hours after receiving their grade to contact the instructor. Grades are only re-evaluated in case of mathematical error. All other grade inquiries should be for answer clarification, not for grade change.

Attendance

Your attendance is required in all scheduled class meetings—a great deal of learning happens in the classroom! Occasional absences owing to unexpected circumstances are understandable, but prolonged, unexcused absences are not. Students who miss more than 5 weeks’ worth of class meetings without justification will automatically fail the class. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Classroom Etiquette

This course will ask students to engage in conversations related to the topics of study. Lively debates are welcome, but they should occur with respectful and courteous behavior. Uncourteous behavior will not be tolerated and may result in removal from a class period, or worse.

UF Policies

The University of Florida has a number of academic policies and campus resources each and every students should be familiar with. See them on this link: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

Weekly Course Schedule – Spring 2026

This schedule is subject to change

Week & Dates	Topic	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1 Jan. 13 & 15	What & Where is the Caribbean?	Read: The Syllabus	Read: CBH, Ch.17
Week 2 Jan. 20 & 22	Pre-Colonial Societies & Encounter	Read: CBH, Ch.1 pp.1–11; & excerpts from Columbus's diary in Felipe Fernández-Armesto, <i>Columbus on Himself</i> [18pgs]	Read: excerpts from Las Casas, <i>An Account of the Destruction of the Indies</i> Map quiz in class
Week 3 Jan. 27 & 29	Colonization, Slavery, & Imperial Competition	Read: CBH, Ch.1 pp.11–15	Read: CBH, Ch.2
Week 4 Feb. 3 & 5	Sustaining Empires: Slavery & the Transatlantic Slave Trade	Read: CBH, Ch.3	Read: Excerpts from Eric Williams, <i>Capitalism and Slavery</i>
Week 5 Feb. 10 & 12	Slave Laws, Resistance, and Free People of Color	Read: CBH, Ch.4	Read: CBH, Ch.5 & 6
Week 6 Feb. 17 & 19	The Haitian Revolution	Read: CBH, Ch. 7 +	Read: selected primary sources from David Geggus, <i>The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History</i>
Week 7 Feb. 24 & 26	Analyzing Primary Sources	No assigned reading today – class discussion on newspapers as primary sources, with Melissa Jerome	In-class workshop: The Haitian Revolution in Caribbean Newspapers PSA 1 in class
Week 8 Mar. 3 & 5	Emancipation & Aftermath	Read: CBH, Ch. 8	Read: CBH, Ch. 10
Week 9 Mar. 10 & 12	New Indentured Workers	Test 1 in class	Read: excerpts of Gaiutra Bahadur's <i>Coolie Woman</i>

			In class: Chinese indentured contracts in Cuba
Week 10 Mar. 17 & 19	Spring Break	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Week 11 Mar. 24 & 26	Neo-colonialism & Revolution	Read: CBH, Ch.13	Read: CBH, Ch.15 PSA: Platt Amendment
Week 12 Mar. 31 & Apr. 2	The Panama Canal	Read: Joan Flores-Villalobos, <i>The Silver Women: How Black Women's Labor Made the Panama Canal</i> , Introduction	Read: Joan Flores-Villalobos, <i>The Silver Women: How Black Women's Labor Made the Panama Canal</i> , Ch. 1 Visit The Panama Canal exhibit in Smathers Library
Week 13 Apr. 7 & 9	Tourism in the Caribbean	Read: Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i> Reflection on Panama Exhibit due	Read: Beverly Mullings, "Globalization, Tourism, and the International Sex Trade"
Week 14 Apr. 14 & 16	Epidemic Disease in Historical Perspective	Test 2 in class	Read: selected readings tbd
Week 15 Apr. 21	Conclusions	Course wrap-up Self-Assessment	No class (Instruction ends Apr. 22)