

Spring 2026 LAH 3931: Afro-Latin America

{Special Topics}

Spring 2026

T 11:45AM-1:40PM & TR 12:50PM-1:40PM

Keene-Flint 119

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

Office Location: Grinter Hall 333

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

Course Description

In recent years, scholars have re-examined the ways in which we tell the story of Africans in the Americas. No longer content with traditional narratives about Latin America that focus on European conquistadors decimating Indigenous communities and forcefully introducing enslaved Africans to replace a “lost workforce,” historians of colonial Latin America have striven to illuminate the diverse historical experiences of people of African descent in the region. “Afro-Latin America” thus brings together the fields of Latin American History and the African Diaspora to study the contributions of Africans and people of African descent to the development of Latin American societies, from the early colonial period to the formation of independent nation-states, ending with questions of integration/exclusion in the post-abolition, independent nations. While slavery (and the ways in which the institution shaped colonial society) will occupy some of our attention—as well as, its social and cultural implications in relation to the question of national identity—this is *not* a course *about* slavery. Topics we will explore include: free and enslaved Africans in the conquest of the Americas; cultural “retention” and resistance to slavery; race, nation and debates on “racial democracy,” among others.

Course Goals

First and foremost, the course aims to deepen our understanding of the diverse histories of Africans and their descendants in the region. It also seeks to shift the focus away from the institution of slavery, highlighting the different ways in which Africans and people of African descent have contributed to Latin American societies. Students will become equipped to articulate both in writing and orally a critical understanding of historical themes pertaining to the African Diaspora in Latin America. Students will also improve research and writing skills, and create an online exhibit to showcase their work.

Required Texts

- Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews (Eds.), *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018) [referred throughout this syllabus as Fuente & Andrews, ALAS] (free E-book available at UF libraries)
- George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [referred throughout this syllabus as Andrews, Afro-LatAm] (limited chapter download through UF Libraries, otherwise available at the UF Bookstore and many online vendors)

Other required readings will be available in Canvas, via the UF Libraries, and/or distributed in class

Course Assignments

[full assignment descriptions in Canvas]

Weekly journal	35%
Analytical essay	30%
Mid-term paper	15%
Participation	10%
TSTD analysis	5%
Self-assessment	5%

GRADING CRITERIA

A Work that goes beyond instructor's expectations: is careful, thoughtful, original, and thorough. Truly outstanding work – even for a “good” student.

A- Very good work with most of the attributes of “A” work but either deficient in some technical aspect, in thoroughness and care or not as strikingly incisive, original, or creative as “A” work. Excellent.

B+ Better than good, competent work, even for the typical student at this university. Some aspects are very strong, but not uniformly excellent.

B Good competent work, which meets all standards/requirements the instructor could specify in advance. Reasonably thorough. Alternatively, work with some excellent aspects that are balanced by serious deficiencies.

B- Almost up to specifiable standards. Often characterized by vagueness and signs of lack of effort or insufficient engagement with the material. Sometimes the result of correctable misunderstanding. Sometimes the result of truncate writing that could improve with more attention/work. Talk to instructor.

C+ Below the specifiable standards for good work. Sometimes the result of poor writing that compromises quality of the work/clarity of ideas. Talk to instructor.

C Work showing serious misunderstanding or lack of effort or engagement. Talk to instructor

C- or below: Talk to instructor immediately.

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/syllabuspolices>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

All readings to be completed by the time you come to class on Tuesdays unless otherwise noted. *This schedule is subject to adjustments as need while the semester is ongoing.

UNIT 1: BEGINNINGS

Week 1: Jan. 13 & Jan. 15: Course introduction and initial discussion: What/where is Afro-Latin America?

- Readings:
 - The Syllabus
 - George Reid Andrews, "Introduction," in *Afro-LatAm*, pp.3-10
 - Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews, "The Making of a Field: Afro-Latin American Studies" in *ALAS*, pp.1-24

UNIT 2: DIASPORA IN MOTION

Week 2: Jan. 20 & Jan. 22: The Early Presence of Black Africans in the Americas

- **Assignment due:** hard copy of your first journal entry by the start of class on T 1/20 for an in-class mini-workshop + initial instructor's feedback
- Readings:
 - Matthew Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America" *The Americas* Vol. 57, No. 2 (Oct., 2000): 171-205 (Canvas)

Week 3: Jan. 27 & Jan. 29: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the African Diaspora in Latin America

- **Assignment:** bring laptop or tablet for in-class activity on Thursday, Jan.29
- Readings:
 - Andrews, *Afro-LatAm* excerpt. pp.11-22
 - Roquinaldo Ferreira and Tatiana Seijas, "The Slave Trade to Latin America: A Historiographical Assessment," in Fuente & Andrews, *ALAS*, pp.27-51

UNIT 3: INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES IN THE DIASPORA

Week 4: Feb. 3 & Feb. 5: [Auto]Biographies of the African Diaspora

- **Assignment due:** Transatlantic slave trade & slave narratives analysis
- Readings:
 - Mariana Dantas, "Anna Maria Lopes de Britto, Eighteenth-Century Minas Gerais (Brazil)," in *As If She Were Free: A Collective Biography of Women and Emancipation in the Americas*, ed. Erica Ball, Tatiana Seijas, and Terri Snyder (Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp.190-206 (available online through UF Libraries)

- Selected chapters from Henry Lovejoy, *Prieto: Yorùbá Kingship in Colonial Cuba during the Age of Revolutions* (UNC Press, 2018) [Introduction; Chapter 2 – E-book]

Week 5: Feb. 10 & Feb. 12: Black Brotherhoods and Laymen Associations

- Readings
 - Marina de Mello e Souza, “Cultural Resistance and Afro-Catholicism in Colonial Brazil” in Javiera Jaque Hidalgo and Miguel Valerio (Eds.), *Indigenous and Black Confraternities in Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) (Canvas)
 - “A Black Irmandade in Bahia, Brazil.” In William B. Taylor, Kenneth Mills, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham (Eds.) *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History* (Canvas)

Week 6: Feb. 17 & Feb. 19: Maroon Communities

- Readings:
 - Andrews, *Afro-LatAm* excerpt, pp. 22-52
 - Jane Landers, “Cimarron and Citizen: African Ethnicity, Corporate Identity, and the Evolution of Free Black Towns in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean,” in *Slaves, Subjects and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America* 111-145 (Canvas)
 - Kathryn Joy McKnight, “Soldier, Slaver, and Elder: Maroon Voices from the Palenque del Limón, 1634” in *Afro-Latino Voices*, pp.43-54 (Canvas)

UNIT 4: AFRO-LATINO CULTURE

Week 7: Feb. 24 & Feb. 26: Afro-Latin American Religions

Mid-term paper in class on Tuesday, 2/24 (in class) *You may consult your weekly journal during this exam (hard copies only, no exceptions), which will consist of an in-class essay based on a prompt, covering course content from week 1-6.

- Readings (for Thursday):
 - Paul Christopher Johnson and Stephan Palmié, “Afro-Latin American Religions,” in Fuente & Andrews, ALAS, pp.438-485

Week 8: Mar. 3 & Mar. 5: Afro-Latin American Art

- Readings:
 - Silvia Hunold Lara, “Customs and Costumes: Carlos Julião and the Image of Black Slaves in Late Eighteenth-Century Brazil,” *Slavery & Abolition*, 23 n2 (2002), 123–146.
 - Alejandro de la Fuente, “Afro-Latin American Art,” in Fuente & Andrews, ALAS, pp.348-405

Week 9: Spring Break, NO CLASS on Mar. 17 & Mar. 19

UNIT 5: DISMANTLING NATIONAL MYTHS

Week 10, Mar. 24 & Mar. 26: Slaves and Free People of Color in the Wars of Independence (or, The Myth of the White Libertador)

- Readings:
 - Andrews, *Afro-LatAm* Chapter 2, pp.53-84
 - Peter Blanchard, "The Slave Soldiers of Spanish South America: From Independence to Abolition," in Christopher L. Brown & Philip Morgan (Eds.), *Arming Slaves, from Classical Times to the Modern Age*

Week 11, Mar. 31 & Apr. 2: A White Argentina?

- Readings:
 - Andrews, *Afro-LatAm* Chapters 4 and 5, pp.117-190
 - Kara Schultz, "'The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far from Here': The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640." *Slavery & Abolition* 36, n.3 (2015): 424–44.
 - Erika Denise Edwards, "The making of a White nation: The disappearance of the Black population in Argentina," *History Compass* (June 2018)
- In-class documentary film: "Tango Negro: The African Roots of Tango," dir. Dom Pedro (2013). Link for free streaming (with UF VPN): <https://access.infobase.com/video/24195-tango-negro-african-roots-tango>

Week 12, Apr. 7 & Apr. 9: "Racial Democracy"

- Readings:
 - Andrews, *Afro-LatAm* Chapter 3, pp.85-116
 - Paulina Alberto and Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, "'Racial Democracy' and Racial Inclusion: Hemispheric Histories," in Fuente & Andrews, *ALAS*, pp.264-316
- In-class documentary film: "Brazil: A Racial Paradise?" (PBS Series "Black in Latin America," 2011, produced by Henry Louis Gates Jr. 53mins.). Link for free streaming (with UF VPN): <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/brazil-a-racial-paradise-4>

Week 13, Apr. 14 & Apr. 16: Other Silenced Histories: Mexico and Peru

- Readings:
 - Jorge E. Delgadillo Núñez, "Historical Memory about Slavery, Abolition, and Afro-descendants in the Mexican Press, 1821–60" in *Afro-Mexican Lives in the Long Nineteenth Century: Slavery, Freedom, and the Writing of History*, ed. Theodore Cohen and Nicole Von Germeten (Cambridge University Press, 2025) pp 139-165
- In-class documentary: "Mexico & Peru: The Black Grandma in the Closet" (PBS Series "Black in Latin America," produced by Henry Louis Gates Jr.) Link for free streaming

(with UF VPN): <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/mexico-peru-the-black-grandma-in-the-closet-3>

Week 14 Apr. 21 (Tuesday only – last class meeting): Conclusions

Assignments due: Turn in weekly journal; in-class self-assessment