CUBA: LITERATURA, CULTURA Y CINE
SPAN 940-379
Fall 2019
Rutgers University-Newark

Prof. Elena Lahr-Vivaz, Ph.D. E-mail: el431@newark.rutgers.edu
M 2:30-3:50 p.m., W 1-2:20 p.m. Office: Conklin 406
Conklin 344 Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30 (and by appointment)

In this class, we will consider Cuban literature, culture, and cinema, seeking to better understand the nuances of the identity of a nation best known for its 1959 Revolution. At the same time, we will think more broadly about how Cuba has been mapped over its long history, and how writers, artists, and filmmakers have contributed to novel formulations of its identity and space. Over the course of the semester, we will also research and write on topics of our choice related to Cuba, and we will present this information to the class (and a broader audience) through a digital humanities project. This course is taught in Spanish.

Course Goals
The primary goals for this course are as follows:

1. identify a minimum of five genres of Cuban textual and cultural production, and describe the key characteristics of each;
2. summarize and analyze the plots of a minimum of ten Cuban texts, and explain their historical and cultural importance;
3. compose an analytical argument on a literary, filmic, or cultural text, and develop this argument orally and in writing;
4. compose an analytical argument on how Cuba is mapped and/or defined, and develop this argument orally and in writing;
5. evaluate and critique the value of academic articles (published in journals and/or books) on Cuban literature, film, and culture, and contextualize one’s own argument in relation to these;
6. use MLA format correctly;
7. create a digital humanities project on an original topic, recognizing that authority is created and constructed, as detailed in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy.¹

Texts
All texts for this course will be available on Blackboard: https://blackboard.rutgers.edu.

Course Evaluation and Expectations
Participation (20%)

Students are expected to participate actively and constructively in class discussions, and to pay attention during lectures and presentations. Students should complete all required readings

¹ The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy is available here: http://www.al.org/acrl/standards/ilframework
before class; participate in class-wide and small-group discussions; and demonstrate respect for the ideas of others. Students must bring all required materials (readings, homework assignments, essays, etc.) to class. *Cell phone use is not permitted in class and laptop use is permitted for note-taking only.*

Students will self-assess their participation twice during the semester, and will work with the professor to determine areas of strength and areas in which improvement is needed. Students will receive two participation grades, each of which will be worth 10 points (or 10% of the final grade in the class) for a total of 20 points (or 20%).

**Homework (20%)**

Homework assignments will be assigned weekly, and will be due on Wednesdays; assignments will be brief, should take no more than 20 minutes to complete, and will serve as starting points for the final project (outlined below). Each homework assignment will be worth 2 points (or 2% of the final grade in the class) for a total of 20 points (or 20%).

**Quizzes (10%)**

Quizzes will be given every other Monday, and will be designed to ensure that students are reading and understanding material discussed in class. Quizzes will be brief, and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Each quiz will be worth 2 points (or 2% of the final grade in the class), for a total of 10 points (or 10%). The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

**Presentations (10%)**

Students will work in groups to make a brief (20-minute) presentation to the class. The presentation will be worth 10 points (or 10% of the final grade in the class).

- In their presentations, students will introduce their classmates to a topic to be covered in class (ie, an author or artist, or an important literary or cultural movement). A sign-up sheet for presentations will be circulated during the first weeks of the term. *No make-up presentations are allowed without the explicit advance permission of the professor.*
- As a group, students will be responsible for preparing PowerPoint (or Prezi) slides, as well as a one-page handout summarizing the information they include in their presentations. Students should email the professor their slides and handout *no later than 9 a.m. the day of their presentation* and should bring copies of their handout to class.

**Final Project (40%)**

Students will work throughout the semester to research a topic of their choosing related to Cuba. In the first half of the semester, students will complete a series of homework assignments related to the topic they have identified; in the second half of semester, they will participate in a series of in-class workshops to create a final digital humanities project that builds on these assignments.

The final project will be worth 40 points (or 40% of the final grade in the class), and will include the following components: archival research piece (20 points), position statement (5
points), bibliography (5 points), map (5 points), short video (5 points). Further details on the final project, as well as its components, will be available on Blackboard.

**Attendance**

*Attendance in this class is mandatory.* Two (2) unexcused absences are permitted without penalty--save these absences for when you really need them, as there will almost certainly be a day or two when you can’t find parking, need to study for an exam in another class, or have an appointment. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade, which will be dropped by 2% per additional absence. If you miss three classes, that is, and have a final grade of 90%, you will receive an 88%; if you miss four classes, your grade will be an 86%.

*Please note: attendance and participation are taken very seriously. If you miss more than 10 classes, you will not pass the course unless I agree that there are extenuating circumstances and unless appropriate documentation is obtained from Academic Services (315 Hill Hall). If you are facing a situation that is making it difficult for you to attend class, please come to see me as soon as possible.*

**Grading**

All grades will be posted to Blackboard. The final average will determine the final grade, with letter grades corresponding to the following levels of achievement (as stated in the college-wide policy determined by the University’s Faculty Senate):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-87 (88-89 B+)</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-77 (78-79 C+)</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Achievement that is worth of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/N</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either: (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit; or (2) was not completed and there was not agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (incomplete).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Resources**

The many resources available to students at Rutgers–Newark include the following:

- Rutgers Learning Center ([http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc](http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc)). Services offered by the Learning Center include tutoring and academic coaching.
- Rutgers Writing Center ([http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter](http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter)). “The Writing Center offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers, Newark campus.”
• Office of Disability Services for Students (http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/). Students needing accommodations for a disability should let the professor know as soon as possible. Students will need a letter from the Office of Disability Services outlining accommodations.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in this class, as it is at the University (http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/).

It is particularly important to remember that *plagiarism is not allowed*. Rutgers University defines plagiarism as follows: “the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic work. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks, or by appropriate indentation, and must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline. Acknowledgment is also required when material from any source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one’s own words. [...] Information that is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be cited; however, the sources of all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, other materials that contribute to one’s general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography” (http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism).

Any student who turns in a work that has been plagiarized in part or in totality will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Students guilty of plagiarism will jeopardize their academic careers. Please note: any student who turns in work that is plagiarized in part or in totality will receive, at minimum, a 0 on the assignment; depending on the extent of plagiarism, he or she may receive an F in the class, a note in his or her academic record, or expulsion from the university.
Course Schedule

Introduction

How do we think of Cuba? How do we map Cuba?

9/4 Course Overview
Mapping Cuba (in-class exercise)

Week 1: Pre-colonial and Colonial Cuba

How is pre-colonial and colonial Cuba mapped? How is race defined in Cuba (past and present)?

9/9 Christopher Columbus, Diario (selections)²
Hillary Gulley, “Searching for Cuba’s Pre-Colombian Roots”

9/11 Fernando Ortiz, El contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar (selections)
Victor R. Ferro Fernández, “Gitana tropical”
Mapping Cuba (writing assignment)

Week 2: The Repeating Island and the Plantation Economy

How might we map the island (be it singular and/or “repeating”) in our discussion of Cuba? How does the plantation economy impact Cuban identity?

9/16 Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Sab (selections)
Quiz #1

9/18 Antonio Benítez Rojo, La isla que se repite (selections)
Leora Fuller: Final Project (Guest Lecture)

Week 3: “Our America”

How do writers position Cuba vis-à-vis Spain, the United States, and Latin America in the nineteenth century? How might we map “Our America” (past, present, and future)?

9/23 José Martí, “Nuestra América”

9/25 Visit to Archives
What are the Archives? (writing assignment)

Week 4: Revolutionary Cuba

How is Cuba mapped and portrayed before and after the 1959 Revolution?

9/30 Theodore Roosevelt, “The Platt Amendment”
Louis A. Pérez, Jr., Ser cubano: identidad, nacionalidad y cultura (selections)
Quiz #2

10/2 Fidel Castro, La historia me absolverá (selections)
John Johnson, “U.S. Cartoonists Portray Cuba”
Cuba en Newark (writing assignment)

² Sept. 10: Last day for students to drop a class without a “W” grade. Sept 11: Last day to add classes.
Week 5: Cuba as “Calibán”

Who is the “new man” (and the “new woman”) in Revolutionary Cuba? How is the space of the nation defined in Revolutionary rhetoric?

10/7 Roberto Fernández Retamar, “Calibán” (selections)
10/9 Fresa y chocolate (film)
Object overview (writing assignment)

Week 6: A Nation for All

How are race and identity negotiated in Revolutionary Cuba? What is the “palenque,” and what is its importance in Cuba today? What does it mean to have “a nation for all”?

10/14 Alejandro de la Fuente, A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba (selections)
Nicolás Guillén, selected poems
Nancy Morejón, selected poems
Quiz #3

10/16 Ruha Benjamin, Race After Technology (selections)
Del Palenque... y para... (blog)
Rito Ramón Aroche, selected poems
Caridad Atencio, selected poems
Christian Parenti, “Post-modern Maroon in the Ultimate Palenque”
Race and Technology (writing assignment)

Week 7: The Cuban Diaspora

What is the relationship between the space of the Cuban nation and the space of the Cuban diaspora? How does this change during (and after) the “Special Period”?

10/21 Silvio Rodríguez, “Silvio Rodríguez Sings of the Special Period”
Steve Fainaru and Ray Sánchez, “Emigration in the Special Period”
Participation Self-Assessment

10/23 Reina María Rodríguez, selected poems
Ramón Hondal, selected poems
Preliminary bibliography

Week 8: Isla sin fin/Island without End

How might we map an “island without end”? How might we map the “Cuban Empire”?

10/28 Antonio José Ponte, Cuentos de todas partes del imperio (selections)
Rafael Rojas, Isla sin fin (selections)
Quiz #4

10/30 Julio García Espinosa, “Por un cine imperfecto”
P.M. (short film)
Position statement (first draft)
Week 9: The Portable Island

11/4 Ruth Behar and Lucía M. Suárez, *The Portable Island: Cubans at Home in the World* (selections)³

11/6 In-class Workshop: Digital Humanities Project
*Voice at Home and in the World* (writing assignment)
*Leora Fuller: Research and Narrative Voice / WordPress* (Guest Lecture)

Week 10: Cuba.com

11/11 Francisco Morán, “Cuba.com: Escapes, descosidos y reinvención del espacio nacional”
Erick J. Mota, *Habana Underguater* (selections)
*Quiz #5*

11/13 In-class Workshop: Digital Humanities Project

Week 11: The Transnational Cuban Archipelago

11/18 Elena Lahr-Vivaz, “Islands and Archipelagos”

11/20 *Leora Fuller: Critical Generosity Workshop* (In-class Workshop)

Week 12: Re-Mapping Cuba

11/25 In-class Workshop: Digital Humanities Project
*Participation Self-Assessment*

11/27 No class: Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 13: Cuba en Newark

12/2 Presentations: Final Projects

12/4 Presentations: Final Projects

Conclusions

12/9 Presentations: Final Projects

12/11 Conclusions

³ Nov. 4: Last day students may drop courses (“W” grade assigned).