

SPAN 395, *Virtualizing Cuba: Arts, Politics and Society in Today's Cuba*

Cuba Maymester 2021 (adapted to be taught *online*)

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Spring 2021 / Monday, May 17 – Thursday, June 10, 2021

Intensive virtual classes will run M-Th from 10am-12:20-12:30pm / last 40 minutes will be asynchronous activities / When we have speakers from Cuba, they will try their best to show at 11:30 AM (PT). Class in Zoom should be over between 12:20-12:30pm.



**Contact Hours: 4wks – 4days – 3 hrs, 10 mins each day* / Classes conducted via Zoom
*last 40-50mins, most of the time, will be asynchronous work.**

Course Description

This course will be conducting entirely in a remote fashion. During four weeks we will analyze Cuban history and its intrinsic relation with pivotal moments in the history of the United States. We will examine Cuban contemporary culture through the discussion of historical documents, documentaries, films, visual art, music and literature. You will have the opportunity to receive virtual presentations from specialists in Cuba-US relations, Cuban journalists, musicians and entrepreneurs from the island; and will be also to enjoy of virtual tours of one of the most important arts museums in Havana and other sites of historical interest.

The evaluation of the course will be based on daily responses to readings and visual materials (in Discussion Board in Blackboard), a presentation of a topic of interest of the students in Google slides format (presented via Zoom), a midterm debate and a final essay which topic is of interest for the student.

The course will be conducted in English. If you are interested to take it for Spanish credit you will do most of the written work in this language.

Learning Outcomes

- Engage you in a cross-cultural inquiry where you can learn more about Cuban and American cultures.
- Provide you with interpretative skills necessary to critically analyze art, cultural and social issues.
- Re-examine the stereotype of Cuba as an “enemy country” and consider how art can increase mutual understanding and bridge differences amid great ideological and geopolitical conflict.

Texts Required

The Cuba Reader. History, Culture, Politics (2019), Ed. Chomsky et al (2nd Edition) – ebook available through the USC library:

<https://read-dukeupress-edu.libproxy1.usc.edu/books/book/2605/The-Cuba-ReaderHistory-Culture-Politics>

Havana Nocturne. (2007), T. J. English – *A fascinating historical novel!*

Digital copy of book available here:

<https://b-ok.cc/book/1088772/b180bc>

Use copies in Amazon at \$4!!

Visual Material (documentaries, films) required to watch in this course:

The Cuba Libre Story, documentary series, 8 episodes (Netflix)

Memories of Underdevelopment (film- available through Digitalia Hispanica, streaming services of the USC Libraries)

CubAmerican (documentary – available through Kanopy)

“*Black in Latin America*”: *Cuba, The Next Revolution* (documentary serie by Henry Louis Gates, Jr, available in Youtube)

Fatherland or Death (documentary available in Youtube)

Cuba and the Cameraman (documentary, available in Netflix)

Wasp Network (film, available in Netflix)

Optional Reading for historical context U.S.-Cuba relations:

The United States and Cuba: From Closest Enemies to Distant Friends (2017), Francisco López Segrera – (Chapter 1 available in Google Books)

Evaluation

Participation/Attendance/Contribution	10%
Assignments (Google Forms)	10%
Student Presentation	10%
Reflections	
(6-7 responses to visual material)	40%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Research Essay (9-10pages)	20%

Grade Scale

A = 93-100 / A- = 90-92 / B+ = 87-90 / B = 83-86 / B- = 80-82 / C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76 / C- = 70-72 / P= 70+ / NP = 67-0

Participation, Attendance and Contribution to class discussions (PAC)

Since this course will be taught *online* during 4 weeks (4 days a week, 3hrs,10mins each) your presence and active participation is expected to have productive class discussions. To guarantee a good grade in this category, you need to attend our Zoom meetings, and show up prepared and willing to participate in class discussion and activities. You need to do the readings and watch the visual material assigned for every class meeting the day prior to our class discussion. For every class you miss, your grade in this category will suffer a 20% deduction. You might also lose points if you show up late to our Zoom meetings or if you are not showing on camera and I call your name and you do not respond. Please, try to keep a good communication flow with me and excuse any tardy or absence you know you will have.

Timely submission of assignments

I understand that this is not the ideal format for a course that requires thought-provoking debates and discussions. I also understand that we ALL are experiencing a difficult, stressful time. However, to be fair to the students that will do the work regardless of these circumstances, I am willing to offer a no-penalty 24hrs extension to a student that request this possibility with enough time before the assignment is due. After this, for any additional day of extension you need, your work will suffer a 50%-70% deduction, depending on how late it is and the quality of the work produced.

Plagiarism

Taking someone else's words, with or without consent and portraying them as if they were your own, constitutes an act of plagiarism. This include cutting and pasting from websites or passages of articles and books, as well as copying another student's work. For USC policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, see <https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/>

Disability Services

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please present your letter of accommodation to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776

Before the First Day of Classes:

It will be ideal that you start the online class with this work done:

- Have watched first two episodes of documentary series in Netflix ***The Cuba Libre Story*** (Netflix):
 - Breaking Chains

- War and Sugar
- Have already started reading *Havana Nocturne* (only book you need to buy and that is a fascinating reading!). We will discuss following chapters: *Intro*, *Chap 2- The Mob's Playground*; *Chap 7 – The Gambler's Paradise*; *Chap 10- Carnival of Flesh*, but you can read more of them if you wish

Course Program – see in Blackboard weekly.

***FINAL RESEARCH ESSAY (9-10 pages) due Monday, June 15 at 5pm. Please send or share your essay, preferably as a Google Doc, or a Word doc that you can share with me at igomez@usc.edu**

***Please don't send me PDFs as they are more challenging to comment.**

DISCLAIMER: the program may change at any time, since it will be adjusted to cover students' interest and participation of virtual presenters from Cuba.

SPAN 395 – Virtualizing Cuba (Cuba Maymester Online, 2021)

By Profe Gómez

Course Program

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*An adjustment of schedule needed due to canceled class of Thursday, May 27

WEEK 1

Monday, May 17

Intro to Course

A. Cuba Without a Castro (synchronous - 10-10:30)

A country steps into the unknown:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/world/americas/cuba-castro.html>

B. Origins of a Complex Relation (synchronous -10:30-11:20) – 11:20-11:30 (break!)

Class discussion of readings from textbook: *The Cuba Reader*

To access the ebook go here:

<https://read-dukeupress-edu.libproxy1.usc.edu/books/book/2605/The-Cuba-ReaderHistory-Culture-Politics>

Scroll down until you find the reading's title and DOI # at the end of link (ex: -025) and CLICK ON "PFD" provided (DO NOT CLICK ON TITLE, since it will take you longer to get to the PDF)

- The Explosion of the *Maine*. New York Journal (-030)
- The Platt Amendment (-034)
- U.S. Cartoonists Portray Cuba (-031) – Breakout Rooms

C. Discussion of first two episodes of “The Cuba Libre Story”, docu-series Netflix (synchronous) / A Kahoot game to test what you learned!
Breaking Chains and War and Sugar (11:30-12pm)

D. **Own your own (asynchronous time - to make up for last 40 mins of class)**

- 1) **Watch virtual presentation of Cuban Art Curator: Elisa González** – Overview of Cuba Art in Pre-Revolutionary Cuba – see link in Blackboard (under Virtual Presentations from Cuba).
- 2) Complete Google Doc activity that Profe Gomez will send you.
- 3) Prepare 3 questions for Elisa: it can be about Cuban pre-revolutionary art, about Cuban contemporary art or her life in Cuba as an art curator. Elisa will participate virtually from Cuba the following class at 11:30 AM (PT / 2:30PM in Cuba)

HW for next class

(readings for following day be completed BEFORE following class/visual material watched):

READ: *Havana Nocturne* (Intro, Chap 2- The Mob’s Playground and Chap 7 – The Gambler’s Paradise)

WATCH: The Cuba Libre Story, Episode 3, Gangsters’ Paradise

Tuesday, May 18:

Cuba’s Allure and The American Gaze (Part 1)

A. Reading discussion 10-11

Havana Nocturne (Intro, Chapter 2- The Mob’s Playground and Chapter 7-The Gambler’s Paradise)

B. **Clip of *The Godfather (Part 2)* – Corleone in Havana**

Discussion 11- 11:20 / Break from 11:20-11:30

C. Virtual conversation with Elisa Gonzalez, art curator from Cuba (11:30 AM)

*bring your questions!

D. **On your own: Watch episode** Lucy Takes a Cruise to Havana (in Daily Motion) – Part 1 (56min) – if this episode is no longer available, a substitute visual material will be assigned.

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6hpcdd>

- 1) Write **Reflections #1** about impressions of how Cuba is represented for an American audience (1 page, - send in Blackboard under “Reflections”)
- 2) Upload Reflection#1 in Blackboard by 5pm.

HW for next class:

READ: Chap 10 of Havana Nocturne: “Carnival of Flesh”/ also, choose another chapter and read it.

WATCH: The Cuba Libre Story, Episode 4: A Ragtag Revolution

Wednesday, May 19

Cuba's Allure and The American Gaze (Part 2)

A. **Student Presentation #1:** Reflections of "Lucy Takes a Cruise to Havana" OR other visual material.

Student: _____ (10-10:30)

B. **Reading discussion:** *Havana Nocturne* (10:30-11:20)

Chapter 10 – "Carnival of Flesh" and any other chapter you decided to read.

Clip of "Superman" scene from Godfather 2 (Youtube)

C. **Reading discussion:** The Invasion of the Tourists (-50) in *The Cuba Reader* online

Video "Havana Holiday", 1959 – a tour of Havana in the late 1950's (11:30-12:20)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Offieyp2VNw>

D. **On your own:** watch these videos from Youtube: (12:20-1:10)

1) Expedia Cuba Vacation Travel Guide:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Offieyp2VNw>

2) Conan in Cuba (in March 2015 Conan O'Brien becomes first late-night host to broadcast from the island, since 1959). Watch intro:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjfogiltO80>

3) Complete the *Kahoot Challenge* Prof Gomez will send you! – about info of these videos 😊

HW for next class:

WATCH: The Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro (doc in Youtube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0952Hj4fWw&t=54s>

AND continue watching episodes of The Cuba Libre Story

READ: see readings assigned for following day (especially any readings/video assigned in preparation for next day virtual speaker)

*Suggested reading about Fidel Castro and his personality (especially for student that will be doing Presentation 2 - from The Cuba Reader

History Will Absolve Me (-064)

Castro Announces the Revolution (-070)

The Cuban Story in the New York Times (-067)

Thursday, May 20

The Cuban Revolution and Its Institutionalization

A. **Student Presentation #2:** the character of Fidel Castro (10-10:30)

Personality analysis of the man that comes to represent Cuba, according to info from documentaries The Cuba Libre Story and YouTube doc The Cuban Revolution

Student: _____

B. The First Steps Towards Social Transformation 10:30-11:20

Group discussions of these readings in Breakout Rooms

Report later to whole class:

- Building a New Society (-068)
- How the Poor Got More (-071)
- The Agrarian Revolution (-076)
- The Literacy Campaign (-078)

C. Virtual conversation with specialist of Cuba-U.S. relations Prof. Raúl Rodríguez (11:30 AM)

*bring questions!

D. Own your own: (12:20-1:20)

WATCH: Cuban film: *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968). Directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

Film available through the USC Library Streaming Media services, at Digitalia Hispanica (Spanish Films with English Subtitles). See this link:

<http://www.digitaliafilmlibrary.com.libproxy1.usc.edu/film/819/memories-of-underdevelopment>

Click in “Digitalia” Film Library supplies (in red); then you need to enter your USC Student ID and Password

HW for weekend/ Monday:

*OPTIONAL: If you want to know more about the Cuban Missile Crisis, also watch this documentary about “De-classified files of the U.S. government about it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJbBQi02Rrs&t=2177s>

WRITE: Reflection #2 – impressions about Memories of Underdevelopment (1 page, via Blackboard). Pick some of scenes that resulted interesting for you and reflect on them. Upload in Blackboard by Sunday, May 23, 5pm.

START THINKING ABOUT: Final essay ~ Need to write an essay proposal/outline and turn it by Friday, May 28 at 5pm.

CONTINUE WATCHING: *The Cuba Libre Story*

WEEK 2

Monday, May 24

On the Brink of Catastrophe

A. Student Presentation #3: Impressions about film *Memories of Underdevelopment*.

Student: _____

B. Breakout Room – group discussion of articles about the Cuban Missile Crisis

- “Operation Mongoose”, (-100)
- “Offensive Missiles on That Imprisoned Island”, (-101)

C. Class discussion of:

“Inconsolable Memories: A Cuban View of the Missile Crisis” (-102)– excerpt of novel that inspired the film

D. On your own

WATCH: Episode 2 of *Black in Latin America (Cuba, The Next Revolution)* by Henry Louis Gates, Jr (Youtube video)¹:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhtGliln58>

DO: Google Doc activity I will send you.

HW for next class:

WATCH: *Afro-Cuba Libre*: a mini-documentary about Race in Cuba.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_OzkISsyDo

READ: readings for next class.

Tuesday, May 25

The Revolution’s Disenfranchised

A. Student Presentation #4: Impressions about two documentaries about race in Cuba

Student: _____

B. Groups discussion:

- Reading: “Silence on Black Cuba” (-082)
- “Postmodern Maroon in the Ultimate Palenque” (-084)

¹ There is another way to see it through the USC Libraries / Databases / Films On Demand with better quality than the one in Youtube:

OK, here is another way--go directly to Films on Demand database. Barbara explains the steps: 1) Click on the USC Databases page, <https://libraries.usc.edu/databases>

2) On Databases page above enter Films on Demand in the search box/ 3) After you sign in on the USC security page with your USC user name and password you will get the database 4) In Films on Demand search for the film title Cuba the next revolution. It will show.

- C. **Virtual conversation with Orlando (Orly) Ochoa**, who will share with you his experience as an Afro-Cuban living in Cuba now and his ideas on racial discrimination.
- D. **Own your own:**
WATCH: Documentary *CubAmerican* – available through Kanopy streaming services (via USC Libraries)
<https://usclib.kanopy.com/video/cubamerican>

HW for next class:

WRITE: **Reflection #3.** You have the choice to write this reflection about either the topic of Race in Cuba or the experience of Cuban-Americans and the way they have shaped American culture.

READ: readings for next day

WORK on your **ESSAY PROPOSAL** – to submit **Tuesday, June 1 by 5pm (via Google Doc share)**

Wednesday, May 26

The Cuban-American Experience

- A. Class discussion of documentary
CubAmerican
- B. Breakout room group discussion of:
- “Cuban Refugee Children” (-104)
 - “From Welcomed Exiles to Illegal Immigrants” (-105)
 - “City on the Edge” (-107) AND short-story
- C. Opening of *Scarface* (1983), film of Brian De Palma about “Marielito” Tony Montana
- **REMINDER: Thursday, May 27 we will not have class!!** Classes will resume on Tuesday, June 1st due to Memorial Weekend (That Tuesday we will have the Midterm Debate = “pros and cons of the Cuban Revolution of 1959”

Assigning groups for the Midterm Debate

One group will defend the argument: “The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had a positive impact on Cuban society” / the other group will defend the argument: “The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had a detrimental effect in Cuban society”

- **REMINDER: Send Essay Proposal by Tuesday, June 1st 5pm via Google Doc share**

HW for LONG Weekend

PREPARE for: Midterm Debate argument

WATCH: Documentary in Netflix: “Cuba and the Cameraman” (2017)

WRITE: Reflection #4 about “Cuba and the Cameraman”
WORK on your Essay Proposal

Thursday, May 27 – CLASS CANCELED

Readings to do this day to understand “The Special Period of the 90s” (very similar to the situation of scarcity and economic crisis that Cuba is suffering at the present post-pandemic):

“The Período Especial” (-110):

“Special Period in Peacetime”: Economic and Labor Reforms (-113).

WEEK 3

Monday, May 31

NO CLASS = Memorial Day

Tuesday, June 1

A. Midterm Debate

B. **Student Presentation #5: Impressions of “Cuba and the Cameraman”**
Student: **Maya Abu-Zahra**

C. Virtual conversation with independent journalist Elain Díaz (Periodismo de Barrio)

D. Own your own:

WATCH: Obama’s speech in Havana, March 22, 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcINz5nPQU>

HW for next class:

READ: Readings for following class

Wednesday, June 2

Cuba in the 2000s – The Era of Raúl

A. **Student Presentation #7: Impressions of Obama’s speech in Havana.**
Student: **Jeremy Du**

B. **Group discussions:**

“Obama and Us”, *TCR*, p. 652

“Raul’s Reforms”, *TCR*, p. 581

“Visit Cuba before It Changes!”, *TCR*, p. 657

“New Cuban Voices”, *TCR*, p.661

C. **Student Presentation #8 Cuba’s advances in medicine and biomedicine**
Student: **Sonali Chu**

- D. Watch in class: *Cuba's Cancer Hope* (PBS documentary about Cuba's development of innovative lung cancer vaccine – 53min)

HW for next class:

READ: News articles for following class

Work on final essay

Thursday, June 3

Cuba Without Fidel

- A. Class discussion of reading and videos
- “Commentaries on Fidel Castro’s Death”, TCR, p. 678
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2016/nov/26/cuban-americans-celebrate-in-miami-following-death-of-fidel-castro-video>
 - <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/reflections-on-the-death-of-fidel-2/>
- B. The New President of Cuba: Miguel Díaz-Canel
“Who is Díaz-Canel: Cuba’s New President?”, April 18, 2018, New York Times
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/19/world/americas/miguel-diaz-canel-bermudez-cuba.html>
- C. Virtual tour of *Fusterlandia* / Fuster: the Cuban “Gaudi”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URfcssOpEPU>

HW for weekend /next class:

WATCH: Film *Wasp Network* (2019) - Netflix

READ: Excerpt of book by Cuba writer will be sent

WEEK 4 – CUBA NOW!

Monday, June 7

One last look back: Cuban spies in U.S. and the view of a Cuban writer

- A. **Student Presentation #8:** impressions of *Wasp Network*

Student: _____

- B. Groups discussion
Until We're Fish by Cuban-American author Susannah R. Drissi

C. Virtual conversation with Cuban writer

- D. Own your own:
WATCH: A New Generation of Cuban Music: CimaFunk Talks at Google

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEya8W3eWBE&t=1022s>

READ: “CimaFunk on top: interview by Cubahora”

<https://cuba50.org/2018/12/28/cimafunk-on-topinterview-by-cubahora/>

HW for weekend / next class:

WRITE: Reflection #6 – you have the choice of writing about *Wasp Network* of the novel *Until We're Fish*.

WATCH: videos made for the class by CimaFunk

WORK on: final essay

Tuesday, June 8

Cuban Music Now: hip-hop, Cuban “funk” and how Afro-Cubans confront racism now

- A. Class discussion about presentation and interview with Erik Rodríguez: CimaFunk
- B. Brief presentation about Cuban hip-hop: the work of the rap couple “Obsesión” and female rap duo: “La Reina y la Real”
- C. Discussion of Cuba art movements for social change and anti-racism activism now in Cuba, based in the study of Sujatha Fernandes: “Afro-Cuban Activist Fight Racism between Two Fires” (-125)

D. Virtual conversation with CimaFunk

HW for next class:

READ: “The end of Cuba’s Entrepreneurship Boom”

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/15/the-end-of-cubas-entrepreneurship-boom/>

WATCH: Obama Speaks at Entrepreneurs Event when in Cuba

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWmApjeuR6Q>

WORK on: Final Essay (to turn in Monday, June 14 by 5pm, ideally)

Wednesday, June 9

Opened for Business: The new entrepreneurial class in Cuba

- A. Class discussion about the challenges of “cuentapropismo” in Cuba (according to the article and the video of the Cuban entrepreneurs talking to Obama)
- B. Group discussion about the presentation of Adriana Heredia, owner of “Beyond Roots”
- C. **Virtual conversation with Adriana Heredia**, founder and owner of *Beyond Roots*

- D. Optional extra-credit experience (1% to be added to Total Weight): learning how to make a Cuban-style *mojito* with Profe G.

HW for next class:

WORK on: Final Essay (to turn in Monday, June 14 by 5pm, ideally)

WATCH: Collin Laverty videos

To learn more about CET and Collin, check the following links:

<https://www.cubaeducationaltravel.com/abouthtml>

About the latest restrictions to Travel to Cuba, imposed by the Trump administration in June, 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMVA2c2ouaU>

Thursday, June 10 – Course conclusion

The situation in Cuba at this moment: from efforts to control the pandemic to extreme scarcity

- A. Discussion of current situation in Cuba
- B. **Virtual conversation with Collin Laverty**, founder and president of Cuba Educational Travel (CET)
- C. Comments about Final Essay / Some conclusive comments / Evaluations
- D. **Writing of last Reflection (Reflection #7-** choice of writing about impressions of Adriana Heredia OR Collin Laverty presentation)

HW for this weekend:

Finish final essay

Final Essay due: **Monday, June 14 (2021) by 5:00pm** – preferably as a Google Doc or a Word doc that you can share with igomez@usc.edu

***Please don't send me PDFs as they are more challenging to comment.**