

**LAH 5934**  
**The Modern Caribbean**  
**Graduate Seminar**  
**Winter 2019**

***Introduction and Scholarly Goals***

By nature, a graduate seminar seeks to generate discussion and debate on a variety of approaches to the research, study and writing of history. This class provides opportunities for specialists of Latin American history to gain comparative knowledge of Caribbean history and historiography. First launched in the 1940s and 50s professionally and conceptually by anticolonial intellectuals (many of whom hailed from the Caribbean itself, such as Eric Williams and C.L.R. James), scholarship on the Caribbean has since become a central axis for studying a wide array of historical realities and systems. These include the roots of European-led capitalism in the system of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism as well as radical thought and political change. In the last thirty years especially, historians have increasingly identified the Caribbean as a critical space for the development of revolution and ideas of freedom, unshackled to the eurocentric premise that Liberalism first emerged among white intellectuals and anti-monarchists in Europe or among the mostly pro-slavery or slave-owning elites who launched anti-imperialist revolution in the Thirteen Colonies.

As this course's list of selected works for assignment reflects, scholars of the Caribbean have generally adopted interdisciplinary approaches to analyzing the past as much as the present. Increasingly committed to accessing the unwritten, undocumented, destroyed or deliberately forgotten archives of slaves, people of color and the Caribbean's other marginalized majorities, historians have adopted and incorporated both the methods and theories of other disciplines, especially literature and anthropology, since the 1970s. Today, historians of Caribbean societies shaped by contemporary authoritarianism, US military interventions or twentieth-century dictatorships are beneficiaries of these efforts. In the absence of open access to state archives (or, in some cases, the archives themselves), we have broadened the definition and scope of our approaches to primary sources—becoming detectives, journalists and midwives to a past whose resilience in everyday life has made its importance impossible to deny.

Key historians of slavery in the Caribbean included the wide-ranging, prolific and legendary Stuart Schwartz as well as the pioneering, methodologically eclectic historian of Puerto Rico and the broader “imperial zone” of the Caribbean, Francisco Scarano. We are honored to welcome both of them to our class this semester and to read works they have selected for discussion with them personally.

***Expectations and Seminar Requirements***

Students in this seminar will find themselves prepared to tackle the Modern Caribbean field for qualifying exams. They should also be inspired to define their dissertations in line with cutting-edge approaches and the still unanswered questions earlier generations of historians raised about the past. Students are expected to know the broad historical chronologies of the countries studied as the purpose of our meetings is to examine scholarly approaches to events, people, periods and contexts, not to discuss a particular sequence of events. (For this reason, the recommended texts

of Caribbean political and economic history listed below should serve as points of reference to the larger concerns of later assigned readings.)

Expectations for active, engaged participation and listening are high; silence is not an acceptable response to the readings or to peers' or Professor Guerra's questions. We shall strive, however, to develop an intimate, dynamic but also intellectually contemplative community based on mutual learning and relaxed discussion, not competition for space on the stage.

Attendance is mandatory at all seminar meetings. Absences without medical or other relevant documentation will result in the student receiving a mark of zero for the missed class. Violations of the honor code, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated and may result in dismissal from the program and/or university.

### ***Assignments***

There are thirteen reading assignments for this class. Students must write a 900- to 1200-word response paper to nine of these thirteen assignments. These response papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point font with 1" margins. Only hard copies are accepted. Regular response papers are due at the time of class when the reading on which the student has written will be discussed. The goal of writing responses before class (rather than after) is to produce independent thought in advance of communal discussion, not a composite of ideas derived from class.

- Of these nine papers, one must engage Allen Wells and Steve Topick's Global Markets Transformed in dialogue with any other book assigned for class. A critical economic history, Wells and Topick's book shows how commodity-driven development recast the colonial Caribbean into a neocolonial region. Thus, the history it tells is crucial to filling out students' knowledge of the area and putting that knowledge into conversation with the political, cultural and social histories that lie at the heart of this seminar. Recommended books for this "dialogical" paper include those by Schwartz, Findlay, Guerra, Iglesias Utset, Hoffnung-Garskof, and Donoghue.
- Students may alternatively opt to write a 2500-word historiographic essay that relies on the whole set of three recommended reference books (Knight, Trouillot as well as Wells & Topick) in lieu of writing two of the required 9 short response papers. Students who choose this option must submit this longer paper during the last week of class, by Friday, April 19.

Because there should be plenty of time and opportunities for students to plan the dates when they will be reading and writing for class, there will be no extensions. That said, the purpose of this seminar is *not* to "test" an already existing set of analytical skills but to develop those skills. Consequently, Professor Guerra will evaluate students' progress and anticipate increasingly sharp, creative and improved writing over time. Barring unexpected obstacles or external distractions (such as obligations to the department or a conference), Professor Guerra will return students' responses the week after students submit them. This will ensure that the students can return to their original response essays and "fill in" analytical, theoretical or other gaps on their own as well as revisit—using their notes from seminar—the material. This will help them to create an archive of reference notes for future study.



- Sybille Fischer, Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution. Duke University Press, 2004. *Read pp. 131-260 only.*
- Lisa Yun, The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba. Temple University Press, 2008. *Read 1-137 only.*

2/13 Getting Beyond Imperial Dependence (to the Cuba that Might Have Been)

CLASS TO BE RESCHEDULED IN CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS. Dr. Guerra is presenting at the opening session of the Cuban Research Institute's annual conference in Miami.

- Lillian Guerra, The Myth of José Martí: Conflicting Nationalisms in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba. UNC Press, 2005.

2/20 Popular Culture as Political Culture in Early Revolutionary Cuba: Close Readings

- Marial Iglesias Utset, A Cultural History of Cuba during the US Occupation, 1898-1902. UNC Press, 2011.

2/27 A Master's Class with Dr. Stuart Schwartz, George Burton Adams Professor of Latin American History, Yale University.

- Stuart Schwartz, Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean. Princeton University Press, 2016.

3/6 SPRING BREAK

3/13 The New History of the Cuban Republic "from Within", Part 1: The Revolution of 1933

- Robert Whitney, State and Revolution in Cuba: Mass Mobilization and Political Change, 1920-1940. UNC Press, 2001.

3/20 The New History of the Cuban Republic (& 1959 Revolution) "from Within", Part 2

- Jennifer Lambe, Madhouse: Psychiatry and Politics in Cuban History. UNC Press, 2017.

3/27 Panama as Axis: US Imperialism, Latin American Freedom and the Crucible of Nation

- Michael E. Donoghue, Borderland on the Isthmus: Race, Culture and the Struggle for the Canal Zone. Duke University Press, 2014.

4/03 Pioneering the Political History of Twentieth-Century Haiti

- Matthew Smith, Red & Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict and Political Change, 1934-1957. UNC Press, 2009.

4/10 Transnational History as Latin American History: Approaching the Dominican Republic

- Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950. Princeton University Press, 2008.

4/17 Historical Cosmologies: Excavating Black Consciousness across Cuban Revolutions

- Jalane Schmidt, Cachita's Streets: The Virgin of Charity, Race and Revolution in Cuba. Duke University Press, 2015.