

# Cuba: Race, Revolution and Culture

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Meets: F | Period 3 - 5 (9:35 AM - 12:35 PM)  
Online via Zoom:

Office Hours: Fridays 3 pm – 5 pm & by Appt.  
[Click here to join Zoom Meeting:977 0402 2782](#)

## OVERALL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course analyzes the role of race and “culture” in the formation contemporary Cuban politics and national identity. By focusing on the arts; particularly music, film and literature, this course will analyze the development of Cuban national identity during Cuba's colonial period; the Afro Cuban challenge to the “race blind” political and cultural movements of the Cuban Republic. We will then wrap-up the semester by addressing the significance of Hip-Hop as a contemporary cultural movement that challenges the social issues currently facing Cuban citizens.

To this end, some of the questions we will address are:

- What is the meaning of race in the contemporary Cuba?
- What does it mean to be “Cuban?”
- Why do Cuban’s link their struggle for equality to anti-racist, postcolonial and anti-neo-colonial social movements?
- What has been the role of “culture” in defining who is a Cuban citizen and who is not?
- How do we understand the centrality of gender and sexuality in the construction of race and Cuban national identity?

These are the central questions that will inform our discussions in this class throughout this term.

We will examine race and culture sociologically. Meaning that we will look at how individual behavior and everyday beliefs are shaped by many social discourses and socio-economic structures. Therefore, in order to understand the Cuba we will consider how concepts like “race,” ”culture” and “neocolonialism” has been defined over time, and how they have become ingrained in Cuban social thought. We will consider these social processes through a racial and “cultural” lens in which we will link Afro Cubans’ rights

struggle to larger geopolitical trends. Course materials draw from historical testimonials, music, film as well as readings from history and the social sciences.

### **UNIT 1: COLONIAL CUBA**

We focus on several key theoretical frameworks in order to understand the role of race, culture and colonialism in structuring contemporary Cuban culture and national identity. We will consider the effects of Caribbean revolutions, such as the Haitian Revolution, on Cuban national politics. Finally, much of our analysis will center on the emergence of Cuba's particular racial system, and the emergence of several key national discourses that continue to structure social life in the present.

### **UNIT 2: REPUBLICAN CUBA**

We consider the experiences and frustrations of Afro Cubans after Cuba's independence. We will consider the effects of the American occupation of the Island from 1898-1902. We will focus on how Cuba's unfinished revolution – which was started with the Wars of Independence – and how Cuba's neocolonial period (1898-1959) affected Afro Cubans' ability to obtain social and political equality.

### **UNIT 3: CUBAN SOCIALISM**

We consider the relationship between Cuba's socialist project and Cubans' continued struggle for national autonomy. We consider the ways in which some things have changed under the post 1959 Revolutionary government. We will also consider how some things have stayed the same, or even have become worse. We will conclude with an analysis of Underground Cuban Hip Hop as a contemporary manifestation of Cuban youth struggle for social change.

### **UNIT 4: NEW HORIZONS**

This section will address contemporary moves to fashion the future of the Cuban Nation.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives for this course are:

- ☞ **To situate Cuba within its contemporary geographical and geopolitical context.**
- ☞ **To understand and apply sociological concepts and theories of race, culture and social change.**
- ☞ **To understand larger geopolitical, socioeconomic forces such as colonialism and neocolonialism.**
- ☞ **To become proficient in using these concepts through Cuba as a case study.**
- ☞ **To engage and impress your colleagues with your knowledge of the “isms” that are of interest to the “developing world.”**
- ☞ **To learn about a country that has had, and continues to have, a significant influence on social policy in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.**

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Our Rightful Share By Aline Helg

Nationalizing Blackness By Robin Moore

A Nation for All by Alejandro De La Fuente

Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity by Tanya L. Saunders

Course Reserves Available through Canvas

## EVALUATION CRITERIA AND GRADING

I.	Attendance and Participation	20%
II.	Weekly reaction papers	20%
III.	Online Discussion Posts	20%
IV:	Term Papers (2 Papers worth 20% each)	40%

### I. ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. It is your responsibility to come to class prepared to participate in class discussion. Active participation includes asking and answering questions, participating in group exercises, and doing the reading before class.

This is the most important requirement of the class. Twenty percent (20%) of your total grade has been allocated to your presence in the classroom throughout the whole class period. If you arrive to class late, you will be marked absent. More than three unexcused absences will result in a zero for the attendance requirement.

What counts as an excused absence? If you are absent due to medical reasons, your absence will only be excused if you present a doctor's note. Notes from doctors will be initially accepted, but subject to verification-so be sure that they have specific contact information. University documentation is required for special situations such as 'field trips' to participate in competitive sports representing University of Florida, attendance at professional, educational events or other official University events.

### II. REACTION PAPERS

Weekly reaction papers are to be 1-2 pages. They are due at the beginning of each week by the Monday before class @ 12 pm. (For the first reaction paper bring a hardcopy) The reaction papers should address the following questions:

1. What are two major themes from the reading? Give three examples.
2. What are three questions that you have concerning the material?
3. What aspect of the reading did you find most interesting?

### III. ONLINE DISCUSSION

Students who are leading discussions are required to post an online discussion question by 5 pm the week before. (Student led Discussions will happen every Weds). Classmates are to respond to the online posts by 12 pm on Tuesday (the day before the class discussion).

### **TERM PAPERS**

The Format of the papers must be as follows:

- Typed.
- 8-10 pgs
- 1 inch margins.
- 12 point Font.
- Times New Roman Font.
- Follow the MLA, APA or Chicago Style format.

There will be two term papers in this course. In these papers you are going to:

1. **Paper I** is due Monday of week 8 by 5 pm. The prompt will be given week 5
2. **Paper II** is due during our Final Exam time in April. Topic TBA

### **No Late Exams Will Be Accepted**

### **V. Grading Policy**

<b>Percent</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>
<b>93.4-100</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>4.00</b>
<b>93.4-100</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>3.67</b>
<b>90.0-93.3</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>3.33</b>
<b>86.7-89.9</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>3.00</b>
<b>83.4-86.6</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>2.67</b>
<b>80.0-83.3</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>2.33</b>
<b>76.7-79.9</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>2.00</b>
<b>73.4-76.6</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>1.67</b>
<b>70.0-73.3</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>1.33</b>
<b>64.4-66.6</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>1.00</b>
<b>60.0-63.3</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>.67</b>
<b>0-59</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>.00</b>

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Make-ups will only be given with a documented, valid excuse as per University of Florida's guidelines (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Lecture will begin promptly. Please allow sufficient time to settle in and review the previous day's lecture notes before lecture begins.

- Please silence all cell phones and pagers. Persons whose electronic devices sound off in class will be asked to leave.
- Do not talk with others during lectures or while others are speaking.
- Express disagreement respectfully and be reflexive about your conduct and opinions.
- No reading, sleeping, or working on other materials during lectures or section. Students engaged in such activities will be asked to leave class.
- Do not pack up your belongings before the end of class, as this makes it difficult for others to hear, think, and concentrate.

**Disruptive behavior in lecture will be reflected in participation grades.**

## **Counseling and Wellness Center**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

## **Alternative Learning Accommodations**

Students who have documented request for alternative learning accommodations must meet with me and present their official University documentation before the end of the second week of class. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

## **Academic Honesty**

Do not cut and paste summaries found online or copy each other's work. All work must be your own. A case of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. More than one case of plagiarism will result in an F for the course. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## **Course Materials and Supplies**

There are no additional fees for this course.

## Writing Studio

Make sure to take advantage of the University's writing center before turning in your assignments. Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

**Final Thoughts:** Please come see me during my office hours with any questions. The progress of a course varies semester to semester, because every semester there is a new group of people with different experiences. So, depending on how the class progresses, I reserve the right to alter the syllabus – of course, with notice. Also, if I see that people are coming to class unprepared to participate, or are turning in papers that do not directly engage course materials, I will change the essay portion of the grading to “pop-quizzes,” and change the exams to in-class exams. There is nothing more frustrating than to receive a paper that shows that the student did not even try to engage the materials, and it is even more frustrating for all of us in class when that student comes to class unprepared.

Remember that this course does not provide clear-cut answers to social problems or issues. What it does offer, however, is a framework in which to analyze various social phenomena and understand their interrelationship with each other. You should be prepared to grapple with some issues about race, gender, sexuality and culture that you may have never thought about before, or have very strong opinions about. Be prepared to deal with value judgments and some conceptual ambiguity. 😊😊

## Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

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## READING SCHEDULE

Topics in lecture may vary a bit from week to week depending on the pacing of lectures and the interests of the class. However, students should keep up with the reading schedule as noted below, and readings should be completed prior to lecture. I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to fit student needs.

### Week 1 Regional Context during the Colonial Period

Course introduction, Colonial period

Black in Latin America: Cuba

**Week 2 Week 3 the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Politics of Race and Nation**

[Textbook] Our Rightful Share: Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4

[Textbook] Measures of Equality: Introduction

Film: La Ultima Cena in Class

**Week 3 the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Politics of Race and Nation**

[Textbook] Our Rightful Share: Introduction, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Conclusion

[Textbook] Measures of Equality: Chapter 1, Chapter 2

Film: Roots of my Heart

**Week 4 Race Science and Religious Considerations**

[Textbook] Measures of Equality: Chapters 3, 4,

Voice of the Leopard Introduction, Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4

The Black Roots of Salsa: The Emancipation of Cuban Rumba

**Week 5 Race, the Cuban Economy, Cuban Politics**

[Textbook] Measures of Equality: Chapters 5 and 6

[Textbook] A Nation for All: Introduction and Chapter 1

“War on the Negro”: Race and the Revolution of 1933

Sara Gómez: Afrocubana (Afro-Cuban Women’s) Activism after 1961

Soy Cuba

**Week 6 The Republic**

[Textbook] A Nation for All: Chapters 2, 3 and 4

**Week 7 The Republic/The Revolution**

[Textbook] A Nation for All: Chapters 5, 6, 7

De Certa Manera Sara Gómez Director [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_FaWYhtW80](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_FaWYhtW80)

**Week 8 Black Politics, National Politics**

[Textbook] Nationalizing Blackness: Introduction, Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Film: Bene More

**Week 9 Black Politics, National Politics**

[Textbook] Nationalizing Blackness: Chapter 6

[Textbook] A Nation for All: Chapter 8

Film: Buena Vista Social Club, Adios

**Week 10 The Modern Period**

[Textbook] Cuban Underground Hip Hop Introduction, Chapter 2

Palabras as los Intelectuales

History Will Absolve Me by Fidel Castro

Man and Socialism in Cuba by Che Guevera

Excerpt from Lilian Guerra's The Myth of Jose Marti (Introduction)  
Film: Cuba, An African Odyssey

**Week 11 The Modern Period**

[Textbook] Cuban Underground Hip Hop Chapter 3, Chapter 4  
Read excerpt from Revolutionizing Romance: Interracial Couples in Contemporary Cuba

**Week 12 The Modern Period**

[Textbook] Cuban Underground Hip Hop Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8

**Week 13 The Modern Period**

Read Excerpts from Vinceremos: The Erotics of Black Self-Making in Cuba  
Read Excerpts of Fiesta de Diez Pesos: Music and Gay Identity in the Special Period  
Read Alyssa Garcia's article on Jineterismo

Excerpt from the Afro-Hispanic Review Special Issue on the Roberto Zurbano Situation  
Excerpts from Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance (Introduction, Self-Styled Revolutionaries: Forgotten Struggles for Social Change and the Problem of Unintended Dissidence, The Revolution that Might Have Been and The Revolution That Was)  
New York Times Article: Public Spaces Named after Fidel Castro Forbidden  
Film: Cuba and the Cameraman