Dr. Robert Duncan (rhduncan@uci.edu)

Office: Social Science Tower (SST) 433
Office hours: MWF 10:00-10:30 & by appt.

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Course Description:

On New Year’s Eve 1958, longtime master of Cuban politics, Fulgencio Batista, fled the presidential palace to seek asylum in the Dominican Republic. The following day, partisans of Fidel Castro’s 26th of July Movement triumphantly entered the capital city of Havana. For the rebels and many others, this event symbolized the end to social injustice, political corruption, and U.S. economic domination. As one of the “great” modern social upheavals, the Cuban Revolution impacted not just the history of Cuba, but the world as well. But evaluating this history has been the subject of rancorous debate for more than half a century. As one of the few socialist states left in the world, Cuba remains an enigma for many. This course will uncover the historic development and legacy of the Revolution while serving as an entry point to understanding Cuba both of the past and present. Themes will include the issues of economic dependency, revolutionary theory, social justice, race, gender, culture, and the always-volatile relations between Cuba and the United States.


Selected articles: available on course website

Requirements:

Each class will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and videos. Grading is based on a midterm (25% / May 5), a final (35% / June 13), one 5-6 page paper based on the readings (25% /May 26), and attendance as well as participation in discussion sections (15%). Exams will combine short identifications and longer essays based on the assigned readings and material covered in lecture and discussion section. Students, therefore, must attend lectures, finish all readings by the assigned date, and be prepared for classroom discussion.
Course Schedule

Week 1:

April 3 Introduction: Fidel is Dead!
April 5 Colonialism, Sugar, and Slaves
April 7 Reform or Revolution?

Readings:

- Shnookal, Deborah, ed. *José Martí Reader: Writings on the Americas* (Ocean, 2007), selected excerpts (pp. 120-129, 142-155, 166-174).

Week 2:

April 10 “A Splendid Little War”: the United States & 1898
April 12 Neocolonialism under the Plattist Republic
April 14 The Politics of Corruption

Readings:

- Castro, Fidel. *History will Absolve Me* [Castro Internet Archive / www.marxists.org]
**Week 3:**

April 17  Setting the Stage: Cuba in the 1940s & 1950s
April 19  Starting a Revolution: Fidel & Che
April 21  Fighting a Revolution: “Los Barbudos”

**Readings:**

- Macaulay, Neill. *A Rebel in Cuba* (all)

**Week 4:**

April 24  The Early Days I: Consolidation
April 26  The Early Days II: Radicalization
April 28  Confrontation: The Bay of Pigs

**Readings:**


**Week 5:**

May 1  Operation Mongoose: PSYOPs in Cuba
May 3  Confrontation (Redux): The Missile Crisis
May 5  Midterm

Readings:


Week 6:

May 8  The Revolutionary Economy
May 10 Building the New Socialist Man
May 12 Bureaucratization

Readings:

- Guevara, Che. “Man and Socialism” [Che Guevara Internet Archive / www.marxists.org]

Week 7:

May 15  Cuba on the World Stage: Latin America
May 17       Cuba on the World Stage: Africa

May 19       Race

Readings:


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Week 8:

May 22       Gender

May 24       Culture

May 26       Rectification: 1980s

Readings:


Week 9:

May 29  
Memorial Day  

May 31  
1990s: the “Special Period”  

June 2  
Cuban-Americans  

Readings:


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Week 10:

June 5  
Life in Cuba: Human Rights & Democracy  

June 7  
Cuba without Fidel  

June 9  
Conclusions  

Readings: