Spring 2018: Cuban Society and Revolution
(Chc/Lat 157 / History 166C / IS 177E / Pol Sci 153G)

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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.

Book: Neill Macaulay, A Rebel in Cuba (Wacahoota Press, 1999)

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 4), a final (35% / June 12), one 5-6 page paper based on the readings (25% /May 25), 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 2 Introduction: Fidel is Still Dead!
April 4 Colonialism, Sugar, and Slaves

April 6 Reform or Revolution?

**Readings:**


**Week 2:**

April 9 “A Splendid Little War”: the United States & 1898

April 11 Neocolonialism under the Plattist Republic

April 13 The Politics of Corruption

**Readings:**


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

**Week 3:**

April 16 Setting the Stage: Cuba in the 1940s & 1950s

April 18 Starting a Revolution: Fidel & Che

April 20 Fighting a Revolution: “Los Barbudos”

**Readings:**

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

Week 4:

April 23  The Early Days I: Consolidation
April 25  The Early Days II: Radicalization
April 27  Confrontation: The Bay of Pigs

Readings:


Week 5:

April 30  Operation Mongoose: PSYOPs in Cuba
May 2   Confrontation (Redux): The Missile Crisis
May 4   Midterm

Readings:

Week 6:

May 7  The Revolutionary Economy
May 9  Building the New Socialist Man
May 11 Bureaucratization

Readings:

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

Week 7:

May 14  Cuba on the World Stage: Latin America
May 16  Cuba on the World Stage: Africa
May 18  Race

Readings:


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**Week 8:**

May 21  Gender

May 23  Culture

May 25  Rectification: 1980s

**Readings:**


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**Week 9:**

May 28  Memorial Day

May 30  1990s: the “Special Period”

June 1  Cuban-Americans

**Readings:**


Week 10:

June 4 Life in Cuba: Human Rights & Democracy
June 6 Cuba without Fidel (or Raúl)
June 8 Conclusions

Readings:


o Selected news articles