

**AFROAM 491-C**  
**Cuba: A Social History of Race, Class, and Gender**  
Fall 2009

**Dr. Kym Morrison**

Office: New Africa House 308  
(tel. 413-545-5157)

[kymorris@afroam.umass.edu](mailto:kymorris@afroam.umass.edu)

**Office Hours:**

Tuesdays 11:00am-12:00pm  
Thursdays 11:00am-12:00pm  
and by appointment

**Course Description**

This course is a reading seminar, with a significant writing component. In it we explore the social relations and everyday experiences of Cubans under the various political states under which they have lived - Spanish colonialism, neo-colonial capitalist republic, and revolutionary socialism. As we consider issues of social identity, the quest for social justice, and national sovereignty, the concepts of race, class, and gender will be central. Two questions frame the course. What were the social conditions in which the Cuban Revolution emerged, and how have these conditions been transformed since 1959? Interdisciplinary research, with an emphasis on historical methods, will be used to understand the ways in which individuals and groups created social change over time or fought to stabilize their situations.

**Required Texts:**

Chomsky, Carr, and Smorkaloff, *The Cuba Reader* (2004), ISBN - 0822331977  
(please bring this book to all class meetings)

Carlos Moore, *Pichón* (2008), ISBN - 1556527675

Lois Smith and Alfred Padula, *Sex and Revolution: Women in Socialist Cuba* (1996)  
ISBN - 0195094913

Susan Eckstein, *Back from the Future* (2003), ISBN - 0415947944

Sujatha Fernandes, *Cuba Represent!* (2006), ISBN - 0822338912

(Available at Food For Thought Books, 106 N. Pleasant St.)

**Requirements and Evaluation**

Participation 30%

Homework 40% (a number of small assignments)

Final Research Paper - 30%

Participation (30%) - A positive experience in any seminar requires generous student input. Your mere attendance counts for very little of this grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time and prepared to speak about the course materials. This grade also is based on the quality and quantity of your provocative debate, insight, and questioning, and your ability to respectfully allow others to do the same. You will receive progress reports of their participation at least on two occasions throughout the semester. Unexcused absences will hurt your participation score

and your final grade. **For every three unexcused absences your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade.** For example, an A- becomes a B-. Additionally, if you plan to arrive more than five minutes late to class, you might consider making other arrangements or inform the instructor in advance and arrive in a non-disruptive manner.

Final Paper (30%) - You should develop a research paper of 11-12 pages (not including the bibliography) based on a narrow question about social relations or everyday lived experiences of Cubans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Begin with the complete text of one excerpt from *The Cuba Reader*. Create a manageable question that is open to proof through analysis of evidence. Here are two examples. The song Guantanamera has been popularized on several occasions by U.S. artists. In doing so, what images of Cuba have they attempted to present, and how are these images linked to contemporaneous moments in Cuba-U.S. diplomacy? In a section "How the Poor Got More," Medea Benjamin, Joseph Collins, and Michael Scott explain the consequences of food rationing and the introduction of the *libreta*. What changes has the government to management of the *libreta* over the revolution's history, and what unexpected adaptations have Cubans made to these policies? Use a combination of published primary and secondary sources to address your questions. Do not imagine that you will be able to find and review all existing material related to your topic.

You should follow the citation standards of your academic major and include a final bibliography of your sources.

Homework (40%) - On average of once every other week, you will be asked to complete a short assignment of approximately two pages. Several of these assignments are stages in the development of your final paper. Some of these steps are as follows.

The research proposal is a 2-3 page discussion of a precise preliminary theme of your final paper. It should indicate the paper's clarifying working title and the thesis--or expected conclusion(s)-- provide a brief introduction to your topic, indicate the research question you will investigate, and explain the manner in which you plan to analyze your primary sources. You may continue to refine or change your topic after submitting this proposal, but please provide me with a brief written explanation.

The annotated bibliography lists 10 scholarly (i.e., published peer-reviewed) secondary sources and 2 or more primary sources related to your project. It is possible that you will not use all of these sources in your final paper, or that later you will find other that are more appropriate. Each entry should have a short paragraph-length description of its significance to your final paper. After the project title, your thesis statement should be placed at the beginning of this document.

A draft of the first five pages continues the progress toward the final paper. This submission should include the paper's introduction, an initial analysis of the primary source(s), and some reference to the secondary material. Students should try to end the draft at a logical point close to the required five pages, at the end of a paragraph or paper segment. As with the final paper, you should follow the bibliography standards of your academic major. One additional copy of this paper should also be given to a classmate for peer review.

The peer review allows you to receive feedback from your class colleagues and assess the level of your own research and writing. You should make arrangements with another classmate to exchange the first drafts of their papers. I may also assign a peer reviewer if it becomes necessary. The reviewer should provide at least one page or type-written comments of the draft that complement the work's best elements, highlight problematic areas, and suggest improvements. These suggestions should address concerns about the draft's thesis, logic, structure, mechanics, and evidence. The reviewer may also directly edit parts of the draft. However, this is less valuable than the comments. One copy of the comments should be given to the student author and another to me.

**Paper Submission Formats and Late Policy** - All submissions should be typewritten in English, with one-inch margins on all sides. The bibliographies should be single-spaced. All other submissions should be double spaced. The font should be between 11 and 12 points. For the homework assignments, your name, course number, assignment number, and submission date should be typed in the upper left corner of the first page. After this header, one blank line should appear before the assignment title, which should be centered between the left and right margins. This title should be followed by one blank line before beginning the assignment. The final paper should have a title sheet that includes the title, your name, course name, and date. The text should begin on the first line of the next sheet. A hard copy of all submissions is required and electronic versions will be accepted only with my prior approval.

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates. Ten points will be deducted from the component's grade if it is submitted more than ten minutes after the start of class and this deduction will be repeated for each consecutive late day after the assigned due date.

### **Course Schedule**

Week 1 September 8 - Introduction, film - *Guantanamera*

September 10 - handout reading due and brief homework due - find images of Cuban life in three distinct historical periods (pre-revolution, 1959 to 1965, and 1990 to the present) and come to class ready to explain why these images fascinate you. Also, write one or two paragraphs describing your vision of social justice, explaining who it serves, how it is achieved, and any limits to it that you may imagine.

Week 2 September 15/17 - *The Cuba Reader* pp. 113-225

Week 3 September 22/24 - *Pichón* (all)

Thursday, homework due - in two pages, with bulleted points list some of the important transitional movements in Moore's sense of racial identity and his relationship to Cuba's governments. Please include page references from the book.

Week 4 September 29/October 1 - *The Cuba Reader* pp. 226-332

Week 5 October 6/8 - *The Cuba Reader* pp. 333-413,  
Thursday, homework due - two-page project proposal

Class will meet in Du Bois Library room 1620

Week 6

October 13 - No Class (adjustment of University calendar for Columbus Day)

October 15<sup>th</sup> - *Sex and Revolution*, through chapter 6

Week 7

October 20 - *Sex and Revolution*, chapter 7 to the end

October 22 - no reading assignment, homework - twelve-item annotated bibliography due. Film, *Retrato de Teresa*.

Week 8 October 27/29 - *The Cuba Reader* pp. 505-587

Week 9 November 3/4 - *Back From the Future* to p. 127

Week 10 November 10/12 - *Back From the Future* to end

Thursday, homework due - For one Cuban social welfare area, in approximately two pages outline the evolution of state policy described by Eckstein.

Week 11 - November 17/19 - *The Cuba Reader* pp. 595-688

Week 12 - November 24 - *Cuba Represent !* to p. 84

Thanksgiving recess, no class Thursday, November 26

Week 13 - December 1- *Cuba Represent!* to end

Homework due - two draft copies of first five pages of final paper due to me and your peer reviewer.

December 3 - In-class, peer review workshop

Week 14 - December 8/10 - Film, *Vida es Silbar*

Thursday, homework due - Imagine that you have been asked by a New York advertising firm to create the publicity for a major event about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Find or create two images that best describe the revolution's social experiences. Write a brief explanation of your choices and include references to the course texts.

Final Paper due - December 15<sup>th</sup> by 3pm.

I reserve the right to modify this syllabus with in-class notification to students.