This seminar explores the question of how Cuba, one of Europe’s longest-lived colonies, became so intricately tied to the United States. It asks how a place that on several occasions almost became a US state and that for a long time served as a favorite haunt of American mobsters and missionaries, honeymooners, and businessmen reinvent itself as a beacon of third-world socialism that brought the world to the brink of nuclear destruction, that outlasted the Soviet Union and ten US presidents, and that today again beckons American travelers and investors. Starting (briefly) with the arrival of Columbus and the indigenous communities he encountered, and ending with the Cuba policies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump, this course will explore the history of Cuba and its intimate, fraught relationship with the United States.

Each week students will read primary and secondary sources about an important aspect of the development of that relationship. Students will select one important episode, person, or historical question to explore in greater depth and produce an original research paper of about 10 pages by the end of the semester. A list of possible paper topics is attached to this syllabus.

Students are required to attend all class sessions, having done the reading and ready to participate actively in class discussion. If you must miss class for religious, health, or other reason, please notify instructor. No laptops, iPads, or phones in class except under exceptional circumstances and with the instructor’s approval.

**Written Work:**

The written work for the course will consist of the following:

**3 Short Papers.** Papers should be two pages, double spaced, Times Roman 12. Prompts are provided on the syllabus. Papers should be submitted using the Assignments feature of our NYU Classes page. You will receive numeric grades for these papers, which will be due on the following dates:

- Paper 1: September 13
- Paper 2: October 4
- Paper 3A: November 1 or Paper 3B November 8
Ungraded Assignments. For many of our meetings I will ask you to come up with discussion questions, or select documents or other texts to discuss in class. These assignments are listed by date on the Schedule of Classes below. These will be graded check, check plus, or check minus. These will be submitted by email to the professor.

2-Page Proposal and 3-page Revised Proposal for Final Paper. Due on October 25 and November 22. Students will propose a topic for their final paper. The body of the proposal will identify a topic, central question, preliminary argument, and significance of the research. Each proposal should include a bibliography of primary and secondary courses (in addition to the page-count requirement). Both versions of the proposal will be submitted using the Assignments feature of our NYU Classes page.

Final 10-page Research Paper. This will be a paper on a topic of your choosing. All papers should be based on research in both primary and secondary sources. There are assignments throughout the semester that are meant to help you choose a topic and begin your independent research on it. In addition, you will meet with the professor at least twice to help identify a topic, plan your research, develop your argument and so on. A preliminary list of suggested topics is attached to the syllabus. The deadline for the paper is December 16. Submission will be through Assignments, NYU Classes.

Evaluation of Student Work

Final grades will be determined as follows:
- Attendance, Participation, and Ungraded Assignments: 25%
- Short Papers: 25%
- Proposal and Revised Proposal: 25%
- Final Paper: 25%

Writing and Academic Integrity. Please familiarize yourself with the university’s policy on plagiarism and academic integrity, available here: cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. Whenever you draw on somebody else’s words or ideas, give them credit in a note. The most common causes of plagiarism are not deliberate dishonesty, but stress and uncertainty. Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, will be grounds for a failing grade and reporting to departmental and university authorities. If you have questions about documentation requirements, please ask!

Disability Disclosure Statement: Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.
Required Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore and on reserve at Bobst Library. They are also widely available used and for rent. Two of them are available as e-books through the Bobst Library website. Other readings are available either through links on the schedule below, or on our class page on NYU Classes. Items marked with an asterisk are available only as PDFs in our NYU Classes site; go to Resources, then to Readings.

- Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing History*
- Miguel Barnet, *Biography of a Runaway Slave*
- Louis Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*
- Michelle Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*  (Also available as ebook through NYU Bobcat—North Carolina Scholarship: http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:5476/view/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469625003.001.0001/upso-9781469625003)

Schedule of Classes

Week 1. Sept. 6: Welcome and Preliminaries

*Readings:*

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing History*, Chapters 1 and 6


Week 2. Sept. 13: Approaching History, Approaching Cuba

*Readings:*


Rampolla, Pocket Guide, Chapter 3

**Paper 1:** After doing a close reading of the three required texts for this week, write a 2-page (double-spaced, 12-pt Times Roman) response that (1) discusses what struck you in terms of language or theme in the Castro and Obama texts and (2) considers the relationship between that moment in US Cuban relations and the kinds of questions raised in Martí’s 1891 text.

Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignment section.

**Week 3. September 20: Cuba: Foundations, Outlines, Research**

Readings:

Rampolla, A Pocket Guide, Chapters 2 and 5 (sections A through C only)

Ada Ferrer, Cuba: An American History. Book proposal and outline, plus drafts of chapters 1-6

Ungraded Assignment:

After doing the required reading for this week, select three chapters from the proposal that particularly interest you. Think of three possible topics that you might be interested in pursuing for your final research paper. (The three topics may correspond to the three chapters you selected, but they don’t have to).

Please review and browse through the following Research Guides available on the NYU Bobst Library website with an eye to resources you can use in researching your final paper.

Critical Histories of the Cuban Revolution: http://guides.nyu.edu/critical_histories_cuban_rev

Caribbean Studies: http://guides.nyu.edu/Caribbean_Studies

Please email me your three possible topics by Monday evening.

**Week 4. September 27: Empire of Liberty, Empire of Slavery**
Readings:

*Stephen Chambers, No God But Gain, Introduction
*Walter Johnson, River of Dark Dreams, chaps. 11-12.

Primary Sources:
Thomas Jefferson on Cuba (from Founders Online)
Excerpt from President James Monroe Annual Address to Congress, 1823 (pdf available here: https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=23)

Ungraded Assignment: Please email me two discussion questions by Monday evening.
In class exercise: How to ask historical questions

Week 5. October 4: Cuban Independence Struggles

Readings:


Primary Source[?]
Miguel Barnet, Biography of a Runaway Slave, pp. 159-208.

Paper 2: Write a 2-page paper that addresses the following questions: Is Biography of a Runaway Slave a primary source? Why or why not? What are the advantages and limits of a work like this?

Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.

Week 6. October 11: Cuba and the American Century

Readings:
Ungraded Assignment: Write a paragraph that explain in your own words what historiography is. Compose a historiographical question or debate related to the topic(s) you’re considering for your final paper? Please email me the paragraph by Monday evening.

In class exercise: Posing Historiographical Questions

Week 7. October 18: US/Cuba Cultural Relations

Readings:

Louis A. Pérez, On Becoming Cuban, Chapters 2-6. Please select 3 chapters to read.

Ungraded Assignment: Write a paragraph that addresses the following question: What is the author’s main argument in this book? Email to me by Monday evening.

In class exercise: Recognizing and Developing Historiographical Arguments

Week 8. October 25: Research/Writing Workshop—Individual Meetings with Professor

Readings:

Rampolla, Pocket Guide, chapters 4-7

Paper Proposal: Due in Class. A 2-page description of your final research paper, which clearly identifies the topic, the historical question, and your preliminary argument. You must also submit a revised bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.

Week 9. November 1: Revolution in the Making

Readings:

Guest lecture: Michelle Chase

**Paper 3A:** Reflect on gender as a category of analysis. How does it shape the way history is interpreted? Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.

**Week 10. November 8: Revolution in Power: Radicalization**

*Readings:*

Chase, *Revolution Within the Revolution*, chapters 4-6 and conclusion.

**Paper 3B:** What was radicalization? What do you think were its causes and what were its manifestations?

Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.

**Week 11. November 15: US-Cuba at Veritable War**

*Readings:*


*Lars Schoultz, That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution*, pp. 142-69 (Bay of Pigs), 183-208 (Cuban Missile Crisis).

After reading about both the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, choose one of the two events to explore through US State Department records. Using the dates of the events as a guide, browse in either of the following websites and select three assignments to discuss in class (please email me the links by the usual time).

[https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/comp1](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v10/comp1)

[http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/search.html](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/search.html)

**Week 12. November 22: Research Day.** No class

*Revised paper proposal due today.* Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.

**Week 13. November 29: Guantánamo and GTMO**
Readings:

L. Pérez, *On Becoming Cuban*, 238-42


*Guantánamo Lease Agreement (1903); 1934 Treaty Agreement; and 2002 Statement by Cuban Government. All in S. Schwab, *Guantánamo, USA: The Untold History of America’s Cuban Outpost*, Appendices D-F.*

Guantánamo Memory Project: [http://gitmomemory.org](http://gitmomemory.org)

Select two interviews from the Guantánamo Memory Project (See Interview Archive in the Stories section of the website). Try to pick different types of interviews. Be prepared to discuss in class why you selected those two interviews and what, briefly, you learned from them.

**Week 14. December 6: Miami, Cuba & Havana, USA**

Readings:


*Lisandro Pérez, *Legacies of Exile*, chapter 2 (pp. 15-27).*

*Jennine Capó Crucet, “How to Leave Hialeah,” in *How to Leave Hialeah*, pp. 153-69*

**Final Papers Due: Friday, December 16.** Please submit on NYU Classes, Assignments.
Final Paper Possible Topics

Your major writing assignment in this class is a 10-page research paper based on primary and secondary sources. A first draft of a proposal is due October 25; a second, more thorough draft is due on November 22.

The list of topics below is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it aims to help you start thinking about topics and questions you may want to pursue for your research project. You are welcome to select a topic not on this list. Even many of the topics below will have to be narrowed or modified in some way in order to be feasible. Finally, the list was composed keeping in mind what topics would be feasible to pursue with English language sources. If you are interested in doing a research project that involves Spanish-language sources, please see me very early in the semester.

Whether you start from a topic on this list or select a different one, all students will have to work hard at defining their central questions, arguments, and implications of their work. Students are strongly encouraged to meet individually with the professor to help do this.

Please know that there is also a subject librarian, Angela Carreño (angela.carreno@nyu.edu) at Bobst with whom you can make an appointment for help in locating relevant sources. Angela has compiled the very useful research guides listed for Week 3 on the syllabus.

The Writing Center, located at 411 Lafayette, 4th floor, is another important resource for you. Students can schedule one fifty-minute session per week. Waiting on standby (in the case of last-minute cancellations or no-shows) is also allowed. Students should schedule appointments online at http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html.

Cuba in the Age of Pirates
US Founding Fathers and Cuba
American Involvement in the Slave Trade to Cuba
Chinese Indentured Servants/Coolie Trade to Cuba
American Abolitionists and Cuba
Cuban Annexationists
Cubans in New York (or Florida) in the 19th Century
American Attempts to Purchase Cuba
American Filibusters and Cuba
Cuban and the US Civil War
American Fighters in the Ten Years War (or the Final War of Independence)
African American Soldiers and the Spanish American War
American Journalism and Cuban Independence
American Occupation of Cuba
The Struggle Against Yellow Fever
Cuban Baseball and the American Negro Leagues
Cuban Students and Teachers at Harvard and/or Tuskegee
The US and the Race War of 1912
American Investment in Cuba
American Diplomacy and the Revolution of 1933
Cuba and Pan-Americanism
The 1940 Constitution
United Fruit Company in Cuba
Marcus Garvey in Cuba
The Holocaust and the *St. Louis* in Cuba
Guantánamo Naval Base during WWII
The American Mob and Havana
American Tourism in Cuba
Cuban Revolutionaries in the US before 1959
US Media Coverage of Fidel Castro
Fidel’s Visits to the US, 1959 or 1960
Uses of History in Cuban Revolutionary Discourse
The American Left and the Cuban Revolution
US Companies and Cuban Expropriations
Bay of Pigs or Missile Crisis
Operation Mongoose
Cuban Agrarian Reform
Cuba-US Migration, 1959-1973
Mariel Boat Lift or 1994 Rafter Crisis
Elian González Controversy
Biographical Paper

Choose a figure that connects the history of the two countries. For example, American cultural figure who spent time in Cuba—Ernest Hemmingway, Langston Hughes, Hart Crane, Walker Evans, Clara Barton, etc), or vice versa (José Martí, Felix Varela, Tomás Estrada Palma)

US-Cuba Cultural Relations (pick a particular aspect)
A Family History Project (if you have family from Cuba and can tie their lives to a theme or event we studied in class).