CUBA IN TRANSITION

IR 529

Fall 2016

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Course Description

Over 57 years since the Revolution the Castro brothers are still directing the way Cuba evolves. This course looks at how and why Cuba maintains a unique social, political and economic system and the prospects for continuing change. It takes into account the recent ‘normalisation’ of US and Cuba relations and analyzes in what areas the US, its businesses and citizens are likely to interact with Cubans in the future. The course will discuss the prospects for peaceful transition in contemporary Cuba and the pressures for greater openness and democratization.

It will examine the relevant aspects of pre-revolutionary Cuba and how the economic and political conditions in the late 1950s created the basis for a successful revolution. It will analyse how Fidel Castro’s Revolution was implemented and how he and his brother Raul have retained control for over 50 years.

The course will cover the international impact of the Cuban Revolution, the appeal of its recent medical diplomacy and its influence on the policies of the US and other countries.

The discussion of the relevant factors in a transition in Cuba will include:- the current strengths and weakness of the Cuban economy and its capacity to survive; Cuba’s overseas relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union; its dependence on Venezuela and the potential for developing other key relationships; the state of civil society, the dissidents, the role of women’s organizations, churches and NGOs and their capacity to influence the process of change; race in Cuba; and the implications of the current economic reforms and new technologies such as the Internet for Cuba’s future.

The history and role of the Cuban American community will be analyzed and compared and contrasted with that of other diaspora communities. The recent changes in the Obama Administrations’ policies towards Cuba and President Obama’s historic visit to the island in March 2016 will be examined in detail. And we will discuss the implications of the closer relationship between the exile community and those on the island.

By the end of the class students will be experts on how Cuba’s political and economic system works, how the Revolution is battling to preserve its achievements, the new ideas being generated in Cuban civil society, and the prospects for American business and NGOs assuming a greater role in Cuba’s
future. Many students who have this understanding will have opportunities to interact with Cuba and Cubans in their future careers.

**Required Reading**


All books can be purchased at Barnes and Noble or online through Amazon.

**Other Reading**

In addition to the books above, there are two surveys of contemporary Cuba which have been published recently and will serve as useful general background:-


For most classes there will be articles assigned to focus on particular aspects of the Cuban Transition. These are listed below under each week’s topics and are available online. We will also have regular discussions about news items reporting on current developments in Cuba.

**Academic Honesty**

Without exception, students are expected to adhere to the Boston University CAS Academic Code. Please read the Boston University Academic Conduct Code. Accordingly, all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the CAS Academic Conduct Committee. Please see http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/.

**Grading**

The course will require a short research paper of 5000 words citing at least 10 separate sources. This is due at the end of November 2016, and should be on a topic relevant to Cuba’s transition to be agreed with me.

Grading will be based on the following components: 20% midterm, 30% required paper, 30% final, 20% participation.

**Sequence of Classes**

**WEEK 1**
**Pre-Revolutionary Cuba:** The key characteristics of pre-1959 Cuba and how these suited Castro’s objectives and capacity for Revolution


**WEEK 2**

The making of the Cuban Revolution. The reasons for its success.

Dominguez: Pages 137-190.

Perez-Stable: Pages 66-84

**WEEK 3**

56 years of Revolution: Cuba’s evolution internally and how Fidel Castro consolidated control.

Dominguez: pages 191 - 305

Perez-Stable: pages 85-144

**WEEK 4**

Cuba’s Revolutionary Foreign Policy.

US relations/The Missile Crisis. The Soviet Bloc. Spreading revolution to Africa. Post Cold War developments

Perez-Stable. Pages 119-123 and 145-158

Dominguez: Pages 146-164.

Sweig: Pages 74-125

**WEEK 5**

The Cuban Communist Party. Its role in history and in contemporary Cuba.


WEEK 6:

The Cuban Military. Its importance as an institution in the Cuban politics and in its economy.

Dominguez: The Civic Soldier. Pages 341-380


WEEK 7

The Cuban American Community. Its role in Cuba’s Future

- Erikson : pages 106-135
- Florida International University/Brookings Institution: Polls of Cuban American Opinion
- Value Orientations of Cubans in Miami, University of Miami Institute of Cuban American Studies, Dr. Andy S. Gomez & Dr. Eugenio M. Rothe
- Diplomacy & Statecraft, Volume 20, Issue 2, 2009 “From Building Barriers to Bridges: Cuban Ties Across the Straits” Susan Eckstein & Catherine Krull pages 322-340

WEEK 8

Cuban Civil Society and the internal opposition.

- The Cuba Wars, Daniel P. Erikson. The Dissenters Pages 54-77.

WEEK 9

Comparative Models of Transition : China, Spain, Eastern Europe.

The Spanish Transition and the Case of Cuba, Carlos Alberto Montaner. Article I University of Miami Cuba in Transition Project 2002.


**WEEK 10**

*The History of EU-Cuba Relations : The Importance of Venezuela*


Chasing Chavez in Erikson. Pages 254-276.

“ Is Three a Crowd: the Venezuela factor in Cuban Policy Toward the United States” Carlos Blanco and Paul Webster Hare, Brookings October 2010.


**WEEK 11**

*Implications for US policy towards Cuba*


“US Public Diplomacy for Cuba: What to Do and How to do it.” Paul Webster Hare, Brookings March 2010


Erikson : Pages 277- 314


WEEK 12

Raul Castro and Cuba’s Economic Reforms: What Might Happen Now?


Paul Webster Hare: Cuba; What Might Happen Now, The CDR Index Cuban Affairs University of Miami: September 2011: http://www.cubanaffairsjournal.org Vol. 6, Issue 2-2011


Cuba’s new economic guidelines http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11695413

WEBSITE : There is no website

LATE WORK and ABSENCES

All absences must be reported. The Research Paper is due by the end of November 2016.

DATES OF EXAMINATIONS

Midterm examination  TBA
Final examination – to be advised as arranged by IR schedule.