

Visualizing Cuba

UGS 302 First-Year Seminar

TTh 12:30-2 PM
 BEN 1.122
 Unique Number 64905
 Difficult Dialogues/Global Cultures Flag

Prof. César A. Salgado
 csld@austin.utexas.edu
 Office Hrs: M 4-5, T 2-4 & by appnt.
 BEN 3.140/CAL 217 (232-4517/471-1925)

Description:

The only communist country in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba exerts a great fascination among North Americans and the world in general. Because of the 52-year economic embargo and the political animosity of exile groups and Castro opponents, the images of Cuba available abroad tend to be overly polarized and stereotypical, painted either in bright technicolor or in dark grey. Cuban is thus mostly seen as a tropical paradise, a tyrannical dictatorship, a racially integrated island, a landscape of ruins, a socialist utopia, or a Caribbean gulag.

This course is meant to have you see Cuba, its history and affairs not as foreign pundits see it, but as Cuban and other artists have seen it through painting, art installations, photography, film, documentaries, urban design, monumental architecture, performance and fiction throughout its 54 years of Revolution and before. Although it will focus on artists and intellectuals in the island, it will also consider how much Cuban figures in exile contribute to this complex imagining. Debates about dissident vs. state-sponsored art, commitment vs. contestation, avant-garde abstraction vs. social realism, censorship vs. 'rectification', race, gender, and sexuality will be reviewed. Our focus will be on how writers, filmmakers, photographers, and visual artists in Cuba and its diaspora respond, contribute, or object to the power of cultural and political icons before, during, and after the Cold War.

This course will help students understand better a neighboring yet inaccessible country that has often been misrepresented and demonized because of a history fraught with political antagonism and intransigence. By studying some key pieces in Cuban art, film, and literature, students will understand how much overlap there is or not between Cuban and U.S. peoples, cultures, and historical processes. This is a course about interrogating positive and negative stereotypes and images about an "enemy country" by using its print, visual, film, and media history and culture to explore alternative points-of-view.

Requirements (with Writing Flag):

Three short analytical 2 page min. reviews on a Cuban art piece: 30% (10% each)

Each essay should focus on a different medium: a painting or art installation; a film scene or script; a photograph or photo essay; a public monument; or a short story or chapter in a novel

Oral Presentations: 10%

Each student should briefly present, analyze, and lead discussion at least once about an item in the class: a Cuban art piece, film, performance, public monument, or novel chapter. Assignments will be distributed early in the course. Ideally, the presentation and short essays will help identify and select a topic for the research papers.

One 10-12 page research paper: 35%

This is an open-topic research project that could: 1. document how a major state-sponsored or independent artistic project or exhibit has been put together in Cuba or abroad (i.e., an ICAIC [Cuba's film institute]; production; an independent movie; an edition of the Havana Arts Biennial); 2. discuss how different media forms inform or influence each other in Cuban expression (film adaptations of literary fiction; use of graphic arts or photographs in a novel or a monuments; etc.) The steps for this assignment--selection of topic; search, consultation and summation of references; abstract of main arguments; first draft and revisions; second draft and revisions; final submission-- will be scheduled throughout the second half of the course in accordance to the Information Literacy guidelines for Signature Courses.

Class attendance, discussion, and participation in special tours, screenings, and talks: 25%

Students are expected to participate energetically in class discussion. In some occasions the class will meet in other campus locales to instruct students on how to take advantages of unique UT "Gems" research resources. By the third week of class there will be a guided visit to the **Benson Latin American Collection** to consult Cuban materials relevant to the class and develop the **Information Literacy Component** of the class. One of the course films will be screened at the **Fine Arts Library** to show students where to locate and consult scholarly bibliography on Cuban studies and Cuban arts, music, and film. Towards the end of the course there will be visit to the **Blanton Art Museum** to see its holdings of prints and paintings by famous contemporary Cuban artists as well as related Latin American, American, and European art samples. Students will be required to attend one of the **University Lecture Series**, place and time to be announced,, and Skype class presentations by two guest speakers: Cuban artist, curator, and critic Antonio Eligio 'Tonel' Fernández and Cuban filmmaker Leon Ichaso.

Course Materials:

Many sources (scholarly books, encyclopedias, articles) are available free online to you through the UT Library System. Three books should be bought at the COOP or via Amazon. Other materials will be available as pdfs from our Blackboard webpage or at videosites on the internet.

Works of scholarship available online at the UT Library Website:

1. *Gale Cuba Encyclopedia*. Editors, Alan West-Durán, Victor Fowler-Calzada, Marel García Perez, Louis A. Perez Jr., César A. Salgado, María de los Angeles Torres
2. Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*
3. Louis Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*
4. Emilio Bejel, *Jose Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*

Fiction and prose books available for purchase at the Co-op

1. Ana Menendez, *Loving Che* (Coop)
2. Antonio José Ponte, *Tales from the Empire* (Coop)
3. Yoani Sánchez, *Havana Real* (Coop)

Films (to be screened in class or seen on your own at the Fine Arts Library)

1. *I Am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964)
2. *The Siberian Mammoth* (Vicente Ferraz, 2005)*
3. *Topaz* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1969)*
4. *Memorias of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)
5. *Che* (Steven Soderbergh, 2008)*
6. *Before Night Falls* (Julian Schnabel, 2000)*
7. *Azúcar amarga* (León Ichaso, 1996)
8. *An Art of Making Ruins* (Florian Borchmeyer, 2007)*
9. *Suite Havana* (Fernando Pérez, 2008)
10. *Juan of the Dead* (Alejandro Brugués, 2011)

*Asterisks mark films that will only be partly seen through short clips.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Aug. 29: Introduction

Week 2 19th Century Cuba in Cartoons, Prints, and Landscape Paintings

Sept. 3: Images and metaphors of Cuba in 19th Century U.S. Newspapers Cartoons

Readings: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 49-74 ([online source](#))

Louis Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, "Introduction," p. 1-11;

Chapter Two: "Imagining Self Interest," p. 25-94 ([online source](#))

Sept. 5: Images of Self, Other, and Nation in Cuban 19th C. Paintings and Prints

Readings: Narciso G. Menocal, "An Overriding Passion—The Quest for a National Identity in Painting," p. 186-197 ([pdf](#))

Week 3 The Iconography of José Martí in Photography and Monuments

Sept. 10: Iconizing the Life of José Martí, "Cuban Apostle" through Photographs

Readings: Emilio Bejel, *Jose Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*, p. 1-2; Chapter 1, p. 17-43 ([online source](#))

Sept. 12: Monumentalizing José Martí in Public Space and Memory in Cuba and Abroad

Emilio Bejel, *Jose Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*, Chapter 2, p. 45-66 ([online source](#))

First review due in class

Week 4 After 1898: The Plattist Republic, the Dance-of-the-Millions, and the 1933 Revolution

Sept. 17: Official and commercial photography and graphics in the First Republic
Special Meeting at the Nattie Lee Benson Latin American Collection

Readings: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 75-88 ([online source](#))

Gale Cuba Entry on "Governance and Contestation: The Republic" ([online](#))

M. L. Lobo Montalvo & Z. Lapique Becali, "The Years of *Social*" ([pdf](#))

Sept. 19: Walter Evans' *The Crime of Cuba* in the History of Cuban Photography

Readings: *Gale Cuba* entries on "Visual Arts: Photography" and "Constantino Arias" ([online source](#))

Jose Quiroga, from *Cuban Palimpsests*, "A Cuban Love Affair with the Image," p. 81-90 ([pdf](#))

Week 5 Painting and Photography from Constitution to Revolution (1940-1959)

Sept. 24: Vernacular Modernism in Cuban Painting in the 1940s and 1950s

Readings: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 89-103 ([online source](#))

Narciso G. Menocal, "An Overriding Passion—The Quest for a National Identity in Painting," p. 197-219 ([pdf](#))

Gale Cuba entries on "Constitution of 1940," "Visual Arts: Republican Period."

Reports on "Gallo amarillo (Mariano Rodríguez)," "The Art of René

Portocarrero," "Mario Carreño," "La gitana tropical (Víctor Manuel)," "The

Still-Lives of Amelia Peláez," "El triunfo de la rumba (Eduardo Abela)," "El

rapto de las mulatas" (Carlos Enríquez)," "La Jungla (Wifredo Lam)"
(online source)

Sept. 26: Fulgencio Batista vs. Fidel Castro: A Battle of Images

Readings: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 103-112 **(online source)**

Gale Cuba entries on "Governance and Contestation: Insurrection, 1952-

1959"; "History Will Absolve Me (Fidel Castro)" **(online)**

Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me" **(pdf)**

Second review due in class

Week 6 The Triumph of the Cuban Revolution as Global Spectacle

Oct. 1: Fidel Castro on the World Stage (1959-1960)

Readings: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 112-121 **(online source)**

Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Intro. & Chap. 1, p. 1-74 **(pdf)**

Gale Cuba entry on "Raúl Corrales: Photographer of the Revolution" **(online)**

Oct. 3: The Cuban Revolution according to (Soviet) Film

Reading: Carlos Espinosa Domínguez, "The Mammoth that Wouldn't Die" **(pdf)**

Film: *I Am Cuba* (1964, Mikhail Kalatozov)

Week 7 Socialist Cuba and the Movie Industry Abroad

Oct. 8: Hollywood and other Film Visions of the Cuban Revolution

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Film: 1959-1989" **(online source)**

Film clips: *The Siberian Mammoth* (Vicente Ferraz, 2005); *Topaz* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1969)

Oct. 10: Building *Fidelismo* after the Bay of Pigs invasion

Reading: Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Chapter 5, p. 1-74 **(pdf)**

Third review due in class

Week 8 The 1962 October Missile Crisis in Cuban Film; the Rise of ICAIC (Cuban Film Institute)

Oct. 15: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Film Adaptations of Literature in Cuba

Reading: Edmundo Desnoes, *Memories of Underdevelopment* **(pdf)**

Gale Cuba entry on "*Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea)"

Film: *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)

Oct. 17 Discussion of *Memories*. ICAIC documentarians Santiago Alvarez, Sara Gómez

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Gómez, Guillén, Giral" **(online)**

Film clips: Selection of shorts by Alvarez and Gómez

Scheduling of meetings to discuss possible research topic

Week 9 Ernesto "Che" Guevara as World Icon

Oct. 22: Che Guevara and Photographic Immortality

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entries on "Guerrillero Heroico (Korda)," "Che Guevara and the New Man," "Che Guevara, Social and Political Thought" **(online)**

Ernesto Guevara, "Socialism and Man in Cuba" **(pdf)**

Ana Menendez, *Loving Che* (1-156) **(Co-op)**

Oct. 24: Che's Iconic Persistence: Discussion of Menendez's Novel

Reading: Ana Menendez, *Loving Che* (finish)

Film clips: *Che* (Steven Soderbergh, 2008) **(Co-op)**

Week 10: 1968-1980: The Long Grey Decade As Seen by Exiles

Oct. 29: Reinaldo Arenas's Autobiography in Film

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on "The Color of Summer (Reinaldo Arenas)"
Reinaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls* (selections) **(pdf)**

Film clip: *Before Night Falls* (Julian Schnabel, 2001)

Oct. 31: Guillermo Cabrera Infante: London Exile, Castro Enemy

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on *Three Trapped Tigers* **(online)**

Oral presentations on vignettes from *View of Dawn in the Tropics* **(pdf)**

First consultation and summation of references; abstracts of main arguments due

Week 11: The Eighties: The Mariel Boatlift, Glasnost, and the Explosion of Art

Nov. 5: The "Volumen Uno" Exhibit: New Cuban Art Take-Off in 1980

Readings: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Peruvian Embassy, Mariel Boatlift," "Visual Arts: Revolutionary Period." **Reports** on "Afro-Cuban Spirituality (Manuel Mendive)," "La anunciación (Antonia Eiriz)," "La sentencia (Belkis Ayón)" **(online)**

Nov. 7: Tracking Traces of Ana Mendieta

Readings: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Visual Arts: "Performing Arts: Performance Art", "Esculturas Rupestres and Other Works by Ana Mendieta" **(online)**
José Quiroga, "Still Searching for Ana Mendieta" **(pdf)**

Week 12: End-of-Cold-War Blues: Cuba's Special Period (1989-2000)

Nov. 12: Viewing the Special Period from Without: Exile Film Maker León Ichaso

Readings: *Gale Cuba* entry on "El Súper (León Ichaso)" **(online)**

Film: *Azúcar amarga* (León Ichaso, 1996)

Nov. 14: Viewing Revolutionary Ruins from Within: The Writings of Antonio José Ponte.

Readings: Selections from Antonio José Ponte, *Tales from the Cuban Empire* **(Coop)**

Film: Clips from *An Art of Making Ruins* (Florian Borchmeyer, 2007)

First draft of research paper due

Week 13: On the Global Commercialization of Cuban Art during the Special Period

Nov. 19 Post-Soviet Performance and Body Art in Cuba

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Visual Arts: Special Period." **Reports:** "The Works of Tania Bruguera," "Palo Monte and Ancestral Spirits: The Art of José Bedia" **(online)**
Sujatha Fernández, *Cuba Represent!*, "Postwar Reconstructions: State Institutions, Public Art, and the New Market Conditions of Production" **(online)**

Special Meeting at the Blanton Museum of Art to see holdings of Cuban art

Nov. 21 Skype conversation with Cuban visual artist, curator, and essayist Antonio Eligio (Tonel) Fernández

Week 14: Filming in Cuba's Special Period

Nov. 26 Fernando Pérez as Documentarian

Reading: *Gale Cuba* entry on "Suite Habana (Fernando Pérez)"

Film: *Suite Habana* (Fernando Pérez, 2003).

Second draft of research paper due.

Week 15: Virtual Cuba: Blogging and Censoring Dissent in the Internet

Dec. 2 The Words and the Phenomenon of Yoani Sánchez

Reading: Yoani Sánchez, *Havana Real* (selections) **(Co-op)**; online videos

Dec. 4 Orlando Pardo Lazo, Dissident Blogger and Photographer

Reading: Pardo Lazo, selections of texts and photographs online and on pdf

Final Paper Due on Special Screening of Alejandro Brugués' 2011 "First Cuban Zombie Film of the Revolution" *Juan of the Dead*, place and time to be announced (but no later than the morning of Friday the 13th).

Final Notes:

- **Grading Policy:** This course will be graded on the Plus/Minus system. There is no written final exam for this course. Late assignments will be deducted by half a grade for each day past the due date.
- **Laptop and Electronics Use Policy:** Classroom Laptop use is for taking notes and consulting material, images, and related to this course only. Other Electronic Devices (Cell phone, Blackberry, I-Phone, etc.) must be turned off during class. Any use of these devices will lead to dismissal from class and marked as an absence for that day).
- **Class attendance policy.** You are expected to attend every meeting unless you have a medical emergency. Total class attendance is calculated as 10% of your grade.
- **Plagiarism:** There will be no tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Failure to submit properly original work for assignments could lead to dismissal from the course and worse. For UT policy about plagiarism consult http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_plagiarism.php.
- **Religious Holidays** – Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.
- **Students with Disabilities:** The instructors will make himself available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations for students with a disability. These students may be required to provide documentation from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Service for Students with Disabilities (471-6259)
- **Emergency Evacuation Policy:** Occupants of buildings at the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. For more policy details see: <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>
- **University Lecture Series.** The Fall 2013 University Lecture Series will be held over three evenings, October 1-3, in Hogg Auditorium. The schedule for topics this year is as follows: Healthcare (Oct. 1), Arts and Humanities (Oct. 2), and Research Happenings Across the 40 Acres (Oct. 3).