Visualizing Cuba
UGS 303 Difficult Dialogues First-Year Seminar

TTh 11:00-12:30 MEZ 1.102
Writing Component/Global Cultures Flags
Unique Number 62665

Prof. César A. Salgado
cslgd@austin.utexas.edu
Office Hrs: T 1-4 & by appt
BEN 3.140 (232-4517)

Description:

The only communist country in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba has exerted a great fascination among North Americans and the world in general. Because of the 54-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 has been thus visualized as a tropical paradise, a tyrannical dictatorship, a racially integrated island, a landscape of ruins, a socialist utopia, and 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 by way of the country's unique visual culture and image politics. We will consider the esthetic, social, political, and economic dimensions of several examples of Cuban painting, photography, art installations, film, documentaries, urban design, monumental architecture, performance, and fiction throughout its 56 years of Revolution and beyond, starting with the island's struggles for abolition, sovereignty, and independence in the nineteenth century. Although it will focus on artists and intellectuals in the island, it will also consider how much Cuban artists in exile contribute to this complex imagining. Theoretical debates about vision vs. visuality, dissident vs. state-sponsored art, commitment vs. contestation, avant-garde abstraction vs. social realism, censorship, 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 global power of political and cultural 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):

1. **Three short analytical reviews on a Cuban art piece**: 33%
   Each 3-5 page essay should focus on a different medium: a painting, print, photography, or cartoon; a film scene or script; a photograph or photo essay; a public monument; or a short story or a chapter in a novel

2. **In-class or online presentations**: 10%
   Each student should prepare a Powerpoint or i-movie presentation analyzing one or more works by one of the visual artists studied in the class. The student will either use it to make an oral presentation in class or post it on our Blackboard page for the rest to see at their convenience. The
student can use one of the analytical reviews to compose the script of the presentation.

3. **One 12-15 page research paper: 35%**
   This is an open-topic research project on a state-sponsored or independent artist, artwork, film production, performance or exhibit in Cuba or abroad that would consider how different media forms inform or influence each other in Cuban expression. 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.

4. **Class attendance and participation in special tours, screenings, and talks: 22%**
   Students are expected to participate in class discussion. In some occasions the class will meet in other locales on campus to learn how to take advantages of unique UT "Gems" research resources. By the fourth week of class there will be a guided visit to the Benson Latin American Collection to consult Cuban materials relevant to the class according Information Literacy Component of signature courses. Towards the end of the course we’ll visit the Blanton Art Museum to see its holdings of prints and paintings by famous contemporary Cuban artists. Students will be required to attend one of the University Lecture Series, place and time to be announced. There will be visits or "Skype" presentations in class by one or more guest speakers (some possibilities: Cuban writer Antonio José Ponte; artist and critic Antonio Eligio "Tonel" Fernández; Cuban filmmaker Leon Ichaso; cultural critic Odette Casamayor-Cisneros and/or writer/blogger/photographer Orlando Pardo Lazo).

**Course Materials:**
Many sources (scholarly books, encyclopedias, articles) are available free online to you through the UT Library System. Three books can be bought at the COOP or via Amazon. Other materials will be available as pdfs from our Blackboard webpage or at other 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
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*
2. Antonio José Ponte, *Tales from the Empire*
3. Yoani Sánchez, *Havana Real*

**Films to be screened in class or seen on your own online or at the Fine Arts Library**
1. *El ojo del canario* (Fernando Pérez, 2012)*
2. *Historias de la Revolución cubana* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1960)*
3. *I Am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964)
5. *Che* (Steven Soderbergh, 2010)
6. *Improper Conduct* (Orlando Jiménez Leal and Nestor Almendros, 1984)
7. *Bitter Sugar* (León Ichaso, 1996)
8. *An Art of Making Ruins* (Florian Borchmeyer, 2007)*
* Asterisks mark films that will only be partly seen through short clips.

**Class Schedule**
**Week 1**  
**Vision and Visuality in Cuba’s Nineteenth Century**  
Jan. 20:  
Introduction: Visual Culture and Image Politics in Cuba  
Jan. 22:  
Nation Visions and Plantation Oversight in 19th C. Paintings and Prints  
Readings:  
Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 36-61; *Gale Cuba* Entry “Día de Reyes en la Habana (V. P. de Landaluze)” ([online](https://www.gale.cengage.com/))  

**Week 2**  
**José Martí as Icon in Photography and Monuments**  
Jan. 27:  
Iconizing the Life of José Martí, “Cuban Apostle” in Photography and Film  
Readings:  
Emilio Bejel, *José Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*, p. 1-2; Chapter 1, p. 17-43 ([online source/Blkbrd pdf](https://blackboard.cengage.com))  
Film clips: *El ojo del canario* (Fernando Pérez 2010)  
Jan. 29:  
Monumentalizing José Martí in Public Urban Space in Cuba and Abroad  
Emilio Bejel, *José Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*, Chapter 2, p. 45-66 ([online source/ Blk pdf](https://www.gale.cengage.com/))

**Week 3**  
**The Spanish American War: Media War in Pictures, Prints & Cartoons**  
Feb. 3:  
Concocting Images of Cuba in U.S. “Yellow Journalism”  
Reading:  
Feb. 5:  
Ruling Through Images: Visualizing the New Possessions after 1898  
Reading:  
Lanie Thompson, “Representation and Rule in the Imperial Archipelago” ([Blk pdf](https://www.gale.cengage.com/))  
Analytical review of photography, monument art, or newspaper item due in class

**Week 4**  
**After 1898: The Platt Republic, Art Deco, and the 1933 Revolution**  
Feb. 10:  
Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and the “Dance of the Millions” in the First Republic  
Readings:  
M. L. Lobo Montalvo & Z. Lapique Becali, “The Years of Social” ([Blk pdf](https://blackboard.cengage.com))  
Feb. 12:  
Documenting the Underbelly of Dictatorship through Photography: The Work of Walter Evans and Constantino Arias  
Readings:  
*Gale Cuba* entries on “Visual Arts: Photography” and “Constatino Arias” ([online source](https://www.gale.cengage.com/)); Jose Quiroga, from *Cuban Palimpsests*, “A Cuban Love Affair with the Image,” p. 81-90 ([Blk pdf](https://blackboard.cengage.com))

**Week 5**  
**Visual Vanguards from 1933 to the Moncada Attack (1940-1953)**  
Feb. 17:  
Vernacular Avant-Gardes in Cuban Painting in the 1930s & 1940s  
Readings:  
“El triunfo de la rumba (Eduardo Abela),” “El rapto de las mulatas” (Carlos Enríquez) (online source)

Feb. 19: Vernacular avant-garde in the 1940s and 1950s
Readings: Gale Cuba entries on “Gallo amarillo (Mariano Rodriguez),” “The Art of René Portocarrero,” “The Still-Lifes of Amelia Peláez,” “El triunfo de la rumba (Eduardo Abela),” “La Jungla and the Artistic Development of Wifredo Lam” (online source)

Week 6: The Cuban Revolution as Global Spectacle
Readings: Ted Henken, Cuba: A Global Handbook, p. 95-121 (online source)
Fidel Castro, History Will Absolve Me (Blkd pdf)
Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba, Intro. & Chap. 1, p. 1-74 (Blkd pdf)

Feb. 26: First films on/by the Cuban Revolution
Readings: Gale Cuba entry on “Film: 1959-1989” (online source)
Screening: Historias de la revolución, first episode (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1960); I Am Cuba, first and second episodes (Mikhail Kalatozok, 1964)

Analytical review of visual artwork due in class

Week 7: Socialism Cuba and the Movie Industry: Building the Cuban Film Institute
March 3: Responses to New Vague and Soviet filmmaking: the PM and I am Cuba controversies
Reading: Carrie Hamilton, “Sex, race and censorship in Cuba: Historicising the P.M. Affair”; Carlos Espinosa Dominguez, “The Mammoth that Wouldn’t Die” (Blkd pdf)
Film clips: PM (O. Jiménez Leal/Sabá Cabrera Infante); Gente en la plantaSoddeyaa (Nestor Almendros)

March 5: Fidelismo as Public Spectacle before and after the Bay of Pigs invasion
Reading: Lillian Guerra, Visions of Power in Cuba, Chapter 2, p. 75-106 (Blkd pdf)

Scheduling of meetings to discuss possible research topic

Week 8: The 1962 October Missile Crisis in Cuban Film
March 10: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Film Adaptation in 1960s Cuba
Reading: Gale Cuba entry on “Memories of Underdevelopment (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea)”
Screening: Memories of Underdevelopment (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)
March 12: Discussion and analysis of Memories.
Reading: Edmundo Desnoes, script of Memories of Underdevelopment and essays and interviews about the film (Blkd pdf)

Spring Break

Week 9: Ernesto “Che” Guevara as World Icon
March 24: Che Guevara and Photographic Immortality
Readings: 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” (Blkd pdf); Ana Menendez, Loving Che (part 1)

March 26: Che’s Iconic Persistence in Contemporary Fiction
Reading: Ana Menendez, Loving Che (part 2 & 3)

Analytical Review of Film Due

Week 10: Guevara on Film
March 31 Guevara on Documentary vs. Feature Film
Film Clips: The Motorcycle Diaries, The Bovilian Diary
Screening: Soderbergh’s Che, Part 1 and 2 (selections)
April 2: Discussion and analysis of “Che” films
Reading: J.P. Spicer-Escalante, “From Korda’s Guerrillero Heroico to Global Brand: Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara” (Blkd pdf)

April 7: Intellectual and Sexual Persecution in Cuba During the “Grey Years” (1970s)
Readings: Ted Henken, Cuba: A Global Handbook skim 130-143, read 143-154; Gale Cuba Entries “Sexuality: The UMAP Camps,” “Peruvian Embassy, Mariel Boatlift” (online)
Film Clips: From Conducta Impropria
April 9: The “Volumen Uno” Exhibit: New Cuban Art Take-Off in the 1980s
Readings: Gale Cuba entries “Visual Arts: Revolutionary Period”; “Afro-Cuban Spirituality (Manuel Mendive),” “La anunciación (Antonia Eiriz),” “Esculturas Rupestres and Other Works by Ana Mendietta” (online)

Week 12: “Socialism or Death”: Cuba’s Special Period (1989-2006)
April 14: Viewing the Special Period from Without: Exile Filmmaker León Ichaso
Readings: Gale Cuba entry on “El Súper (León Ichaso);” “Film: Cuban Cinema of the Diaspora”; “Sexuality: Jinetera and the Special Period” (online)
Screening: Azúcar amarga (León Ichaso, 1996)
April 16: Viewing Ruins from Within: the work of Antonio José Ponte.
Readings: Ted Henken, Cuba: A Global Handbook, 154-188. Selected stories by Antonio José Ponte, Tales from the Cuban Empire (Coop)
Film clips: From An Art of Making Ruins

Week 13: On Cuban Special Period Film, Photography, and Performance Art
April 21: Fernando Pérez as Documentarian: Film and Photography in the Special Period
Reading: Gale Cuba entry on “Suite Habana (Fernando Pérez);” “Film: 1989-2010” (online); Ana Dopico, “Picturing Havana” (Blkd pdf)
Film clips: Suite Habana (Fernando Pérez, 2003).
April 23: Post-Soviet Performance Art in Cuba
Week 14: Cuban Art in US University Museums
April 28: Special meeting at the Blanton Museum of Art to see Cuban Holdings
First draft or outline of research paper due.
April 30: Queloides: Afro-Cuban Art and Racial Discrimination in the Special Period
Readings: Alejandro de la Fuente, “Queloides: Race and Racism in Cuban Contemporary Art”; Odette Casamayor-Cisneros, “Elusive Faces: Representations of Blacks & Blackness in Contemporary Cuban Art” (Blkb pdf); Gale Cuba entries “Palo Monte and Ancestral Spirits: The Art of José Bedia”; “La sentencia (Belkis Ayón)”; “Dreaming of an Island (Maria Magdalena Campos Pons)” (online)

Week 15: Virtual Cuba: Blogging and Censoring Dissent in the Internet
May 5 The Words and the Fame of Yoani Sánchez
Reading: Yoani Sánchez, Havana Real (selections)
May 7 Skype conversation with Cuban visual artist/essayist Antonio Eligio (Tonel) Fernández or photographer/blogger Orlando Pardo Lazo. Course evaluations.

Final Paper Due on Friday the 15th during special evening screening of Alejandro Brugués’ Juan of the Dead (2011), exact place and time to be announced.

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 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 evaluate 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. For details about the Spring 2015 University Lecture Series consult http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/uls