

**Visualizing Cuba**  
**UGS 302 Difficult Dialogues First-Year Seminar Fall 2018**

TTh 9:30-11:00 BEN 1.102  
 Writing Component/Global Cultures Flags  
 Unique Number 62010

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 Office Hrs: T-Th 12:30-2 BEN 3.140

**Description:**

The only communist country in the Western Hemisphere, Cuba has exerted a great visual fascination among North Americans and the world in general. Cuba has provided the world with many of the most iconic images and figures we have of the Caribbean region, the Third World and its people, and the history of the Cold War. These images have been artistic, journalistic, political, racial, gendered, commercial, or propagandistic in some measure. The global attention that Cuba commands is even greater today thanks to the unpredictable part to diplomatic normalization between the country and its long-standing nemesis, the United States after the passing of Fidel Castro and the end of his brother's Raúl presidency. Because of the 57-year economic embargo and the sustained political animosity of exile groups, the images of Cuba available around the world still tend to be overly polarized and stereotypical, painted either in bright colors or in dark grey. We continue to visualize Cuba alternatively as a tropical paradise, a tyrannical dictatorship, a racially integrated island, a landscape of ruins, an ideal of 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 and sculpture, performance, and fiction throughout its 59 years of Revolution and beyond, starting with the island's struggles for abolition, sovereignty, and independence in the nineteenth century.

We will consider how much visual artists in the island, both regime-friendly and dissidents, as well as those who have created their work in exile contribute to this complex imagining. Theoretical debates about dissident vs. state-sponsored art, commitment vs. contestation, avant-garde experimentation vs. social realism, freedom of expression vs. censorship, and the visual role of race, gender, and sexuality will be reviewed. Our focus will be on how writers, filmmakers, photographers, and other 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 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 a former "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: 36%

Each 3-4 page essay should focus on a different medium: a. pre-1902 print, photograph, painting, or cartoon; b. a work of Cuban avant-garde art; 3. film scene or script

#### 2. One 10-12 page research paper: 34%

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; outline with main arguments; first draft and revisions; final submission--are scheduled throughout the second half of the course in accordance to the Information Literacy guidelines for Signature Courses.

For this paper you need to follow the following 5 steps:

- a. Propose an appropriate topic for approval by both the professor and the grader (5%)
- b. Put together a commented bibliography with 5 good sources as part of a research plan (5%)
- c. Provide an outline that sketches the main argument, identifies your method or strategy of analysis, summarizes the main sources, and begins analyzing the materials (See Point 3 below)
- d. Turn in a first draft with an introduction; a body of research findings, analysis, and argumentation; and a conclusion
- e. Turn in the final paper after incorporating revisions suggested by the instructor and the grader (24%)

#### 3. Class presentations: 15%

At some point you will be asked to present the work of a visual artist to the entire class. You will latter use the outline for your research paper to make a 10-minute presentation of the project to your fellow students for constructive feedback.

#### 4. Class attendance, participation, and presence in special tours, screenings, and talks: 15%

Students are expected to participate in class discussion. In at least two occasions the class will meet in other locales on campus, outside class time, to learn how to take advantages of unique UT "Gems" research resources. We'll have a special guided visit to **Blanton Art Museum** to see its holdings of prints and paintings by noted contemporary Cuban artists and to the Visual Arts Center to see a special exhibit.. UGS students are encouraged to attend one of the **University Lecture Series**, place and time to be announced. We hope you get involved in the vibrant intellectual life of the university, including events about urgent current issues. Finally, we could on having one specially guest speaker in class, either a noted Cuban studies scholar or visual artist.

### Course Materials:

Many of the class sources are available free online to you through the UT Library System. Two books should be bought at the COOP or via Amazon. Other materials will be available as pdfs from our Canvas webpage or other sites 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*

**Books available for purchase at the Co-op:**

1. Yoani Sánchez, *Havana Real*
2. Rachel Price, *Planet/Cuba. Art, Culture, and the Future of the Island*

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

1. *I Am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964)
2. *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)
3. *Che* (Steven Soderbergh, 2010)
4. *Improper Conduct* (Orlando Jiménez Leal and Nestor Almendros, 1984)
5. *Bitter Sugar* (León Ichaso, 1996)
6. *Suite Havana* (Fernando Pérez, 2003)

**Optional Book for Reference**

Alan West-Durán, *Cuba: A Cultural History* (Reaktion Books)

**Class Schedule****Week 1**

Aug 30 Visual Culture and Image Politics in Cuba: An Introduction  
 Read: Alan West-Durán, Introduction to *Cuba: A Cultural History* (handout in class)

**Week 2 Cuban Landscape and Society in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Prints and Painting**

Sept 4 Vistas of Havana and plantation oversight in Serres, Miahle, and Laplante  
 Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 36-61 (Canvas pdf)  
 Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Oversight. The Ordering of Slavery" (Canvas pdf)  
*Gale Cuba* entries: "Havana: El Morro and La Cabaña"; "Havana: Atlantic Center of Shipping, Commerce, and Building" (online)

Sept 6 Racializing Cuba in the works of Víctor Patricio de Landaluce; Esteban Chartrand and Guillermo Collazo "nationalize" Cuban landscape painting  
 Read: *Gale Cuba* entry: "Día de Reyes en la Habana (V. P. de Landaluce)" (online)  
 Narciso G. Menocal, "An Overriding Passion—The Quest for a National Identity in Painting," p. 186-197 (Canvas pdf)  
 Jill Lane, "Smoking Habaneras" (Canvas pdf)

**Week 3 José Martí as Icon in Photography, Monuments, and Urban Public Space**

Sept 11 José Martí, Cuba's "Apostle," in photography  
 Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 61-74 (Canvas pdf)  
 Emilio Bejel, *José Martí: Images of Memory and Mourning*, p. 1-2; Chapter 1, p. 17-43 (Canvas pdf)  
*Gale Cuba* entries: "José Martí: Political Essays"; "José Martí: Exile in New York"

Sept 13 José Martí in urban public space and sculpture in Cuba and abroad  
 Read: Emilio Bejel, *Jose Martí: Images of Memory [...]*, Chapter 2, p. 45-66 (Canvas pdf)

**Week 4 The Spanish American War: Media War in Pictures, Prints & Cartoons**

Sept 18 Concocting images of Cuba in U.S. "Yellow Journalism"  
 Read: Louis Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, "Introduction," p. 1-11; "Chapter Two: Imagining Self Interest," p. 25-94 (Canvas pdf)

Sept 20 Ruling through images: Visualizing the new possessions after 1898

Read: Lanny Thompson, "Representation and Rule in the Imperial Archipelago" (Canvas pdf)  
**3-4 page paper analyzing a print, photography, monument, or newspaper item due in class**

### **Week 5 After 1898: The "Plattist" Republic, Art Deco, and the 1933 Revolution**

Sept 25 Conrado Massaguer, Art Deco, and the "Dance of the Millions"/

Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 74-88 (Canvas pdf)  
 M. L. Lobo Montalvo & Z. Lapique Becali, "The Years of *Social*" (Canvas pdf)

Sept 27 Visualizing dictatorship and revolt in photography: Walker Evans in 1933 Havana

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries: "Visual Arts: Photography"; "The Machado Dictatorship Falls: August 1933" (online)

José Quiroga, "A Cuban Love Affair with The Image" (Canvas pdf)

Stills from *Return to Cuba: In the Steps of Walker Evans* (doc 2015) and Getty Exhibit "Cuba from Walker Evans to Now" (2011)

### **Week 6 The Avant-Garde in Cuban Visual Arts from the 1930s to the 1950s**

Oct 2 The Avant-Garde in Cuban Painting during the 1930s & 1940s

Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 88-95 (Canvas pdf)  
 Narciso G. Menocal, "An Overriding Passion—The Quest for a National Identity in Painting," p. 197-219 (Canvas pdf)  
*Gale Cuba* entry: "Visual Arts: Republican Period" (online)

Oct 4 Vernacular Avant-Garde in Cuba during the 1940s and 1950s (class presentations)

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries: "Mario Carreño", "*La gitana tropical* (Víctor Manuel)", "*El triunfo de la rumba* (Eduardo Abela)", "*El rapto de las mulatas*" (Carlos Enríquez)", "*Gallo amarillo* (Mariano Rodríguez)", "The Art of René Portocarrero," "The Still-Lives of Amelia Peláez," "*El triunfo de la rumba* (Eduardo Abela)," "*La Jungla* and the Artistic Development of Wifredo Lam" (online) (oral presentations)

### **Week 7 The Cuban Revolution as Global Spectacle**

Oct 9 Fulgencio Batista vs. Fidel Castro on the World Stage (1953-1961)

Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, p. 95-121 (online source)  
*Gale Cuba* entries: "The Politics and Death of Eduardo Chibás"; "The Cuban Revolution of 1959"; "History Will Absolve Me (Fidel Castro)"  
 Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, Intro. & pages from Chap. 1 (Canvas pdf)

Oct 11 Shooting and Filming the Cuban Revolution:

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries: "Film: 1959-1989"; "Raúl Corrales: Photographer of the Revolution" (online)  
 Carlos Espinosa Dominguez, "The Mammoth that Wouldn't Die" (Canvas pdf)  
 Richard Gott: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2005/nov/12/cuba>

Film: Class screening, *I Am Cuba*, first and third episodes (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964)

**3-4 page paper analyzing avant-garde visual artwork from Cuba due in class**

**Recommended:** *Like the lonely traveler*: Panel Discussion with María Magdalena Campos  
 Pons // Oct. 12, 4:30 PM//UT Visual Arts Center

**Week 8 Filming the Cuban Revolution (Continued)**

- Oct 16 Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and ICAIC Film Adaptation in 1960s Cuba  
 Read *Gale Cuba* entries: “*Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea)”;  
*Cuba Gale* entries on “Bay of Pigs Invasion: 1961”; “Cuban Missile Crisis” (online)  
 Film: Class screening, *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Tomas Gutiérrez Alea, 1967)  
 Oct 18 Discussion and analysis of *I am Cuba* and *Memories*.  
 Read Edmundo Desnoes, script of *Memories of Underdevelopment* and essays and interviews about the film (Canvas pdf)

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**Week 9 Ernesto “Che” Guevara as World Icon**

- Oct 23 Che Guevara and Photographic Immortality  
 Read *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” (Canvas pdf)  
 J.P. Spicer-Escalante, “From Korda’s Guerrillero Heroico to Global Brand: Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara” (Canvas pdf)  
 Oct 25 Che’s Iconic Persistence in Contemporary Film  
 Film: Class screening Soderbergh’s *Che, Part 1*  
 Read Amy Taubin: <https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1350-why-che>

**Scheduling of meetings to discuss term paper research topic during office hours****Week 10 1970s vs. 1980s: The Grey Period, Glasnost, and the 1980s Arts Explosion**

- Oct 30 Intellectual and Sexual Persecution in Cuba During the “Grey Years” (1970s)  
 Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook* skim 130-143, read 143-154; *Gale Cuba* entries: “Sexuality: The UMAP Camps,” “Peruvian Embassy, Mariel Boatlift”; “Sexuality: Gay and Lesbian Representation in Cuban Art, Film, and Literature” (online)  
 Film: Class screening of clips from *Improper Conduct (Conducta impropia)*  
 Nov 1 New Cuban Art takes off in the 1980s  
 Read: *Gale Cuba* entries “Visual Arts: Revolutionary Period”; “La anunciación (Antonia Eiriz),” “*Esculturas Rupestres* and Other Works by Ana Mendieta”; other artists and artworks (online) (oral presentations)

**3-4 page paper analyzing a scene from a film due in class****Week 11 Cuba’s Special Period on Film and Page (1991-2006)**

- Nov 6 Viewing the “Special Period” from Without: Exile Filmmaker León Ichaso  
 Read: Ted Henken, *Cuba: A Global Handbook*, 154-188 (Canvas pdf)  
*Gale Cuba* Entries: “Film: Cuban Cinema of the Diaspora”; “Economy: Special Period”; “Sexuality: Jinetera and the Special Period”; “Rafter Crisis: 1994” (online)  
 César A. Salgado, “Re-viewing *Bitter Sugar* Twenty Years After” (online)  
 Film: Clips from *Bitter Sugar* (León Ichaso, 1996)  
 Nov 8 Viewing ruins from within: Poet and Writer Antonio José Ponte speaks on camera  
 Read: Ana Dopico, “Picturing Havana” (Canvas pdf)

Lucia M. Suárez, "Ruin Memory - Havana Beyond the Revolution" (Canvas pdf)  
 Film: Clips from Florian Borchmeyer's *An Art of Making Ruins*

**Comment bibliography of five sources due in class**

**Week 12 On Cuban Special Period Film, Photography, and Performance Art**

Nov 13 Post-Soviet Performance Art in Cuba: Tania Bruguera

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries on "Visual Arts: Special Period"; "Visual Arts: "Performing Arts: Performance Art"; "The Works of Tania Bruguera" (online source)

Nov 15 Fernando Pérez as Cuba's Special Period Master Cineaste

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries: "Suite Habana (Fernando Pérez)"; "Film: 1989-2010" (**online**)

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

**Week 13**

Nov 20 **On class presentations of outlines for final papers**

**Week 14 María Magdalena Campos Pons and Yoani Sánchez**

Nov 27 Afro-Cuban Art after the Cuban Revolution: Focus on Maria Magdalena Campos Pons

Read: *Gale Cuba* entries: "Dreaming of an Island (Maria Magdalena Campos Pons)"; "Palo Monte and Ancestral Spirits: The Art of José Bedia"; "La sentencia (Belkis Ayón)"; "Afro-Cuban Spirituality (Manuel Mendive)"

Alejandro de la Fuente, "*Queloides*: Race and Racism in Cuban Contemporary Art";

Odetta Casamayor-Cisneros, "Elusive Faces: Representations of Blacks & Blackness in Contemporary Cuban Art" (Canvas pdf). **First Draft Due**

**(Meets at the María Magdalena Campos Pons Video Exhibit, UT Visual Arts Center)**

Nov 29 Yoani Sánchez's *Generación Y*

Read: Yoani Sánchez, *Havana Real* (selections to be assigned)

**Week 15 Virtual Cuba/Planet Cuba**

Dec 4 New Cuban trends, works, and artists and the neoliberal global art markets

Read: Chapter selections from Rachel Price, *Planet/Cuba*

Dec 6 Planet Cuba/New Trends, continued. **Course evaluations. Draft with comments returned.**

Read: Chapter selections from Rachel Price, *Planet/Cuba*

**Final Paper Due on Friday 14 at 5PM**

**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](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.** For details about the Spring 2015 University Lecture Series consult <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/uls>

Your professor supports Gun Free UT but believes it is his responsibility to teach, evaluate, and advise all responsible students fairly and in equal terms whatever their positions or opinions.