The Course:

Last December, Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama simultaneously announced that the two nations would be establishing formal diplomatic relations for the first time in 55 years. This announcement generated enormous enthusiasm and disappointments in the United States and Cuba. For many Cubans and supporters of the Cuban Revolution around the world, the small island nation has been a beacon of hope, an inspiration for the construction of a more just and humane society. For them Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Celia Sanchez and hundreds of other revolutionaries are honored for their successful struggles against U.S. imperialism and domestic dictatorship. Those opposed to the new U.S./Cuban relationship regard the Cuban government as a dictatorship that stole the property of Cuban landowners and business persons after the revolution.

The great debate about U.S./Cuban relations also brings attention to two other subjects of importance. First, the U.S./Cuban relationship is a microcosm of the long history of United States influence and control over the countries of Latin America. U.S. hegemony in the region replaced traditional Spanish, Portuguese, British, and Dutch colonialism in the region. That five hundred year history needs to be revisited because it connects to the economic, political, cultural, and social structure of Latin American today.

Second, the twenty-first century has seen a rising hemisphere-wide resistance to traditional United States domination. Fifteen years ago the Venezuelan government launched what former president Hugo Chavez called the Bolivarian Revolution. This revolution involves building solidarity among Latin American nations, constructing alternative international economic and political institutions, and inside countries constructing what some call twenty-first century socialism. This is a new kind of socialism based upon grassroots organizations, egalitarian principles, and workplace cooperatives. While Venezuela has initiated the Bolivarian Revolution, there is no question that revolutionary ferment in the region is building off the inspiration and examples of the Cuban Revolution. In sum, United States/Cuban/Latin American relations play a critical role in how we understand each of the three political poles.

This course will address the history of Latin America, the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere, the domestic and international relations of Cuba, and the connections between Cuba and the rest of Latin America. These issues will be addressed through videos, readings, lectures (including guests), and, most importantly, discussion. The seven topics below will be covered over the next 15 weeks. Students will be asked to write two in-class essay examinations, to participate in all our discussions, and to make a presentation during one week to initiate discussion. Also students will be asked to write one five-page paper on a topic listed under “Cuba Today.” Papers may use in
class readings and at least three additional sources in describing the topic and will be due in the fourteenth week of the semester. Grades will be based on the two examinations, the paper, and an evaluation of in-class participation. The presentations will be based on the week’s readings and/or commentaries or videos shown in class. This class is designed to be a community effort with each of us contributing our experience, our passions, and our critical reflections on the meanings of United States policy, the Cuban Revolution, and the Bolivarian Revolution.

**Texts:**


Several articles posted on Blackboard Learn

**Course Topics:**

1. ”Open Veins in Latin America:” Latin America Before the Cuban Revolution
2. The United States Role in the Western Hemisphere: Mexico, Guatemala, Central America
3. United States/Cuban Relations Before 1959
4. United States/Cuban Relations During the Cold War (1959-1991): Blockades, Invasions, the Missile Crisis
6. Cuba Today:
   a)Politics  
   b)Economics  
   c)Culture: the Arts, Community  
   d)Race and Gender  
   e)Health Care  
   e)Social Change  
   f)21st Century Economic Changes  
   g)Internationalism and Foreign Policy
7. U.S./Cuban/Latin America: The Bolivarian Revolution
Videos (merely possibilities):

On Gold
Open Veins of Latin America
U.S. Mexican War
Crucible of Empire
CNN on the Bay of Pigs and Missile Crisis
Fidel: The Untold Story
Memories of Underdevelopment
Portrait of Theresa
Strawberry and Chocolate
Buena Vista Social Club
TED Talk on Cuban Health Care
Videos on Cuban Cooperatives

Readings:

Week

1.) “A Student’s Perspective on the Study of Cuba;” “Theories of International Relations”

2.) Review of Open Veins in Latin America and if available, Chapter one of the book by Edwardo Galeano

3.) Targ, “Cuba and the USA” vi.-38

4.) Harry Targ Essays on Cuba

5.) Targ, “Cuba and the USA” 39-114

6.) Cuba Reader, 1-116

7.) Cuba Reader 309-373

8.) Cuba Reader 117-214
9.) Cuba Reader 373-399
10.) Cuba Reader 399-416, 423-433
11.) Cuba Reader 417-422, 433-446
12.) Cuba Reader 215-305
13.) “Cuba, Angola, and South Africa”
14.) “A Short Essay on Neoliberalism;” and TBA
15.) TBA