

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES**

**SPA 23013/ LACS 23013 – Historia y memoria en la literatura de la diáspora cubana
Spring 2013**

COURSE SYLLABUS



Antonio Eligio Fernández, *Mundo soñado*, 1996

Class meetings: Tues/Thus 12:00-1:20 pm, P-222

Instructor: Jenna Leving Jacobson, leving@uchicago.edu

<http://www.pinterest.com/jlevingjacobson>

Office hours: GB 204, Tuesdays 9:00-11:00am and by appointment

Course description:

In this course we will read a sample of the prominent literary voices to have emerged from the Cuban Diaspora since the triumph of the socialist revolution in 1959. We will look at the problematics of migration and exile specifically as a literary and cultural problem. The texts we will read—novels and autobiographical non-fiction—all grapple with how to write, preserve, and reconstruct history and memory. We will thus explore these broad themes in an array of readings from throughout the Cuban Diaspora.

Among the many questions to be raised, we will consider the ways in which literature can represent and reproduce the human, social, cultural, historical and political experiences of exile. Through these multiple visions of the self and homeland, we will examine expressions of how that self remembers, imagines and reconstitutes the homeland as well as its diasporic community.

PQ: SPAN 20300 or consent of instructor.

Course goals:

Students will develop their interpretive skills by critically engaging with this challenging body of texts. They will become familiar with important literary discussions surrounding questions of the Cuban Diaspora and come to understand more deeply how the experiences of exile have been narrated, remembered and forgotten in works of both fiction and non-fiction. In analyzing problems of identity and in exploring the narrative production of both individual and collective memory, students will compare and problematize the various interpretations of history presented in the readings. They will use tools of literary analysis along with their acquired knowledge of the political, historical and cultural contexts framing these texts, to closely and critically read these works and to formulate complex and nuanced arguments about the problems encountered throughout this course.

Required texts:

- Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974)
- Reinaldo Arenas, *Antes que anochezca* (1992)
- Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992)
- Zoé Valdés, *La nada cotidiana* (1995)
- Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *El año que viene estamos en Cuba* (1997)
- Achy Obejas, *Days of Awe* (2001)

Calendar of readings:**Unit 1: Rewriting History—weeks 1 & 2**

Readings: Guillermo Cabrera Infante, *Vista del amanecer en el trópico*, and selections from *Mea Cuba*

The global and theoretical questions that will frame this unit confront the ways history can be rewritten and re-imagined. How do we understand memory and how it relates to history? To one's relationship with a (geographic or national) territory? Can personal reminiscence represent collective memory? And how is collective experience to be remembered and narrated?

Week 1

April 2—Introduction

April 4—Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005): *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974)

“Las islas surgieron del océano...”—“Por un bando del gobierno...”

Week 2

April 9—Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005): *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974)

“El diario de campaña...”—“El comandante tenía la costumbre...”

Suggested reading: Selections from *Mea Cuba* (1992)

[Discussion questions due]

April 11—Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005): *Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974)

“Aunque están tumbados en la yerba...”—“Y ahí estará.”

Unit 2: Exilic Autobiographies: Memory, Nostalgia and Identity—weeks 3—5

Readings: Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *El año que viene estamos en Cuba*,
Reinaldo Arenas: *Antes que anochezca*

The two memoirs we will read in this unit present very different visions of exile and form a part of very different Diasporas. We will consider how the historical, cultural, political and economic differences experienced by Pérez Firmat and Arenas inform their personal memories of their lives on the island, their exodus and their lives in exile. In contrasting these voices we begin to create a more nuanced portrait of the Cuban Diaspora.

Some of the central questions of this unit deal with the ruptures and recuperations from one's past and from one's self. How are those moments constituted in memoirs written in the Cuban Diaspora? How are history and memory imagined and written from exile? How does one reconcile the problems of both alienation and belonging in exile?

Week 3

April 16—Gustavo Pérez Firmat (1949-): *El año que viene estamos en Cuba* (1997) Primera Parte
April 18—Gustavo Pérez Firmat (1949-): *El año que viene estamos en Cuba* (1997) Segunda Parte
[Essay #1 due]

Week 4

April 23—Gustavo Pérez Firmat (1949-): *El año que viene estamos en Cuba* (1997) Tercera Parte
[Discussion questions due]

April 25—Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990): *Antes que anochezca* (1992) Introducción—La Habana
Suggested reading: Selections from *Mea Cuba* (1992)

Week 5

April 30—Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990): *Antes que anochezca* (1992) Fidel Castro—La fuga
[Discussion questions due]

May 2—Reinaldo Arenas (1943-1990): *Antes que anochezca* (1992) La captura—Carta de despedida

Unit 3: Fictionalized Memories—weeks 6—9

Readings: Achy Obejas, *Days of Awe*,
Zoe Valdés, *La nada cotidiana*,
Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*

In the last weeks of the quarter we will read three texts: fictional accounts based on the authors' experiences as Cuban women who left the island and fictionalized their memories as novels. These specific texts confront the problematic categories of religion, gender and sexuality, and thus as readers, we must confront how these categories are articulated in the novels. Essentially we are returning to the question of identity posed in earlier discussions but bending the framework to look at how the exiled subject identifies herself through the fictional narration of her memories.

Week 6

May 7—Cristina García (1958-): *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) Ocean Blue—Enough Attitude
[Discussion questions due]

May 9—Cristina García (1958-): *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) Baskets of Water—Celia’s Letter: 1959
[Essay #2 due]

Week 7

May 14—Zoé Valdés (1959-): *La nada cotidiana* (1995) Morir por la patria es vivir—El Traidor
 May 16—Zoé Valdés (1959-): *La nada cotidiana* (1995) La casa de las ex-culturas—La Gusana
[Discussion questions due]

Week 8

May 21—Zoé Valdés (1959-): *La nada cotidiana* (1995) El Lince—Y yo que lo tenía en un altar
 May 23—Achy Obejas (1956-): *Days of Awe* (2001) Prologue—XIII

Week 9

May 28—Achy Obejas (1956-): *Days of Awe* (2001) XIV—XXVII
[Discussion questions due]

May 30—Achy Obejas (1956-): *Days of Awe* (2001) XXIX—XL
[Final Paper proposal due]

Week 10: Presentations of paper ideas and wrap-up

June 4—Student presentations

June 6—(Reading period—optional meetings on final papers)

Course Evaluation:

Participation	20%
Discussion Questions (6)	12%
Essay #1	15%
Essay #2	20%
Proposal & Presentation	8%
Final Written Paper	25%

Explanation of Course Requirements

Students will be required to actively participate in our bi-weekly class meetings and complete a variety of analytical exercises designed to evaluate their comprehension and interpretation of the primary texts we study together.

Participation: (20%)

Students will be expected to attend all class meetings prepared to discuss the assigned readings. A weekly participation grade will be posted for each student on the Chalk gradebook based on her engagement with and contributions to class discussion. Active participation means the student not only contributes with thoughtful comments and questions, but also respectfully listens to his classmates' contributions as well. Grades will be negatively affected by absences. After three absences a student's grade will be dropped by 10%. After six absences of any kind, the student will be asked to withdraw from the course.

Participation grades will also suffer from tardiness and distracting oneself or others with laptops, cell phones, tablets or work from another class. (It is completely obvious when you are texting, on facebook or online shopping. Don't hide your phone on your lap, just put it on silent and stow it in your bag. Don't even bring your computer to class—you don't need it!)

Discussion questions: (10%)

For each text, students will be responsible for posting discussion questions on the Chalk site to help them prepare for class, to insure timely completion of readings, and so that discussions respond to students' concerns and interests. When formulating a discussion question, think of yourself as the instructor for this course designing an exam or paper assignment. Ask yourself if that question will provoke multiple responses and interpretations. Will it address the over-arching themes and problems of interest to this course? Will it allow a student to demonstrate that she has read and understood the text, and that she has thought about it critically? This assignment will be graded on how well the question posted articulates a central problem in reading that text, and on timely completion (posted **at least 24 hours before the next class meeting**, i.e. before noon on April 8 for the first post).

Essay #1: (15%)

A 2-3 page close reading focused on an excerpt of the students' choice from *Vista del amanecer en el trópico*. This essay will be evaluated on how well the student demonstrates a thorough reading of the rhetorical elements evident in the chosen fragment and how it speaks to more global themes of the text. Essays can be turned in as a hard copy or via email before the beginning of class on April 18. Emailed essays should be sent before noon on the 18th as an attached Word document, saved as "Name.Essay1.SPAN23013"

Essay #2: (20%)

A 3-4 page comparative analysis of *El año que viene estamos en Cuba* and *Antes que anochezca*, focused on a theme of the students' choice. This essay will be evaluated on how well the student demonstrates an understanding of the primary texts as well as his/her articulation of the central theme or argument.

Essays can be turned in as a hard copy or via email before the beginning of class on May 9. Emailed essays should be sent before noon on the 9th as an attached Word document, saved as "Name.Essay2.SPAN23013"

Proposal & presentation: (10%)

Students will submit a 1-2 paragraph description of their final paper by week 9, and during the last week of class, they will share their chosen paper topics with the class. They will have 2-3 minutes to present their ideas. This will help them to formulate a thesis and outline by the 10th week of class so that they can benefit from feedback from both the instructor and classmates before completing the final draft. Paper proposals can be turned in as a hard copy or via email before the beginning of class on May 30. Emailed essays should be sent before noon on the 30th as an attached Word document, saved as "Name.Proposal.SPAN23013"

Final Paper: (25%)

A 6-8 page written paper that will compare and analyze at least two of the three texts read in Unit 3 (García, Valdés, & Obejas). The final paper will be evaluated on the observations and analyses made of the primary texts and the effectiveness of the student's argument. Final papers must be submitted via email by 10am on Thursday, June 13 as an attached Word document, saved as "Name.FinalPaper.SPAN23013"

* All writing assignments are to be double-spaced in size 12 Times New Roman font with 1" margins

Plagiarism – Please see general college guidelines on plagiarism. Study groups are acceptable, but all reading and writing assignments should be done independently. Students should not get help from other people or from the Internet to complete writing assignments, including online translators. They should not recycle materials, whether it is their own (from a previous course) or someone else's. Sanctions vary from getting an F for the assignment to getting an F for the whole course. Advisors are contacted in most cases.

Assistance – Consulting a dictionary or discussing a text or a particular point with a classmate can constitute legitimate assistance under proper circumstances. Working on writing assignments with classmates, using online translators to write commentaries or essays, and asking friends or native speakers to write or proofread assignments for you, all constitute cheating. Should the student find published, academic articles useful, this kind of research is acceptable, but not required. When using another scholar's ideas, those ideas must be accurately cited.

Note for Students with Disabilities: Students with physical or learning disabilities should inform the instructor and contact their area dean of students and the Associate Dean of Student Services (Administration 222, 702-7773) in as timely a fashion as possible to request assistance and coordination of accommodations at the University.

RECURSOS

Cine

Unidad 1: Reescrituras de la H/historia

PM, 1961

Memorias del subdesarrollo, 1968

Buena Vista Social Club, 1999

Unidad 2: Autobiografías exílicas: memoria, nostalgia e identidad

Conducta impropia, 1984

Fresa y chocolate, 1993

Cuban Roots/Bronx Stories, 2000

Before Night Falls, 2001

Unidad 3: Memorias ficcionalizadas

Adio kerida, 2002

Suite Habana, 2003

Habana blues, 2005

Habana abierta, 2005

Banda Sonora

Unidad 1: Reescrituras de la H/historia

Buena Vista Social Club, “Chan Chan,” “El cuarto de Tula,” “Candela”

Pablo Milanés, “Pobre del cantor”

Eduardo Ramos, Canción de los CDR”

Carlos Puebla, “Hasta siempre”

Beny Moré, “Que bueno baila usted”

Silvio Rodríguez, “Madre,” “Ojalá,” “Oda a mi generación”

Ibrahim Ferrer, “Marieta”

Omara Portuondo, “Songoro Cosongo,” “Dos gardenias”

Unidad 2: Autobiografías exílicas: memoria, nostalgia e identidad

Willy Chirino, “La jinetera”

Celeste Mendoza, “Mi rumba echando candela”

Raúl Paz, “Havanization,” “Carnaval,”

Albita Rodríguez, “No se parece a nada,” “Cantare”

Equis Alfonso, “Habana”

Descemer Bueno “Pa’rriba,” “Se feliz”

Orquesta Aragón, “Los tamalitos de Olga”

Guayabero, “El tumbaíto”

Pedro Luis Ferrer, “Ay Mariposa”

David Calzado y La Charanga Habanera, “Gozando en Miami”

Unidad 3: Memorias ficcionalizadas

Gloria Estéfan, “Mi tierra”

Francisco Aguabella, “Elegua”

Celia Cruz, “Guantanamera”

Yerba Buena, “Bote bote va”

Los Van Van, “La Habana no aguanta más,” “Este te pone la cabeza mala,” “Temba, tumba, timba,” “Somos cubanos,” “Que le den candela”

Chuchito Valdés “Guaguaco montuno,” “Blues la rumba,” “Yo tengo mi tumbao”

Chucho Valdés e Irakeré, “Bacalao con pan”

Sonido Isleño, “Rumba Judía”

Descemer Bueno y Equia Alfonso, “Arenas de soledad”

Habana Abierta, “Corazón boomerang,” “Asere, ¿qué vola?”

David Calzado y La Charanga Habanera, “Soy cubano, soy popular”

Páginas web de interés

Revista encuentro: la revista digital de *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* (sitio de noticias, información, reseñas, opiniones, etc.) Publicado en Madrid.

<http://www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro/>

La jiribilla: Revista oficial de la cultura cubana, publicada en La Habana

<http://www.lajiribilla.cu>

Desde Cuba: portal de blogueros cubanos en la isla.

<http://www.desdecuba.com/>

Havana Cultura: Entrevistas, fotos, videos e información sobre la producción cultural en Cuba. Un proyecto de Havana Club y Gilles Peterson.

<http://www.havana-cultura.com/>

www.pinterest.com/jlevingjacobson: página conservada por Jenna, con música, videos, imágenes e información de interés

Cuba en Chicago**Events**

April 11-25, 29th annual Latino Film Festival, <http://chicagolatinofilmfestival.org>

April 13, “Havana Blue” concert at the Auditorium Theater

April 13, Ángel D’Cuba, at Old Town School of Folk Music

May 5, Cubano Be! Cubano Bop! at Old Town School of Folk Music

May 20, Afro-Cuban Drumming, 19th Century Club in Oak Park

May 30-31, Chuchito Valdés at Jazz Showcase

June 20, Conjunto Cuban Jazz Party at Katerina’s

Restaurants

Café La Guardia (Bucktown) 2111 W Armitage Ave

The Lazy Parrot (Wicker Park) 2257 W North Ave
90 Miles Cuban Café (Roscoe Village: 3101 N Clybourn Ave/ Bucktown: 540 W. Armitage
Habana Libre (Noble Square) 1440 W Chicago Ave
Señor Pan Cafetería (Cragin/Hermosa) 4612 W Fullerton Ave
Señor Pan Café (Bucktown) 2615 W. North Ave
El Cubanito (Logan Square) 1440 W Chicago Ave
Havana (River North) 412 N Clark St
El Rinconcito Cuban (Logan Square) 3238 W Fullerton Ave
Cafecito (Loop) 26 E Congress Pkwy
Paladar (Logan Square) 2115 N Milwaukee Ave
Café Marianao (Logan Square) 2246 N Milwaukee Ave

Chicago Cuba Project: Non-profit oral history project dedicated to documenting the lives of Cubans living in the Chicago area, <http://chicagocubaproject.org/>