

Trinity College, INTS216/HIST 236

Understanding the History, Culture and Politics of Latin America & the Caribbean.

Instructor: Professor Cristian J. Padilla Romero (he/him)

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Classroom: MECC - 246

Fall 2023, Tuesdays & Thursdays (10:50AM-12:05PM)

Office Hours: Seabury Hall, basement, N-045 Tu, & Th: 1:15-3:15pm

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course explores major historical themes and contemporary cultural and political topics related to Latin American and Caribbean societies and cultures. The goal is for the students to acquire a panoramic view of the Latin America and the Caribbean worlds while acquiring a deeper understanding of various issues that are explored more intensely in other upper-division courses at Trinity. We will engage issues of demography, geography, basic historical periods and processes, particular anthropological and cultural debates, fundamental political and gender, sociological approaches to daily life, aesthetic and literary movements, and the regions' positions within the historic and contemporary world economy. Open to all students, this course is required of INTS majors with a Caribbean and Latin American Studies focus.

Learning Objectives:

“When one teaches two learn” was what my high school teacher always repeated to me. In the case of this class, the goal of this course is for students to work collaboratively and develop their critical thinking skills as we learn about history in general and Latin America and the Caribbean specifically. Students will learn how to ask insightful and thought-provoking questions that will enhance their own understanding and that of their peers. Students will be asked to provide their own input into the historical, social, cultural and political themes discussed in class. Students will be encouraged to ask questions and learn how to deepen their inquiry skills.

My goal is to teach students about history but in a way that is doable, interesting, and challenging. I do not expect students to have prior historical knowledge about Latin America and I understand that each student comes to the class with different historical and personal backgrounds.

Unlike what it is often told, history and the social sciences in general, are not objective fields that produce universal truths that must be upheld unconditionally. Instead, History, as an academic discipline as developed in the Western tradition, is a deeply subjective field. It developed as a subset of a few privileged voices who intentionally and unintendedly shaped the way knowledge is produced and reproduced, often in ways that uplifted Euro-American white supremacist and capitalist interests. The consequence of that history resulted in the marginalization people of color and the Global South. Therefore, I acknowledge that there will be overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens in which it was written or produced. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of History. I encourage students to contact me or submit anonymous feedback if you have any questions or suggestions to improve the quality of the course material.

Evaluation

The evaluation for this course originates in different types of assessments, from class participation to in-class exams and a 10-page writing assignment submitted as the “final exam”. Class participation

will count for 40% of the final grade, with half posted at mid-term and the second half posted at the end of the semester. The nature of class participation will be discussed the first day of class. Class attendance every scheduled session is required. However, if consistent attendance is not within your capacity, please come discuss with the instructor to find other ways to facilitate your learning. Medical and other explanations for absences must be discussed with the instructor. The remaining class valuation will originate in two exams and a final writing assignment explained the first day of class. Exam I, scheduled for 10/17, will count for 20% of the grade; and Exam 2, worth 20% of the final grade, is scheduled for 11/21. Finally, the writing assignment that will be submitted during the “final exam” date, Dec 15, at midnight. It will be valued at 20% of the final grade. The nature of the exams and writing assignment will be discussed the first day of class.

Accommodations Policy

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or create barriers to your learning, please let me know. I encourage you to visit Trinity’s Student Accessibility Resource Center: Lori.Clapis@trincoll.edu. If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me.

Office Hours:

Weekly office hours are a dedicated time that I am available to answer your questions, discuss course content, and generally be of support. Please drop into my office at Seabury N-045. If there is a scheduling conflict, please email to arrange a different time or zoom meeting—I look forward to speaking with you. To decrease the barrier to office hours, I am inviting each of you to attend office hours (individually or small groups—in fact I encourage group meetings) during the first few weeks of class as part of your participation grade. There is no need to prepare anything beforehand.

Intellectual Honesty

“In accordance with the Trinity College Student Integrity Contract, students are expected to abide by the highest standards of intellectual honesty in all academic exercises. Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw. It is the responsibility of each student to make sure that he or she is fully aware of what constitutes intellectually honest work in every examination, quiz, paper, laboratory report, homework assignment, or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation in a course at Trinity College.” (Trinity College Student Handbook, p. 13).

Having said that, please let me know if you are struggling with your assignments, especially with your writing, in this course. We can come up with a game plan together. Learning is not derived only from the lectures and materials covered in the course. Part of the learning process is developing diverse sets of skills that allow you to not only think and analyze material. Part of the process is how to put your thoughts on paper which is not an easy process. As you will notice in the reading material, academic writing is too often filled with jargon and unnecessarily complex syntax, please do not feel like you must replicate that. Effective writers communicate in short, precise, and straightforward ways. I want YOUR voice to shine through.

Policy on A.I:

Generative AI systems (like ChatGPT), if used correctly, can serve as powerful tools for learning and idea refinement. In this course, you can use generative AI systems to learn about concepts iteratively through a conversation (much like you would have a conversation with a peer, TA or an

instructor). However, you cannot ask these systems to directly give you answers or write for you. One reason for this is because the answers that the system generates can be inaccurate (no matter how confident the system might sound). But more importantly, I believe the intellectual growth you can get from working through a difficult problem and discovering the answer for yourself cannot be replicated by just reading a pre-generated answer. Having said that: any attempt to pass off A.I. writing as your own in this class constitutes a violation of Trinity College's intellectual honesty policy. As the Student Handbook explains, "Intellectual honesty assumes that students do their own work and that they credit properly those upon whose work and thought they draw" (28-37; 28). Failure to abide by the policy may result in censure, suspension, or even expulsion.

Books Required:

John C. Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016).

Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017).

Schedule:

(Always subject to changes, communicated by the instructor in person or via email. Students are responsible for reviewing emails from the instructor daily during the semester).

I. Introduction: What is "Latin America" in contrast to "the Caribbean"

Tue 09/05 Class Introduction. read Chapter 1, "Welcome to Latin America," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions posted on Moodle.

II. Spanish Colonialism and its Long Legacies in Latin America, 16th to 20th Centuries

Thu 09/07 Discuss Chapter 1 in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 09/12 read Chapter 2, "Encounter," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For background on the film scheduled for 09/12 on Cuba, read Jelly-Schapiro, **Island People: The Caribbean and the World** (New York: Vintage, 2017). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on Cuba in his book on the Caribbean.

Tu 09/12 Screen Film "They Are We":
"Nearly 200 years after a family was split by the transatlantic slave trade, they were, remarkably reunited. In Central Cuba, proud members of the Ganga-Longoba, a small Afro-Cuban ethnic group, have kept their unique heritage alive. Incredibly, through decades of brutal enslavement, independence wars, and then the denying of all religions after the revolution, they have retained a collection of distinct songs and dances that one of their ancestors brought from Africa as a slave. Each December 17th they still perform them at the San Lazaro ceremony."

- Th 09/14 Discuss Chapter 2 in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For background on films scheduled for 09/19 and 09/26, read Chapters on the Dominican Republic and Haiti in Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017). As you do, think about the Study Questions Regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on the Dominican Republic and Haiti in his book on the Caribbean.
- Tu 09/19 Screen Film on the Dominican Republic, "Stateless": "Director Michèle Stephenson's new documentary follows families of those affected by the 2013 legislation stripping citizenship from Dominicans of Haitian descent, uncovering the complex history and present-day politics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic through the grassroots electoral campaign of a young attorney named Rosa Iris." For 09/21 read Chapter 3, "Colonial Crucible," in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Th 09/21 Discuss Chapter 3 in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 2/22 review the chapter on Haiti, Jelly-Schapiro.). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on Haiti in his book on the Caribbean.
- Tu 09/26 7pm Screen Film on Haiti: "Man by the Shore": "A Small country town in Papa Doc's Haiti. A period of bloody dictatorship during which entire families are wiped out, massacred, victims of an arbitrary regime. 8-year-old Sarah's parents are forced to flee Haiti Under Duvalier. Sarah's father, a discredited officer, entrusts Sarah and her two sisters to their grandmother. For the time being secure from the violent and impulsive Janvier, who is bent on Revenge and dedicated to the regime, Sarah creates a world of her own. A world full of fantasy, mystery and rituals. Thirty years later, Sarah's memories of these years are haunted by nightmares which recall a man by the shore that put an end to her childhood."
- Thu 09/28 For background to the film scheduled for 10/03 on Colombia's Caribbean Islands, read Sharika Crawford, "A Transnational World Fractured but not Forgotten: British West Indian Migration to the Colombian Islands of San Andrés and Providence," *New West Indian Guide* 85 (1&2) (2011), pp. 31-52 and Crawford, "Andean or Caribbean? Nine Books on Colombia," *Latin American Research Review*, 56:2 (June 2021): 512-521. These essays are posted on the course's Moodle site.
- Tu 10/03 Screen Film on Colombia's Caribbean Islands: "Bad Luck Goat": "After accidentally killing a bearded goat with their father's truck, two incompatible siblings in their teenage years, embark on a journey of reconciliation." For 3/3 read Chapter 4 in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.

- Thu 10/05 Discuss Chapter 4, “Independence,” in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 3/8 on Costa Rica, read Ivan Molina, “Costa Rica,” in Robert H.Holden, Editor, Oxford Handbook of Central American History (Oxford University Press, 2020). This article is available on Moodle.
- Tue 10/10 – FALL BREAK NO CLASSES
- Thu 10/12 Screen Film Caribbean Costa Rica, “Caribe”: “Passion: of people for the land and sea, of corporations for riches, and of men and women for each other. Vicente and Abigail run a banana plantation in Limon Province, on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica. Abigail's half-sister Irene, about whom Abigail knew nothing, comes to introduce herself. She is 21 and beautiful. Meanwhile, banana prices fall, threatening the plantation's finances. An oil company works with the government to get off-shore drilling rights, over local objection. Vicente is at the center of each cross-current. Will he fall for Irene, can he save the plantation, will he sell out to corporate offers? What of the coast: can its beauty be saved?” Study for Exam 1 on Chapters 1-4 in Chasteen scheduled for 3/10.
- Tue 10/17 Exam 1. For 10/19 read, Paul Lopez Oro, “Ni de aquí, ni de allá”: Garífuna Subjectivities and the Politics of Diasporic Belonging,” P.R. Rivera-Rideau et al. (eds.), Afro-Latin@s in Movement, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-59874-5_3
- Thu 10/19 Screen Film on Honduras “Garifuna in Peril”: “A Garifuna language teacher, Ricardo, struggles to preserve his culture by building a language school back in his home village in Honduras, Central America. A business venture with his brother designed to raise money for the school's construction becomes complicated by the expansion plans of a nearby tourist resort. Historical parallels are invoked as Ricardo's son rehearses and performs a stage play about the Garifuna people's last stand against the British on the island St. Vincent over 200 years ago. It features debut performances by Honduran and Belizean actors.” For 10/24, read For Discuss Chapter 5, “Post-Colonial Blues,” and Chapter 6, “Progress”, in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Tue 10/24 Discuss Chapter 5, “Post-Colonial Blues” and Chapter 6, “Progress,” in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For March 29h read Chapter 7, “Neo-Colonialism,” in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Thu 10/27 Discuss Chapter 7, “Neo-Colonialism,” in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 3/31 read Chapter 8, “Nationalism,” in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.

- Tue 10/31 Guest Speaker Gabriel Rivera Cotto is a Combined Ph.D. student in History and African-American Studies. His research focuses on enslaved people's resistance and inter-Caribbean networks of information and movement during early 19th-century Puerto Rico. Gabriel received his B.A. in History with a Minor in French from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. Read chapter on Puerto Rico in Jelly- Schapiro, **Island People: The Caribbean and the World** (New York: Vintage, 2017). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly- Schapiro's chapter on Puerto Rico in his book on the Caribbean. These are in a folder on Moodle. Read Chapter 8, "Nationalism," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 11/07 read Chapter 9, "Revolution," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Th 11/02 Discuss Chapter 9, "Revolution," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 4/7 read Chapter 10, "Reaction," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Tu 11/07 Discuss Chapter 10, "Reaction," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 4/12 read, Chapter 11, "Neo-Liberalism & Beyond," in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.
- Thu 11/09 Guest Speaker Jessica Cruz PhD student in History at Yale University. Jess Cruz is a third-year PhD student in the Yale University History Department (Pronouns: she/her/ella). She is a Cuban American, born and raised in Hialeah, Florida and is a First-Generation Low-Income (FLI) student whose research has been supported by the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship. Jess is currently researching how Miami, Florida has historically functioned as a sanctuary and exporter of the Latin American Right throughout the 20th century. She is tracing, through the material and cultural expression of the city (at the moment through the construction of stadiums, radio, music, memorials and parades), how Miami has acted as a central node for a vast, intergenerational network of counterrevolution across the hemisphere. Jess is trying to think about everyday acts and routines that illustrate the continued living memory of decades of transnational and reactionary exile organizations, the experimentation and employment of counterinsurgency tactics, and lastly, how the explicit acts of terrorism organized across the city have continued to act as a blueprint for the hemispheric right.
- Tu 11/14 NO CLASS
- Thu 11/16 Discuss Chapter 11 in Chasteen, **Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America**, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions.

Tue 11/21 Exam 2 on Chapters 5-11 in Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire : A Concise History of Latin America*, 4th edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016), and think about the study questions. For 4/19 read Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017), pp. 3-95 on Jamaica). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on Jamaica in his book on the Caribbean. These are in a folder on Moodle.

TH 11/23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

III. Introduction to Contrasting Colonialisms in the Grand Caribbean

Tu 11/28 Discuss Jamaica in Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017). For 11/30 read the Chapter on Trinidad in Jelly Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017)). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on Trinidad in his book on the Caribbean.

Thu 11/30 Discuss the chapter on Trinidad in Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017). For 12/05 read Chapters 11, 12 and 13 in Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017), on Cayman, Barbados, Grenada, Barbuda, Monserrat, Antigua, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Dominica, in the context of the all the other chapters of this book read before). As you do, think about the Study Questions regarding Jelly-Schapiro's chapter on the Lesser Antilles (Chapters 11, 12 and 13) in his book on the Caribbean.

Tue 12/05 Discuss Chapters 11, 12 and 13 in Jelly-Schapiro, *Island People: The Caribbean and the World* (New York: Vintage, 2017), on Cayman, Barbados, Grenada, Barbuda, Monserrat, Antigua, Martinique, Guadeloupe and Dominica. For 12/07, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction," *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(2) (2011), pp. 1-16.

IV. Decolonializing Thought and Projects

Thu 12/07 Discuss Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction," *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, 1(2) (2011), pp. 1-16. This essay is posted to the course Moodle site.

Tue 12/12 Review of the learning objectives of the course.

Mon 12/15 Final Paper due at Midnight