

# **HIS 156, A Communist Country on America's Doorsteps: Cuba from Columbus to the Present**

**Fall 2020**

**Joseph E. Inikori (Professor)**

**Zoom, Monday/Wednesday 10.25-11.40 am**

**Office Hours: Tuesday 10.00 am-12.00 noon, Zoom**

## **I**      *Course Scope and Focus*

While the socioeconomic situation in Cuba has changed considerably since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the process of normalizing relations with the United States is in progress, Cuba has been for many decades a communist country just 90 miles away from American shores. This course traces the complex historical developments which gave rise to this situation and discusses the grave global repercussions. It examines the evolution of socioeconomic and political interest groups in colonial Spanish Cuba and the subsequent American entanglement in the internal historical processes in Cuba, with far-reaching unintended consequences, particularly, the ultimate involvement of the Soviet Union, which brought Cuba to the center of the Cold War between the super powers. The process was not linear. There were several turning points. But the long-run narrative aims at making the defining elements of Cuba-US relations in the more recent past comprehensible. The narrative also aims at providing lessons that may be practically helpful for US policymakers in assessing the long-run costs and benefits of foreign interventions.

## **II**      *Required Textbooks*

- 1      Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- 2      Jane Franklin, *Cuba and the U.S. Empire: A Chronological History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016).

### III *Course Requirements*

The course is based on group learning. This means that the professor takes the lead in the lectures, but all members of the class participate actively in the discussions that go together with the lectures. For this to work well, all students must read closely the assigned literature for the specified sets of classes, with a focus on the issues stated and the discussion questions listed. Students are expected to attend all Zoom classes and do so punctually. Attendance record will be kept and will be used to compute attendance scores that will be a total of 10 marks. Students are encouraged to take advantage of Office Hours to discuss with the professor all issues relating to the course. There are 8 slots, 15-minutes each, every week, Tuesday 10.00 am to 12 noon (**10-10.15 am, 10.15-10.30 am, 10.30-10.45 am, 10.45-11 am, 11-11.15 am, 11.15-11.30 am, 11.30-11.45 am, 11.45-12 noon**). During the Zoom class, every Monday, the professor will ask students who want to utilize the office hours to state their chosen slot for the week. Each student is expected to write four one-page essays (one each for the 4 sections of the course) for a total score of 40 marks (10 marks per essay). There will be a Take-Home Mid-Term that will carry a total of 20 marks (2 essays of 2 pages each). The questions will be e-mailed to the students on Wednesday, October 14, and the answers will be e-mailed to the professor on Monday, October 19, 2020. The final assignment is a 10-page term paper that carries a total of 30 marks. The papers will be e-mailed to the professor on Wednesday, December 9, 2020. The paper takes the place of a final examination in the course.

#### IV Course Outline

The course is divided into four sections. They are shown together with their periods of coverage.

1. Geography and pre-Spanish Cuba; from military garrisons and fortresses to the rise of slave plantations; Cuban economy and United States markets; United States efforts to buy Cuba, 1848 and 1854; Ten Years' War to free Cuba from Spanish rule, 1868-1878; Revolution and United States intervention, 1895-1898; United States military occupation, 1899-1903 — **12 classes, August 26 to October 7, 2020.**

**Discussion Questions:** i) *Why did Christopher Columbus believe Cuba was part of Asia?*

ii) *What caused the decline of the indigenous population of Cuba a few decades after Spanish colonization?*

lii) *What factors determined the role of Cuba in Spanish colonization of the Americas and how did the role affect economy and society in early Spanish Cuba?*

iv) *Trace the historical development of slave plantations in Cuba.*

v) *Trace the historical development of socioeconomic classes in Spanish Cuba.*

vi) *Discuss the main differences between the objectives of the Ten Years' War, 1868-1878, and the Revolution of 1895-1898.*

vii) *Why were the creole planters committed to the annexation of Cuba by the United States?*

viii) *Why did the United States decide against the annexation of Cuba in 1898 having tried unsuccessfully to purchase the island from Spain in 1848 and 1854?*

ix) *Discuss the probable socioeconomic and political changes in Cuba that United States intervention prevented.*

x) *Show the effects of United States intervention and military occupation on Cuba's economy and society.*

**Readings: a)** Louis A. Perez, Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 2015), pages 1-149;

**b)** Jane Franklin, *Cuba and the U.S. Empire: A Chronological History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016), pages 1-12.

2. The Republic of Cuba, from United States Control to Fidel Castro's Revolution, 1903-1959:— the growth of American private investment in Cuba and the diminution of Cuban creole investment; the economic impact of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903; the sugar economy and Cuban politics; United States interventions, 1906-1909, 1912, and 1917; the rise of native Cuban entrepreneurs during and after World War I; the economy and Gerard Machado's presidency, 1920s to 1930s; end of Machado's government (1933) and the institution of the revolutionary government headed by medical Professor Ramon Grau San Martin; United States involvement, overthrow of Professor Martin's government by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista; Batista's reign in Cuba under United States direction, 1934-1959; Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement and the overthrow of Batista — **6 classes, October 12-28, 2020**

**Discussion Questions:** i) *Examine the causes and effects of United States interventions in Cuba (1906-1909, 1912, and 1917).*

ii) *What factors contributed to the rise of native Cuban entrepreneurs during and after World War I?*

iii) *Discuss the rise and fall of the Gerard Machado's presidency in Cuba (with emphasis on socioeconomic conditions and contribution to economic nationalism).*

iv) *Compare the proclaimed policies of the revolutionary government headed by Professor Ramon Grau San Martin and those of the 1895-1898 revolutionaries.*

v) *Compare the probable socioeconomic and political changes in Cuba prevented by United States intervention in 1934 with those prevented by the military intervention of 1898.*

vi) *Discuss the contribution of Batista's reign, under United States direction, to the rise of Fidel Castro.*

**Readings: a)** *Perez, Jr., Cuba, pp. 150-267;*

**b)** *Franklin, Cuba and the U.S. Empire, pp. 12-17.*

3. Emergence of Communist Cuba, 1959-1990:— Cuban-American relations, April 1959-January 1961; Bay of Pigs, April 1961; Soviet Embrace and the Missile Crisis, 1962; Economy and Society in Communist Cuba, Failures and Successes, 1959-1990 —

**6 classes, November 2-18, 2020.**

**Discussion Questions: i)** *Compare the early policies of Fidel Castro's Cuba with those proposed by the 1895-1898 revolutionaries and by the revolutionary government of Professor Ramon Grau San Martin.*

**ii)** *Trace the process leading to the Soviet embrace and the establishment of a communist system in Cuba.*

**iii)** *Examine the impact of United States policies on economy and society in Cuba, 1959-1990.*

**iv)** *Explain why the United States maintained trade relations with communist China, while maintaining trade embargo on communist Cuba.*

**v)** *Discuss the role of Cuba in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States.*

**vi)** *Assess the performance of the Cuban economy in the context of a socialist economy operating in a global capitalist economy.*

**Readings: a)** *Perez, Jr., Cuba, pp. 268-302;*

**b)** *Franklin, Cuba and the U.S. Empire, pp. 18-273.*

4. Post-Cold War Cuba, 1991 to the present:— impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union; economic reform; growing integration into the global economy, but hostile relations with the United States persist; President Obama’s initiative to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba — **5 classes, November 23-December 7, 2020.**

**(Thanksgiving Recess, November 26-27, 2020).**

**Discussion Questions: i)** *How have the economic reforms and the integration of the Cuban economy into the global capitalist economy affected the socioeconomic conditions of the Cuban people?*

**ii)** *Do you believe the ongoing economic reforms would give rise to the establishment of a private enterprise market economy in Cuba in the long run?*

**iii)** *What socioeconomic and political changes have occurred in the United States that encouraged Present Obama to initiate the process of normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba?*

**iv)** *Given what we know, how would you assess the probability that normal relations between the United States and Cuba would be established in the near future?*

**v)** *Examine the rise and performance of Fidel Castro as a national leader.*

**Readings:** **a)** *Perez, Jr., Cuba*, pp. 303-355;

**b)** *Franklin, Cuba and the U.S. Empire*, pp. 383-406.

5. Concluding discussion — December 9, 2020.

**Discussion Questions:— i)** *How important was the contribution of the United States to the course of Cuban history from 1898 to the present?*

**ii)** *What lessons can United States policymakers learn from Cuban history concerning foreign interventions?*