

University of Wisconsin–Madison
Department of History
History 533
MULTI-RACIAL SOCIETIES IN LATIN AMERICA
Fall 2015

**TANGLED WEBS OF BLACKNESS:
THE CARIBBEAN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1880-1950**

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Office hours:
W 1-2 (walk-in hour)
W 2-4 (office door sign-up)

Course description:

This course examines modern Caribbean history from a unique vantage point. It focuses on race, migration, citizenship, and culture in the post-emancipation era, ca. 1880 to 1950. Specifically, it considers the web of relationships that people created while occupying North America's racially exclusive regimes--most notably the Caribbean and the United States--and/or spaces occupied by American imperialism. Some scholars have regarded the relationship between the two (racially exclusive regimes and imperialism) as two sides of the same coin--parallel tracks of social reorganization after the demise of racial slavery. The course also approaches the question of how race was "retooled" in the post-emancipation era to maintain and even sharpen social and political distinctions, not just in the Americas but throughout the world.

Scholars of post-emancipation societies, principally Cuba, Haiti, and the United States, have in recent years emphasized integral and comparative approaches to these countries' histories. In this vein, the most salient thematic has been the construction of Black citizenship, as former slaves and their descendants struggled to give new meanings to the freedoms they legally won in the last third of the 19th. C. Our course concentrates on that scholarship and on its evidentiary and theoretical foundations. It looks at the ways in which historians have conceived the relationship between the imperial core and the Caribbean periphery, while making interactions between Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans a centerpiece of their analyses. Thus, much of our focus will be wide-angle and comparative; naturally so, since our ultimate goal is to reveal the tangled web of North American linkages to Caribbean history, particularly in African-diasporic terms in the post-emancipation era.

The course fulfills the University's Comm-B general education requirement. Accordingly, it is not lecture-oriented but writing- and public-speaking oriented. It's designed to hone students' historical research skills and their ability to critically assess secondary literature. Class presentations will sharpen students' oral communication skills. I'm less interested in the recitation of

memorized facts and interpretations than in the construction of arguments and their development in oral and written form.

Class format

Lectures (a few), student presentations (more), book discussions, films.

Requirements

A) *Three* (3) book critiques from among the five books we'll read in their entirety this semester. Although all five books are required reading, students will select from among them the *three* they will critique according to specific guidelines distributed during the second week of the semester.

B) By December 15 at 4 p.m., students will submit via email to fscarano@wisc.edu the final draft of a 15-20 page research paper.¹ This draft will represent a second, thoroughly revised paper in accordance with a submission calendar handed out early in the semester. The first draft, due the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, should be as close to a final draft as possible.

The papers will thrash out different angles of the question *How did Black folk resist white hegemony in the Caribbean after ca. 1880 and how effective was such resistance?* The exact country, time period, regional setting, labor context, migration experience and/or political ferment to be analyzed will be left up to the student researcher. Overall, however, the research papers are meant to uncover relatively obscure or under-studied instances during which Blacks (or people regarded as Black or *colored* in their particular context) fought against or exposed racial prejudice and exclusion, thus helping to define new forms of citizenship.

C) Intermediate steps: Early in the semester we will devote significant time to the specific requirements of these papers: how extensive the research ought to be, how to balance primary and secondary sources (and what kinds they are to begin with, as well as which ones may be available to you), and the intermediate requirements students will need to demonstrate mastery of the research process (e.g., statement of problem, annotated primary and secondary bibliography, introductory paragraphs, concluding paragraphs, etc.) The course calendar below outlines the due dates for these intermediate steps.

D) Contribution to class discussions: I expect students to participate enthusiastically in class discussions. The final grade for participation (25% of the final tally) will reflect how well they've understood and digested the readings when it is their time to present them orally, as well as how knowledgeably and effectively they are in challenging received knowledge.

¹Double-spaced, Times New Roman font in 11- or 12-font size, one-inch vertical and horizontal margins.

Final grade

The final grade will reflect the following distribution:

In-class participation, incl. presentations.....	25%
Book critiques (3 x 5%.....)	15%
Research paper 'target assignments' (3 X 5%).....	15%
First draft.....	20%
Final paper.....	25%
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Total.....	100%

Mobile computer/device policy

I encourage students to take notes on laptops. However, reading email during class, going on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., or browsing the web without explicit requests or direction from the instructor *is not allowed*. Such misuse of a web-capable device is rude and annoying. It distracts other students and diminishes your own ability to take quality notes. If I notice that you are violating this rule, I will ask you to refrain from using your device for the remainder of the semester.

Required readings

The following books will be read in their entirety. You may purchase them at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative, 426 W. Gilman St., ph. 257-6050. They are also on reserve at College Library.

Scott, R. J. 2008. *Degrees of freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after slavery*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Renda, M. A. 2001. *Taking Haiti: Military occupation and the culture of U.S. imperialism, 1915–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Putnam, L. 2013. *Radical moves: Caribbean migrants and the politics of race in the jazz age*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Guridy, F. A. 2010. *Forging diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African-Americans in a world of empire and Jim Crow*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Burgos Jr., A. 2007. *Playing America's game: Baseball, Latinos, and the color line*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

In addition to these books, other required readings will be available on our site at Learn@UW.

The History Lab

New this semester, the History Lab is a resource center where experts (PhD students) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff is here, along with your professors and teaching assistants, to help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Sign up for a consultation at <https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>.

Course Outline
**(on Learn@UW)

Week I - Orientation (Sept. 3)

Week II - A Caribbean History Primer (Sept. 8-10)

**Guerra, "Why Caribbean History Matters"

**Scarano, "Liberal Pacts and Hierarchies of Rule: Approaching the Imperial Transition in Cuba and Puerto Rico"

**Schmieder, "Histories under Construction: Slavery, Emancipation, and Post-Emancipation in the French Caribbean"

**Cooper, "The Conundrum of Race: Retooling Inequality"

Week III - Emancipation (Sept. 15-17)

Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, chs. 1-5

Week IV - Degrees of Freedom to Make the Nation (Sept. 22-24)

Scott, *Degrees of Freedom*, chs. 6-9

Due (9/24): One or two paragraphs that contain the question (also called problem statement) you will research for the term paper. Essentially, this will be your first stab at the core question you will try to answer in your research.

Week V - Racializing U.S. Imperialism (Sept. 29-Oct. 1)

**Del Moral, "Rescuing the Jíbaro: Renewing the Puerto Rican *Patria* through School Reform"

Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, Intro. and chs. 1-2

Week VI - Circuits of Pleasure and Discrimination (Oct. 6-8)

Guridy, *Forging Diaspora*, chs. 3-4

Week VII - Occupying Blackness (Oct. 13-15)

Renda, *Taking Haiti*, chs. 1-4

Due (10/15): Annotated bibliography for the term paper, following advice received from librarians at the September 22 training session.

Week VIII - Imperialism and Culture (Oct. 20-22)

Renda - *Taking Haiti*, chs. 5-Conclusion

Week IX - Circuits of Labor and Identity (Oct. 27-29)

Putnam, *Radical Moves*, Intro. and chs. 1-3

Week X - Research (Nov. 3-5)

No classes scheduled.

Week XI - Meanings of Diaspora (Nov. 10-12)

Putnam, *Radical Moves*, chs. 4-6 and Conclusion

Due (11/12): Introductory and concluding paragraphs to the research paper.

Week XI - Beisból (Nov. 17-19)

Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Introduction and chs. 1-8

Week XII - Still Playing the Game (Nov. 24)

Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, chs. 9-12 and Conclusion

Due (11/24): "Fairly final" paper draft.

Weeks XIII-XV - Research presentations (Dec. 1-3 and Dec. 8-10)

Final paper due December 14.

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Guideline for the Book Critiques

The best history books should be written with precision and clarity. They should also contain a compelling theoretical structure supported by an abundance of evidence. Unfortunately, most books fall far short of this ideal. The book critiques are designed to help you become a critical and analytical reader.

The following guidelines will focus your attention on the basic elements of historical research and help you develop a systematic set of criteria for judging the utility of a given text. Your critiques will help you understand exactly what the author was trying to accomplish and how well he or she succeeded. They will also help you understand why you agree or disagree with the author's conclusions and how to judge the value of her or his work.

Each report should be typed, double spaced, free of grammatical or spelling errors and approximately five to six pages in length. The maximum length of the critiques is eight pages. A complete citation of the book should appear at the top of the paper. The words "Reviewed by [your name]" will follow. Please use the following subheadings in the body of your paper.

a. Major issues or problems (about one page).

In this section you should identify what issues and problems the author wishes to analyze. What specific questions are being raised? What is the current state of our knowledge in this area? How does the author propose to contribute to this body of knowledge?

b. The author's thesis (two or three sentences).

What is his/her main hypothesis? What arguments does the author intend to make in the book?

c. Data or evidence offered (one paragraph).

Now that you have summarized the author's argument, what kinds of evidence does she or he use to back it up? What are the data sources and how were they gathered?

d. Conclusion (about two pages).

What conclusions does the author reach? Based on the author's data and arguments, are those conclusions justified? What do we know now that we did not know before? What are the implications for theory building and future research?

e. **Summary Criticism** (about two pages).

Based on your analysis, is this good historical research? Based on the author's evidence and argument, are those conclusions justified? Did the author do a good job or not? Why do you agree or disagree with the author? Be specific!