

NB: This syllabus is from 2021. It is subject to change.

Fall 2021
MW 1:45-2:45 p.m. EST
Claire Fagin Hall 114

Professor A. C. Offner
offner@sas.upenn.edu
Office hours: Tues 9:30-11:30 a.m. EST
Sign up for office hours [here](#).
Join office hours by clicking [here](#).
Password: history

TA: Kimberly G. White
kgkwhite@sas.upenn.edu
Office hours: Wed. 3:30-4:30 p.m. EST
Sign up for office hours [here](#).
Join office hours by clicking [here](#).
Password: torts

History 174

Capitalism, Socialism, and Crisis in the Twentieth-Century Americas

From the crisis of the Great Depression through the 1970s, the United States and Latin America produced remarkable efforts to remake society and political economy. This course analyzes the Cuban and Guatemalan revolutions, as well as social movements that transformed the United States: the black freedom movement, the labor movement, and changing forms of Latinx politics. In all three countries, Americans looked for ways to reform capitalism or build socialism; address entrenched patterns of racism; define and realize democracy; and achieve national independence. They conceived of these challenges in dramatically different ways. Together, we'll compare national histories and analyze the relationships between national upheavals.

In studying the US and Latin America together, the class allows students to explore central questions in both regions' histories. What did capitalism, socialism, and communism amount to? What did democracy mean? What were the roots of racial inequality and how did Americans address it? Why were Americans so enticed by economic growth, and how did they pursue it? How did the Cold War shape social movements? What purposes did unions serve? How did Christianity inform movements for and against social change?

Studying these regions together also allows us to explore international interactions. How did the black freedom movement in the US relate to the Cuban revolution? How did Latin American immigration shape the US labor movement? How did US Cold War policy influence Latin American revolutionary movements?

The goal of this class is for you to interpret the readings and decide what you think. What you learn in this class, and the quality of our experience together, depends on your reading closely, coming to class with informed ideas and questions, and being prepared to help your classmates answer theirs.

We will read approximately 100 pages per week. No background is required.

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This course fulfills the History and Tradition sector requirement. History and Tradition courses explore continuity and change in human thought, belief and action. They offer students the opportunity to interpret primary sources, understand the contexts in which the sources were created, and use them to write original, persuasive essays about the past.

Health and Safety

Following current university policy, this course will be taught in person, and all of us will wear masks covering both nose and mouth at all times. **The mask policy will be strictly enforced. To report a member of the Penn community for non-compliance with the mask mandate, click [here](#).**

Given the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, university, local, and national policies might change during the course of the semester. In that case, I will revise our syllabus and keep you informed. My priority is ensuring all of our health and safety and making sure that you are able to learn.

Required Readings for All Students

All readings on the syllabus are required. Educational research shows that people learn more when they read in hard copy, and I therefore encourage you to check books out from the library, purchase them in hard copy, or print out articles if possible.

The following books are available on reserve at Van Pelt and for sale at the Penn Bookstore, 3601 Walnut Street.

Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope* (1992)

Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba* (2012)

Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights* (1993)

If you would like to check out a library book for more than a few hours, please use Borrow Direct and EZBorrow, both available at library.upenn.edu. These services allow you to borrow books for 12 weeks from other university libraries. **Plan ahead and order early in the semester.**

Readings are also available electronically on Canvas.

Please do not use Kindle editions, as they do not contain page numbers necessary for class discussion and citation in papers.

You may consult [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support you are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure your health, safety, and secure learning environment.

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Required Work

1. Weekly Canvas posts and informed, responsive class participation (30%)

Canvas posts

Each student must post a one-paragraph response to the week's readings by Monday at 1 p.m. EST. Posts are not graded, but are required to pass the class. In week 2, posts are due Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Each week, I'll post a few questions on Canvas under Discussions. Read them before you dive into the books, and when you've finished, choose one question to answer in your post. At the end of the post, pose one question of your own that the reading raised for you.

To complete the Canvas post, you must do all the week's reading by Monday. On the syllabus, the division of readings between Mondays and Wednesdays simply indicates the readings that correspond to each lecture.

We will give each student written feedback on one Canvas post during the first four weeks of class. If you would like more feedback, please come to office hours.

Informed, responsive participation in lecture and recitation section

Everyone must complete the readings before class and participate in discussion throughout the semester in an informed, responsive way. By "informed," I mean informed by a close reading of our texts, and by "responsive," I mean responsive to each other, listening and responding to each other's thoughts. If speaking in class makes you nervous, consider the Canvas post an opportunity to prepare an idea that you can share with the group.

2. First Perusall annotation and primary source workshop (5%)

In assigned groups of 3-4, students will use Perusall to annotate a primary source and come to recitation section ready to present their interpretation of the document.

3. Three-page primary source interpretation (20%)

4. Six-to-seven-page comparative paper (30%)

5. Second Perusall annotation and primary source workshop (15%)

In assigned groups of 3-4, students will use Perusall to annotate a collection of primary sources and come to recitation section ready to present their interpretation of the documents.

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Attendance and Absences

Attendance in lecture and recitation is required. We will discuss the readings in every class, so please bring them with you.

If you are unable to come to class, please submit a Course Absence Report and get notes from a classmate. If you have questions after reading the notes, you may come to my office hours to discuss the material.

Laptops

Educational research shows that people learn more when they take notes by hand. Laptop use is not permitted in face-to-face classes for note-taking. You may open a laptop when we are analyzing a reading in electronic format, or if you have a documented disability entitling you to accommodation.

Communication

The great pleasure of teaching is getting to know students. Come to my office hours to discuss any of the course material. If you have class or work during my office hours, you may email me to set up a separate appointment.

For brief, procedural questions about the class, email is fine. But any substantive intellectual question should be discussed in office hours.

Appropriate Use of Course Content

Your use of all content on our course website, including discussions and Perusall annotations, is limited to this class. You should not share these materials with anyone outside the class or otherwise reproduce their content. This policy exists to ensure the confidentiality of our class discussion and thereby facilitate the free exchange of ideas. It also honors the creativity and labor that I put into designing and teaching this course.

Students may not record lectures or recitation sections.

Disability

If you have a documented disability that entitles you to accommodation, please have Student Disability Services notify me at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other violations of academic honesty can result in suspension and expulsion from Penn. Please review the university's guide on academic integrity (www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity). Come and talk with me if you have any questions about the definition of plagiarism and academic honesty.

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Recommended Academic Resources

The Marks Family Writing Center: <http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/wc/>

Bring a draft or paper outline. Appointments and walk-in hours.

Weingarten Learning Resources Center: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/>

Help with academic reading, writing, study strategies, and time management. Individual appointments, walk-in hours, and workshops.

Student Disabilities Services: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>

If you have a disability or temporary injury, SDS will help you acquire documentation and secure accommodations.

Penn College Achievement Program: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/eap/penncap/>

PENNCAP works with a diverse group of academically talented students, many from low-income and/or first-generation backgrounds, to support their academic success. Staff provide coaching, counseling, academic assistance, and cultural enrichment. Students must apply to participate.

Other Recommended Resources

Penn First Plus: <https://pennfirstplus.upenn.edu/>

Hub for academic, financial, and other resources for first-generation/low-income (FGLI) students.

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/caps/>

Free, confidential services from mental health professionals.

RAP Line (Reach A Peer): 215.573.2RAP: <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/rap-online/>

9 p.m.-1 a.m. EST. Peer support, information, and referrals.

DACA and Undocumented Student Resources: <https://home.vpul.upenn.edu/daca-and-undocumented-student-resources/>

If you experience violence, stalking, sexual harassment, or sexual violence:

Penn Women's Center: 3643 Locust Walk, 215.898.8611, <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/pwc/>

- Education, advocacy, crisis counseling, support group for survivors. Serving all students regardless of gender identity.

Student Health Service: 3535 Market St., Suite 100, 215.746.3535,

<https://shs.wellness.upenn.edu/>

- Medical examinations, testing and treatment of STIs, emergency contraception, and referrals. Office visits are covered in full by the Clinical Fee and the Penn Student Insurance Plan (PSIP). Charges for lab tests related to sexual assault are waived.

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Class Schedule

WEEK 1

Sept. 1 Introduction

Reading to discuss in class and recitation: please read in advance

“Migrant Workers in the Sugar Industry,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 234-238

Recitation sections begin this week

Part I: A US Story

WEEK 2

Sept. 6 Labor Day: no class

Sept. 8 The 1930s and the Crisis of Capitalism

This week only, Canvas posts are due Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, pp. 1-43

WEEK 3

Sept. 13 Industrial Unionism

Handout: How to Read a Primary Source

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, pp. 861-879 (textbook for background)

Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, chapters 2-3

“Declaration of Independence by United Steel Workers of America”

Sept. 15 The Popular Front I

Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*, pp. 890-897 (textbook for background)

Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, chapter 5

By the start of class on Sept. 15, every student must have opened Perusall once from our Canvas website. After opening it, simply close it. It does not matter if you have already opened it for another course. Perusall will not recognize you as a student enrolled in this class unless you open it from our Canvas site. If you do not complete this step, you will not be assigned to a group for our primary source workshops and will receive an F on those assignments.

By Friday, Sept. 17 at 5 p.m., every student who has opened Perusall will receive an email assigning them to a group. Please communicate with your group to set up a meeting time for next week’s assignment.

WEEK 4

Sept. 20 The Popular Front II: Discussion

Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, chapter 5

Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist*, chapters 9-10

KKK Poster, Birmingham, Alabama, 1933 (Guy B. Johnson Papers, UNC Libraries)

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- Sept. 22 Labor and Civil Rights in Wartime
Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights*, chapters 6-7
Walter Reuther, "More Airplanes for Defense," 1940
First Perusall annotation due at 5 p.m.

Sept 23-24 recitation sections:

First Perusall annotation and primary source workshop

Reading: Oral history interviews with Howard Johnson and David Friedman. Full instructions are on Canvas; a brief summary is below.

Within each recitation section, you will be assigned to a group of 3-4 students. Each student will use Perusall to annotate the interviews, writing their own thoughts and responding to at least one annotation by a classmate in their group (you will only see the annotations of your group members). **Annotations are due by Wednesday at 5 p.m. After completing the annotation, the groups must meet (virtually or in person) to prepare a 5-minute presentation explaining their interpretation of the source.** In recitation sections, we will hold a workshop: each group will present, and all students are expected to listen carefully and ask questions of the presenting group.

WEEK 5

- Sept. 27 Competing Visions of Postwar Prosperity
Joshua Freeman, *American Empire*, chapters 1-4
Walter Reuther, radio broadcast, Toledo, February 22, 1946
Sept. 29 Postwar Growth and Inequality: The Rise of the Sunbelt
Images from Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise*

Fri, Oct 1 **First paper due via Canvas by 6 p.m.**

WEEK 6

- Oct. 4 Postwar Growth and Inequality: Suburbanization (Discussion)
Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, chapter 7
HOLC materials from Philadelphia, 1937 (3 primary source documents)
"Greed of Real Estate Interests Reason for 'Racial Covenants,'" *New World*, 2/5/48
Oct. 6 Cold War Civil Rights
Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough*, chapter 2
Waldo E. Martin, *Brown v. Board of Education*, pp. 199, 202-203, 214

Part II: A Guatemalan Story

WEEK 7

- Oct. 11 From the Liberal Era to the Democratic Spring
Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, Prologue and Chapter 1
Oct. 13 Democracy and Communism in Guatemala (Discussion)
Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, chapters 2, 4-6

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“If That Is Communism, Then They Are Communists,” Greg Grandin et. al.,

Guatemala Reader (2011), 214-216

“A New Guatemala,” Greg Grandin et. al., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 206-210

Oct 14-15 Fall break: no recitation sections

WEEK 8

Oct. 18 Land Reform and its Advocates (I): Rural Roots and Meanings

Oct. 20 Land Reform and its Advocates (II): What it Meant to Arbenz and the PGT

(Discussion)

Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, chapters 7-9

“Most Precious Fruit of the Revolution,” Greg Grandin et. al., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 217-220

WEEK 9

Oct. 25 The Guatemalan Opposition (Discussion)

Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, chapter 10

“Arevalista to Counterrevolutionary,” Greg Grandin et. al., eds., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 221-225

Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arrellano, “Enemies of Christ,” Greg Grandin et. al., eds., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 226-229

Oct. 27 Coup and Counterrevolution

Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, chapters 11, 13-epilogue

“Sabotage for Liberty,” Greg Grandin et. al., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 238-241

“A Plan for Assassination,” Greg Grandin et. al., *Guatemala Reader* (2011), 242-245

Part III: A Cuban Story

WEEK 10

Nov. 1 Cuba Before the Revolution: Sugar and its Discontents

Skidmore, *Modern Latin America*, pp. 121-130

“Life at the Mill,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 226-233

“Migrant Workers in the Sugar Industry,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 234-238

“Sugar Mills and Soviets,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 281-282

Nov. 3 Why A Revolution in Cuba?

Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, pp. 219-236

Fidel Castro, “History Will Absolve Me,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 306-314

WEEK 11

Nov. 8 Turning to Socialism (A Series of Unexpected Events)

Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, chapter 11 (pp. 237-256)

“Fish à la Grande Jardinière,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 354-362

“Women in the Swamps,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 363-369

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“1961: The Year of Education,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 386-388

- Nov. 10 The Search for a Socialist Economic Strategy
Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, chapter 12 (257-290)

WEEK 12

- Nov. 15 Racism and Anti-Racism in the Cuban Revolution
Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All*, chapter 7
- Nov. 17 The Cuban Revolution on a World Stage: Debating Guerrilla Warfare
Alma Guillermoprieto, “The Harsh Angel”

WEEK 13

- Nov. 22 From Democracy to Grassroots Dictatorship (Discussion)
Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba*, chapters 1, 2, and pp. 135-150
Che Guevara, “Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War,” Aviva Chomsky et. al., eds., *The Cuba Reader*, 315-320
- Nov. 24 No lecture (Friday schedule)
Final paper due via Canvas by 1 p.m.
No recitation sections this week

Part IV: Connections and Reverberations

WEEK 14

- Nov. 29 Capital Mobility and Precarious Labor: From the Caribbean to Florida
Ada Ferrer, “My Brother’s Keeper,” *New Yorker*, Feb. 22, 2021
- Dec. 1 Capital Mobility and Precarious Work: The US to Mexico

WEEK 15

- Dec. 6 Fruits of Cold War Movements: Mexican-American Politics and Conservative Color-Blindness
Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is Not Enough*, chapters 5, 7
- Dec. 8 Conclusion: Why Study All This?

Dec. 9-10 recitation sections: Second primary source workshop