

Cuba: Island of Consequence
HIS387

Mondays/Wednesdays, Frey 328
2:40-4:00pm

SATISFIES SBC: ESI, GLO, SBS+



Course Description: From 1898 until 1959, Cuba was an afterthought in U.S. geopolitics. Successfully wrestled from former control by Spain, after 1898 U.S. economic, military, and diplomatic dominance over the island guaranteed that the highly strategic Caribbean region was placed on the U.S. ledger during World War I, World War II, and for the first ten years of the Cold War. All of this changed abruptly following the unexpected toppling of U.S.-backed strongman Gen. Fulgencio Batista by the guerrilla army under the command of Fidel Castro on January 1st, 1959. Castro soon revealed a far more radical agenda for Cuban society than he initially indicated and rightfully feared U.S. efforts to topple him. Yet what might have remained a local situation confined to U.S.-Cuban relations rapidly evolved into a pan-regional event with far-reaching geopolitical consequences. The reasons for this wider impact were two-fold. First, the Soviet Union—communist adversary of the capitalist West—was previously seeking to expand its diplomatic and economic influence into Latin America. Cuba was not initially part of that strategy (the island had little to offer in economic terms), but Castro's socialist program combined with fears of a U.S. invasion presented a unique opportunity for the USSR to establish a "strategic bridge" into the U.S. sphere of influence. Second, the Cuban Revolution transpired in the context of a generalized explosion of anti-colonialist nationalism across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. This revolt was already coalescing under the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The five founding members of NAM were united in their opposition to Cold War political binaries (communism/capitalism) and economic "rules of the game" that restricted their

development aspirations. To attain geopolitical muscle—and thus change these "rules of the game" in their favor—NAM sought to expand its membership to include Latin America. Thus, by the mid 1960s the United States faced a triple set of challenges to its traditional hegemony in the region: Cuban-inspired armed insurrection against U.S.-backed regimes, Soviet efforts to establish trade agreements with governments struggling to break free of U.S. economic dominance, and the appeal of the Non-Aligned Movement whose demands for better terms of trade for commodity exports and the rejection of ideological labels resonated with statesmen eager to forge a path of "independence" between the two Cold War rivals.

Our class explores this dynamic from an academic as well as "historical simulations" perspective. We will spend the first half of the course immersing ourselves in primary and secondary sources that explore the idea of a Global Cold War. Concurrently, students will conduct background research to complete a biographical essay (due Week 6) on the historical character whom they will "role play" in the second half of the course. The full roster of historical characters will be distributed at the start of the semester, but role assignments are to remain secret until the start of the simulation itself. I will provide a supplemental reading list to assist with the research on individual characters and national backgrounds.

Once the simulation part of the course begins, we will relocate to the History Department, Room N328 (LACS Gallery). This will become our central meeting space, however individual country teams (there are twelve teams in total) will be dispersed to other discrete meeting spaces around the department (NAM will meet as a single team). Prior to the start of the simulation portion of the course, we will spend a session going over the rules, guidelines, and general expectations of the game. Once the game commences, students are expected to participate "in character" (this may extend to donning certain wardrobe and/or political signifiers). Each subsequent week of class advances approximately one year in "historical time," with the game running from January 1961 (President Kennedy's inauguration) to January 1966 (Tricontinental Conference), however the chronology may be impacted by the turn of events as they unfold.

In addition to the expectation of embracing your historical role as a player of the game, there are two additional course requirements. First, each student must produce five "Action Documents" and/or "Speech Acts" that directly contribute to the dynamic of the game itself. For each category, the range of possibilities is open. For Action Documents, this might include, for instance, writing a press release or newspaper article about a particular trade, diplomatic, or military agreement, penning an Op Ed on a particular issue, creating an editorial cartoon reflective of a particular position, or drawing up a trade, diplomatic, or other international agreement. Action Documents will be published (in whole or part) in the latest edition of *The Global Dispatch*, a newspaper distributed to each student prior to the start of the next round of the game. Speech Acts may involve giving a formal declaration at a convened meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations (UN), or meeting of the Non-Alignment Movement, staging a collective protest with a formal set of demands, or other such public activity that clearly reflects a strategized (versus, spontaneous) component. Second, each student

is required to keep a diary that details the unfolding of history from the perspective of your individual character. Think of the diary as the equivalent of a "lost memoir" that might have been left by your character in real life, and which would be of utmost value to a future historian to discover.

The engaged participation by every student is vital to the game's overall success—and your team's chance of victory. Thus, it is essential that no student miss class unless for exceptional circumstances, including, of course, Covid infection.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance/Participation (25%): This class cannot work without the committed participation of every student. Students must inform the professor in advance if he/she believes they will be absent or arrive late. All absences will require a short make-up assignment tied to where the course is at that particular moment.

Biographical Essay (25%): 5-7 page essay that examines your historical character for the simulation. Research for this essay should incorporate the assigned class readings (primary and secondary sources), relevant material from a list of "suggested readings," as well as independent investigation. The more you are able to flesh out the background motivations, strategic and/or personal objectives, and plot twists that shaped your character's real-life trajectory, the better you will be able both to assume the identity of your character and to anticipate conflict and the potential for alliances with other characters in the game. All essays must be submitted with Chicago Style Footnotes, using 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman, 12pt font. For help with proper footnote formatting and other writing support visit the [Writing Resources](#) page on the History Department website.

Action Documents/Speech Acts (25%): During the simulation, each student must produce a minimum of five documents and/or speech acts (broadly defined) that directly contribute to the game dynamics. In the case of documents or speech acts that involve collaboration between different team members and/or across teams—for instance, establishing an arms control treaty or reaching a commodity agreement—joint credit will be assigned as appropriate. Action Documents will be published in *The Global Dispatch* for general consumption (these could include analysis of a particular Speech Act as well) and thus will directly impact game dynamics.

Biographical Memoir (25%): At the end of the simulation, each student will submit a diary that corresponds to the historical perspective of your character throughout the game. Please purchase a diary-style notebook that is appropriate to this assignment. Consider your diary a primary source that will become available to future historians. Entries must be written after each round of the game should address questions of power, goals, conflicts, and all other relevant aspects—including knowledge of and/or suspicions of plots against other players or possibly oneself! Reference to other players should always use their assigned historical name. In the event your character meets an early

demise (a possibility for several characters in the game), you will be required to continue the diary from the perspective of your new role reassignment.

BOOKS REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE

Eric Zolov, *The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties* (Duke University Press, 2020)

Thomas C. Field, Jr., Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pettina, *Latin America and the Global Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020) [Use Discount Code 01DAH40 for 40% off hardcover when ordered directly from [UNC Press website](#)]

Primary Source Documents and any additional readings will be placed on Black Board.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

ESI: “Evaluate and Synthesize Researched Information”

1. Locate and organize information from a variety of appropriate sources, both primary and secondary.
2. Analyze the accuracy of information and the credibility of sources.
3. Determine the relevance of information.
4. Use information ethically and responsibly.

GLO: “Engage Global Issues”

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the interconnectedness of the world through an examination of the Global Cold War.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of societies and cultures outside of the United States, with a particular emphasis on Latin American, African, and Asian struggles for sovereignty and the role of the Soviet Union in that dynamic.

SBS+: “Pursue Deeper Understanding”

1. Demonstrate mastery of the conceptual vocabulary needed to interpret the Global Cold War and to use this vocabulary appropriately.
2. Evaluate the motivating factors, key personalities, and contingent outcomes that influenced the trajectory of the Cold War in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.
3. Research the central political, economic, cultural, and ideological debates with respect to Latin America, Africa, and Asia during the 1960s.
4. Grasp the principal features of Latin American, African, and Asian geography

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT/STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT CENTER

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Student Accessibility Support Center, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation are confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency

evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information see [here](#).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, see [here](#).

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

CLASS MEETINGS

Week I: Introduction

Mon., 1/24

Overview of the course and historical period

Wed., 1/26

Required Readings:

Zolov, *The Last Good Neighbor* (Hereafter: LGN), "Introduction"

Field, et. al., *Latin America and the Global Cold War* (Hereafter: LA-GCW), "Introduction"

Note: Selection of Character Roles

(Categories: Head of State, Military/Intelligence, Diplomat, Leftist)

Week II

Mon., 1/31

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 1, "Mexico's 'Restless' Left"

Documents: Lázaro Cárdenas, "Mexico and the Cuban Revolution" (1959)

Wed., 2/2

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 2, "'Luniks and Sputniks in Chapultepec!'"

LA-GCW, Chap. 3, "Mexican-Soviet Encounters in the Early 1960s"

Documents: "The Rio Treaty" (1947), Nikita Khrushchev, "On Peaceful Coexistence" (1959)

Week III

Mon., 2/7

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 3, "Mexico's New Internationalism"

LA-GCW, Chap. 12, "A Mexican New International Economic Order?"

Wed., 2/9

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 4, "The 'Spirit of Bandung' in Mexican National Politics"

LA-GCW, Chap. 4, "Brazil and Non-Alignment"

Document: Broz Tito, "Opening Speech: Conference of Non-Aligned Countries" (1961)

Week IV

Mon., 2/14

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 5, "The 'Preferred Revolution'"

LA-GCW, Chap. 2, Bolivia between Washington, Prague, and Havana"

Documents: Kennedy, "Inaugural Address" (1961), "Alliance for Progress" (1961),

"Carta de Punta del Este" (1962)

Wed., 2/16

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 6, "New Left Splits"

LA-GCW, Chap. 6, "Cuba, the USSR, and the Non-Aligned Movement"

Documents: Fidel Castro, "Second Declaration of Havana" (1962)

Week V

Mon., 2/21

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 7, "Apex of Internationalism"

LA-GCW, Chap. 10, "Cuba, the United States, and the Uses of the Third World Project"

Wed., 2/23

Required Readings:

LGN, Chap. 8, "The Last Good Neighbor"

Document: Guevara, "Message to the Tricontinental" (1967)

Week VI

Mon., 2/28

Required Readings:

LGN, Epilogue: "Into the Global 1970s"

LA-GCW, Chap. 9 ("Latin American *Tercermundistas*") & Conclusion ("The Third World in Latin America")

Wed., 3/2

Biographical Essays Due (in class)

Week VII

Mon., 3/7

Discussion of Game Rules & Expectations

Wed., 3/9: Round 1 (Inauguration of President Kennedy)

Week VIII: SPRING BREAK**Week IX**

Mon., 3/21: Round 2

Wed., 3/23: Round 3

Week X

Mon., 3/28: Round 4

Wed., 3/30: Round 5

Week XI

Mon., 4/4: Round 6

Wed., 4/6: Round 7

Week XII

Mon., 4/11: Round 8

Wed., 4/13: Round 9

Week XIII

Mon., 4/18: Round 10

Wed., 4/20: Round 11

Week XIV

Mon., 4/25: Round 12

Wed., 4/27: Round 13 (Tricontinental Conference)

Week XV: Historical Debriefing

Mon., 5/2:

Wed., 5/4

All Diaries Due (in class)