



### **Puerto Rico in Crisis**

African and African Diaspora Studies 374E

AMS 370, HIS 363K, MAS 374

Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Mónica A. Jiménez

Email: Via Canvas

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will provide a history of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States focusing in particular on questions of catastrophe and capitalism. The course will center around two questions: What is Puerto Rico to the United States? And how did we get to the present moment of crisis? In answering these questions, we will focus in particular in the ways that law has racialized islanders and conceived of them as unprepared and undeserving of rights and full citizenship. This conception has thus shaped the way that capitalism has worked as a force in shaping the islands possibilities throughout the 120 years of its relationship with the US. Ultimately, we will examine how the early 20th century imperial moment, which created the US-Puerto Rico relationship, continues to define that relationship today. As was made glaringly visible when Hurricane Maria hit the island in September 2017, the island's long-standing colonial relationship with the US continues to have real ramifications for Puerto Ricans living there today. This course will focus in particular on topics of law, economic policy, politics and migration to understand Puerto Rico's continuous exclusion and precarious status.

This course carries the Cultural Diversity in the United States, Global Cultures and Writing flags.

### **Learning Goals**

Students will encounter the broad arc of 20th century Puerto Rican history while engaging specific moments that have helped shape the island's present. Students will gain a sense of historical processes of change over time, and a broad methodology for assessing how events and experiences influence the choices people make, what they believe is possible, and how these inform human activity today. Through this engagement students will strengthen analytical and critical thinking skills, while also developing and deepening their reading comprehension and writing skills.

**Grade Breakdown**

Attendance/Active Class Participation	15%
News Summaries	20%
2 Short Response Papers (15% each)	30%
In-class Exam	15%
Book Review	20%

Guidelines for all assignments, including the papers exam, will be distributed during the semester.

**Expectations and Assignments:**

**ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVE CLASS PARTICIPATION (15%): The success of this course requires your consistent presence in class as well as your contribution to class discussion.**

Each student is expected to attend class, participate in discussions, and complete all reading and writing assignments by the deadlines indicated in this syllabus or any written addenda. Class discussions are an important component and students will be graded on their participation, contributions to discussions and engagement with their peers.

The first three absences do not affect your grade. The fourth unexcused absence and every one thereafter will deduct 2 points (out of the 20 possible) from the attendance grade in the class. **You are responsible for keeping track of your absences.**

**\*\*\* Cell phone use will not be tolerated in class.** Please keep your cellphone silenced and in your pocket or bag. If you are texting in class, I will ask you to leave and you will be counted absent for that day.

**NEWS SUMMARIES (20%)**

Given that the history of Puerto Rico in crises is literally being written daily, an essential part of this course will be to keep track of the events on the island as they relate to the topics of our course. Students will explore the ways in which media sources report on and interpret contemporary issues and events in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican community in the United States. Each week you will read a minimum of two articles about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans and craft a brief (1-1.5 page) written summary in your own words.

- Please note the title, date and source of your newspaper articles and include a web address.
- Sources should be legitimate media/ news sources and not simply entertainment or opinion blogs or websites. Acceptable examples include NY Times, Washington Post, Huffington Post, BBC, Guardian, etc. Sources in Spanish are acceptable.
- Please come to class prepared to discuss the current events on the island and how they relate to the topics discussed in class. These discussions will feature prominently in our course.
- Summaries will be due each Thursday before.

**SHORT PAPERS (15% each)**

Students are expected to write two thoughtful 3-page response papers to the readings. For response paper #1, you should choose a reading from weeks 2-8. For response paper #2, you will respond to the readings and symposium held in week 14.

#### IN-CLASS EXAMINATION (20%)

Held on November 15th.

#### BOOK REVIEW (20%)

You will be expected to produce a thorough and well-written 5 page book review. You will have the opportunity to determine which book you will review and can choose from literary works (fiction, poetry, film, etc.) or more traditional academic works (history, anthropology, etc.) You should choose a work that is directly and obviously linked to the themes of our course. It should be a work that interests you and that you have not read before.

You will be asked to write a one-paragraph pitch about your choice and how the text is relevant to the course. This will be due on October 18th. I will approve the book or suggest that you choose something else. The final book review will be due on December 14th. Guidelines for the book review will be posted on Canvas.

#### **Deadlines:**

Book review proposal (1 paragraph): October 18, 2018

Response Paper # 1 (3 pages): October 25, 2018

In Class Exam: November 15, 2018

Response Paper #2 (3 pages): December 6, 2018

Book review (5 pages): December 14, 2018

**\*\* All assignments will be turned in via Canvas.**

#### **University Writing Center:**

If you know that you struggle with writing, or do not have a lot of experience with academic and historical writing, I encourage you to make an appointment with the Undergraduate Writing Center as soon as possible. (<http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/>)

#### **Accommodations:**

The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities: phone: 512-471-6259; Videophone: 512-410-6644; email [ssd@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:ssd@austin.utexas.edu).

Please see me in my office within the first two weeks of class to discuss any necessary accommodations.

#### **Readings:**

Available electronically via UT library:

- Cesar Ayala, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*.
- Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the US*

All other readings will be available on Canvas at least one week before they are due.  
Useful background texts available at <https://puertoricosyllabus.com>

### Course Schedule

The professor reserves the right to deviate or modify parts of this schedule. All changes will include notice and any modified syllabi will be posted on Canvas.

**NB – Please prepare all readings for Tuesday’s class.**

#### **Week One**

**August 30**, Introduction and Course Overview

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2018/03/19/a-cartoon-history-of-colonialism-in-puerto-rico/>

#### **I: Crisis**

#### **Week Two**

**September 4 and 6**, September 20, 2017

<https://theintercept.com/2018/03/20/puerto-rico-hurricane-maria-recovery/>

#### **Week Three**

**September 11 and 13**, Un-Natural Disaster

- Yarimar Bonilla, “The Wait of Disaster”
- Marie Cruz Soto, “In Vieques, Life Amid Devastation”
- Alexis Santos-Lozada, “In Puerto Rico, Counting Deaths and Making Deaths Count”
- Hilda Lloréns, “Ruin Nation”

#### **Week Four**

**September 18 and 20**, The Crisis Before Maria

- Yarimar Bonilla and Rafael A. Boglio Martínez, “Puerto Rico in Crisis: Government Workers Battle Neoliberal Reform”
- Juan Gonzalez, “Puerto Rico’s Debt Crisis: Economic Collapse in America’s Biggest Colony and What Can Be Done About It” available at [https://www.democracynow.org/2015/11/26/juan\\_gonzalez\\_on\\_how\\_puerto\\_ricos](https://www.democracynow.org/2015/11/26/juan_gonzalez_on_how_puerto_ricos)

#### **Week Five**

**September 25 and 27**, Broken PROMESAs

- Alyosha Goldstein, “Promises Are Over: Puerto Rico and the Ends of Decolonization”
- Marisol LeBrón, “People Before Debt”

### **II: The Crises that Came Before**

#### **Week Six**

**October 2 and 4**, What is Puerto Rico?

- Luis Martínez-Fernández, “The Rise of the American Mediterranean, 1846-1905.”
- Brenda Gayle Plummer, “Building U.S. Hegemony in the Caribbean.”
- Cesar Ayala, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*, pp. 33-51.

### Week Seven

**October 9 and 11**, The Unincorporated Territory: To be “foreign in a domestic Sense”

- Excerpts from *Downes v. Bidwell*, 182 US 244 (1901)

### Week Eight

**October 16 and 18**, Americanization Like it or Not

- Solsirée del Moral, “Negotiating Colonialism ‘Race,’ Class, and Education in Early Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico.”
- Eileen J. Findlay, “Love in the Tropics: Marriage, Divorce, and the Construction of Benevolent Colonialism in Puerto Rico, 1898-1910.”
- Ellen Walsh, “The Not-So-Docile Puerto Rican: Students Resist Americanization, 1930.”

**October 18 – Book Review Proposal Due**

### Week Nine

**October 23 and 25**, The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

- Cesar Ayala, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*, pp. 137-178.

**October 25 – Reading Response #1 Due**

### Week Ten

**October 30 and November 1**, Puerto Rico Transformed

- Cesar Ayala, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898*, 179-200.
- Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the US*, pp. 122-136.

### Week Eleven

**November 6 and 8**, Puerto Rico in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Heading towards a Hurricane Ayala, 267-290?

- Carlos Pabón, “The Political Status of Puerto Rico: A Nonsense Dilemma,”
- Christina Duffy Burnett, “ ‘None of the Above’ Means more of the Same: Why Solving Puerto Rico’s Status Problem Matters”
- Jaime Benson-Arias, “Sailing on the USS Titanic: Puerto Rico’s Unique Insertion to the Global Economic Trends,”

## III. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Colony

### Week Twelve

**November 13 and 15**, The Globalization and Development Paradoxes

- Jeb Sprague-Silgado, “Global Capitalism in the Caribbean”
- Zaire Z. Dinzey-Flores, “The Development Paradox”

**Week Thirteen****November 20, No Class – Happy Thanksgiving****Week Fourteen****November 27, Environmental Degradation and Energy Dependence**

- Bret Gustafson, “The New Energy Imperialism in the Caribbean”
- Hilda Llorens, “In Puerto Rico, environmental injustice and racism inflame protests over coal ash” on *The Conversation*  
<https://theconversation.com/in-puerto-rico-environmental-injustice-and-racism-inflame-protests-over-coal-ash-69763>
- Interview with Elizabeth Yeampierre: “Capitalism is Going to Kill the Planet”

**November 28<sup>th</sup> – No Class****Symposium – “Puerto Rico in the Wake of Crisis: Towards a Just (After)life of Disaster”****November 30 – 2:00, Eidman Courtroom, University of Texas School of Law**

- 6:00 -- Elizabeth Yeampierre Keynote Event

**December 1 – 9:00 a.m. Symposium Day 2, Gordon-White Multipurpose Room****Week Fifteen****December 4 and 6, “No es luto, es resistencia”: Art and Resistance**

- Rocio Zambra, “Colonial Debts”
- Selection of poetry
- The Ground Truth Project available at <http://thegroundtruthproject.org/portraits-of-resilience-puerto-rican-millennials-face-economic-meltdown-with-a-spirit-of-palante/>
- Puerto Rico Under Water exhibit available at <https://www.cser.columbia.edu/puerto-rico-under-water>

**December 14th--- Final Papers Due**

**Grading Policy and Distribution:** Please note that this class, will utilize plus and minus options for final grades. Your grade will be determined based of this scale.

A 94-100 A- 90-93 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72

**Late Work:**

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Generally, except in the case of an excused absence, work submitted after an assigned deadline will not be eligible for full credit. Please communicate with me if you are having problems keeping to the schedule. It is better to talk through problems than ignore them.