Course Title: Human Rights and Literature in the Caribbean: Guantánamo Bay
Course Code: Not yet assigned
Credits/Hours: 3 credits /45 contact hours
Prerequisites: Successful completion of both semesters of first-year English or the equivalent

General Course Description

This second-year undergraduate English course articulates key connections between human rights discourse and literature in the Caribbean, focusing on how they have informed responses to abuse, injustice, and other types of infractions on freedom. Human rights are analyzed as a set of text-based legal concepts that writers, artists, lawyers, politicians, and others have used to define and cultivate social justice. Literary texts from various genres are juxtaposed with personal testimonies and examples of creative work from the Humanities. These are examined as essential elements of the historical record that assist in formulating responsible answers to the ethical and moral questions related to the topic at the center of the course.

This course is designed as one that can be altered to emphasize critical perspectives on a particular topic that is important in contemporary scholarship related to human rights and the Caribbean. Possible themes include: the US military base at Guantánamo Bay, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, the environment, colonialism, incarceration, and indigenous peoples.

Description for this Variant

The course variant presented here, which focuses on the US military base at Guantánamo Bay, is divided into four main parts. The first part, a chronology spanning approximately 117 years, begins with the establishment of the US Naval base at Guantánamo Bay during the Spanish-American War. It tracks the base’s history in relation to events of hemispheric and global significance (e.g., the invasions of Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, US military actions in WWII, the Cold War, and the Global War on Terror). The second part introduces students to legal instruments that have been both at the center of controversies related the base and key to the conceptualization of international human rights. These include The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), The Geneva Convention (1949), The 1951 Refugee Convention (and 1967 Protocol), The Cuban Adjustment Act (1967), The UN Convention Against Torture (1987), and The Detainee Treatment Act (2005). The third part centers on the analysis of
texts that present first-hand experiences in the base. They include poetry, memoirs, and testimonies written by Cuban and Haitian refugees, US military personnel, others working the base (e.g., interpreters, physicians, journalists), and recent Muslim detainees.

The fourth part considers how a diverse group of writers, poets, visual artists, playwrights, performance artists, and filmmakers have responded to human rights abuses at Guantánamo Bay Naval Station.

Students will complete a research project and be encouraged to present it at an undergraduate academic conference on campus. The research project will be based on readings, an annotated bibliography, and an abstract.

**Descripción General del Curso**

Este curso de inglés de segundo año articula conexiones clave entre el discurso de los derechos humanos y la literatura en el Caribe con un enfoque en como han informado respuestas a abusos, injusticias y otros tipos de atropellos contra de la libertad. Analiza los derechos humanos como una serie de conceptos legales que escritores, artistas, abogados, políticos y otros han usado para definir y cultivar la justicia social. Yuhtapone textos literarios con testimonios personales y ejemplos de trabajo creativo de las Humanidades. Los examina como elementos esenciales del registro histórico que ayudan a formular respuestas responsables a las preguntas éticas y morales relacionadas al tema central del curso.

El curso está diseñado como uno que se puede alterar para enfatizar perspectivas críticas en un tema particular que sea importante a la academia contemporánea en relación con los derechos humanos y el Caribe. Los temas posibles incluyen: la base militar estadounidense en Guantánamo, género y sexualidad, raza y etnicidad, el ambiente, colonialismo, encarcelación y poblaciones indígenas.

**Descripción para esta Variante**

La variante del curso presentada aquí, que se enfoca en la Base Naval de la Bahía de Guantánamo, se divide en cuatro partes. La primera parte, una cronología que abarca aproximadamente 117 años, comienza con el establecimiento de la Base Naval de la Bahía de Guantánamo durante la guerra hispano-estadounidense. Observa la historia de la base en relación con eventos de importancia hemisférica y global (e.g., las invasiones de Puerto Rico, Haití y la República Dominicana, acciones militares estadounidenses durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, la Guerra Fría y la Guerra Global contra el Terrorismo). La segunda parte introduce a los estudiantes a instrumentos legales que han estado tanto en el centro de controversias relacionadas a la base como han sido claves a la conceptualización de los derechos humanos internacionales. Estos incluyen la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos (1948), los Convenios de Ginebra (1949), la Convención sobre el Estatuto de los Refugiados del 1951 (y el Protocolo de 1967), la Ley de Ajuste Cubano (1967), la Convención en las Naciones Unidas contra la tortura y otros tratos o penas crueles, inhumanas o degradantes (1987) y la Ley sobre el Trato de Detenidos (2005). La tercera parte se enfoca en el análisis de textos que presentan experiencias de primera mano en la base. Estos incluyen poesía, memorias y testimonios escritos por refugiados cubanos y haitianos, personal militar estadounidense,
otros que trabajaron en la base (e.g., intérpretes, médicos, periodistas) y detenidos musulmanes recientes. La cuarta parte considera como un grupo diverso de escritores, poetas, artistas visuales, dramaturgos, performeros y cineastas han respondido a los abusos contra los derechos humanos en la Base Naval de Guantánamo.

Los estudiantes completarán un proyecto de investigación y se les exhortará a presentarlo en una conferencia académica subgraduada en el recinto. El proyecto de investigación consistirá de lecturas, una bibliografía anotada y un resumen.

Justification

The discussion of human rights in various literary genres has had an important role in the development of literary canons as well as critical theory. Ethical and moral questions surrounding the US military base at Guantánamo Bay relate to human rights abuses at the US military prison, the redefinition of rights and freedoms and in the Caribbean context, and current debates about democracy and terrorism. The US military base’s contemporary legacy compels scholars, researchers, and students to reflect on the contradictions and controversies that cluster around it. The base’s history is directly linked to Puerto Rico given that both were seized in the Spanish-American War and the fact that a relatively large number of Puerto Ricans have worked within the confines of the base.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

• Describe how the use of the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base relates to a chronology of important events in the history of the Caribbean (i.e., the Spanish-American War, invasions of Puerto Rico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, Cuban independence, and the 1959 Cuban Revolution, improved diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US).

• Elaborate the historical contexts in which contemporary understandings of human rights have been formulated and challenged (i.e., the aftermath of WWII, the 1991-94 Haitian Refugee Crisis, the 1994 Balsero Crisis, and the Global War on Terror (2001-2013).

• Define various basic legal concepts important to international human rights law (i.e., human rights, persecution, refugee, torture, enemy combatant).

• Explain some of the challenges accompanying demands that the US government close the prison at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base, using insights from international human rights law and information presented in testimonies, interviews, and autobiographical works.

• Relate first-hand testimonies, literary texts, and artistic productions that present information about the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base to other sociopolitical movements and broader artistic and literary traditions, in the Caribbean and beyond.
• Analyze texts from various genres of literature to better understand how specific legal instruments have served, failed, or challenged members of different groups that have found themselves detained in or working at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base (e.g., US military personnel, Cuban and Haitian asylum-seekers and refugees, enemy combatants, victims of torture, hunger strikers, lawyers representing detainees).

• Evaluate the extent to which specific artistic productions within the Humanities (e.g., performance art, plays, films,) effectively raise awareness about human rights abuses in the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

• Complete writing assignments that reveal similarities and differences across different experiences within Guantánamo Bay Naval Base.

• Use critical thinking, close reading, research, and skills from literary analysis to complete original research that uses primary and secondary sources.

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<tr>
<th>Fifteen-week Calendar</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part I: Introductions and Historical Trajectory</strong> (2 weeks / 6 hours)</td>
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| Week 1 | “Regional Politics, 1898, and the Platt Amendment” by J.K. Lipman (2009)  
Overview of web-based academic projects focusing on Guantánamo |
Selections from *The Guantánamo Files* by A. Worthington (2007) |
| **Part II: Theoretical and Legal Context** (3 weeks / 9 hours) |
| Week 5 | Writing and Research Workshop I: Brainstorming, identifying a research topic, creating an annotated bibliography (1 week / 3 hours)  
Discussion of web-based project: Guantánamo Public Memory Project. |
| **Part III: Testimonies, Human Rights Reports, & Autobiographical Works** (5 weeks / 15 hours) |
| Week 6 | Haitian Experiences  
“Lavalas: The Flood After the Flood” by N. Payen  
Short video: “In Search of La Belle Vie: A Filmmaker’s Take on the Guantánamo Bay Experience” (featuring R. Salnave)  
Short video: “The Haitian Guantánamo Bay Experience: The Legal Journey” |
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<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Cuban Experiences</td>
<td>Group presentations on primary sources; students identify relevant information online testimonies, electronic databases, journalism, human rights reports.</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Writing and Research Workshop II: Using electronic databases, integrating primary and secondary sources</td>
<td>Discussion of web-based project: <em>Witness to Guantánamo</em>, University of San Francisco School of Law</td>
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<td>“What It's Like to be Detained in Guantánamo Bay” by M. Begg (2013)</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Selections from <em>Guantánamo Diary</em> by O.S. Mohammedou (edited by L. Siems, 2015)</td>
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<td>Part IV: The Humanities, Performance, &amp; Social Justice</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Film: “Road to Guantánamo” directed by M. Whitecross and M. Winterbottom (2006)</td>
<td>Yasiin Bey’s (Mos Def) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fJz7J7ZOpM">video performance</a>, Forced Feeding under Standard Guantánamo Procedure (2013)</td>
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<td><em>Guantánamo Bay: The Hunger Strikes</em> (video animation from <em>The Guardian</em>, 2013)</td>
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<td>“Holding Doctors Responsible at Guantanamo” by N. Sherman (2006)</td>
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<td>Part V: Sharing Hope and Insights</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Human Rights, Literature, and the Future</td>
<td>Undergraduate Publishing Opportunities</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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**Instructional Strategies**
- The instructor will facilitate and emphasize learning through guided group discussion.
- The instructor will emphasize the insights offered by an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of human rights discourse and literature related to the base at Guantánamo Bay.
- The instructor will invite at least one guest speaker with relevant expertise to participate through Skype.
Resources
Classroom with Internet connection
Electronic platform
DVD player
Guest speakers (participation in person or via Skype)

Readings
A course packet of assigned readings will be made available for students. Additional readings that students can use for research projects will be made available on the course website.

Evaluation Strategies
A. Class participation (attendance, active and informed participation) 15%
B. Thought papers (3) 15%
C. Interdisciplinary essay 15%
D. Annotated bibliographies (2) 10%
E. Oral presentations (presentation of 1 reading and final presentation) 15%
F. Final Research Paper 30%

Total 100%

Law 51 and Law 238
In accordance with the recommendation of the Office of the Dean of Students, (Division for Persons with Disabilities) students who are clients of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester in order to make arrangements for reasonable accommodations and for any necessary auxiliary equipment. Other students with special needs who require any kind of assistance or reasonable accommodations should also contact the professor. Alternative evaluation methods will be provided to students with identified and certified special needs.

Grading System
A 100-90  B 89-80  C 79-70  D 69-60  F 59-0

Course Bibliography
Books, Chapters, and Academic Articles


Newspaper Articles, Human Rights Reports, and Primary Sources


Walicek, Don E. “En respuesta a las injusticias en Guantánamo: Entrevista a James Yee” (Responding to Injustice in Guantánamo: An Interview with James Yee) translated by E. Vázquez *Claridad.* February 9, 2015.

Films / Videos


*Road to Guantánamo.* Dir. Mat Whitecross and Michael Winterbottom. Channel 4 Television Corporation / Film 4, Revolution Studios, and Screen West Midlands (UK), 2006. Film.


Web/Online Resources


