

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute

José Martí and the Cuban Immigrant Communities of Florida in Cuban Independence and the Dawn of the American Century
University of Tampa

Cuba émigrés to Key West and Tampa (Ybor City), 1868-1940
[DRAFT]

General Course Description

Societies and Cultures of the Caribbean¹

The course aims to demystify the commonly held idea of the Caribbean as an idyllic, relaxing and paradisiac site of beautiful beaches, mojitos and piñas Coladas. Instead, it will delve into the multiple life experiences of Caribbean people. It will begin with a historical exploration of critical processes that have shaped the cultures and societies of the contemporary Caribbean. In particular, we will pay attention to the imposition of colonialism and the subsequent development of the plantation economy in shaping the culture, race, gender, and class experiences of the inhabitants of the region. Furthermore, through the concept of creolization, we will examine the cultural manifestations that have articulated the array of defying practices against external and internal political subordination, imperialism and all ways of racial and ethnic discrimination in Caribbean societies. These cultural practices include the emergence of complex syncretic religions, folkloric and popular music, carnivals, and literature.

We will end the semester by studying two crucial issues concerning the contemporary Caribbean; *migration* and "disaster capitalism". The Caribbean has been the scenario of a constant movement of people since the arrival of Europeans to the region. The movements, however, have been diverse. For centuries the flow of people was within the Caribbean territories and toward their colonial metropolis. In the post-colonial period, however, the migration continued as it followed labor and economic opportunities according to the trends of global *capitalism*. During these processes thousands of people transformed the places where they choose to live while simultaneously transforming their own identities. It is for these reason that this course will delve into the experience of the Caribbean diasporas that have settled in New York, London, Toronto, Florida (Key West, Tampa, Miami, Orlando, Kissimmee) San Juan, Puerto Rico, Havana, Cuban and other at different historical conjunctures. Finally, in the last weeks of the semester, we will study the recovery efforts made by local and foreign governments after the earthquake that devastated Haiti in January of 2010 and Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017. In particular we will pay special attention to the wave of austerity measures imposed by the local governments following the economic policies associated with what Naomi Klein has coined as "disaster capitalism".

¹ This teaching module has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar "José Martí and Cuban Migrant Communities of Florida"

Teaching Module Description and Rationale

Cuba émigrés to Key West and Tampa (Ybor City), 1868-1940

This module will examine the Cuban migrations to Key West and Tampa (Ybor City and West Tampa) from 1868 to 1940. The devastating effect that the Ten Year's War for independence in Cuba (1868-1878) had on Cuban economy and society intensified Cuban migration to Key West and Tampa. During this process Spanish and Cuban business men relocated their cigar factories in Florida partly because it could provide a presumable labor stability and economic growth. Cigar factories needed the skills and knowledge of talented artisans to transform the tobacco leaves into high quality cigars. The artisans, however, brought with them their political ideas, workers solidarity and militancy and their commitment for Cuban independence between 1895 and 1898. These ideas not only jeopardized the economic interests of cigar factory owners but also contoured a unique Latin community in the United States. In general, this module will focus on the emergence and transformations of these communities in Key West and Tampa between 1868 and 1940.

The lesson will be divided in two main units. The first will explore the emergence of Key West and Ybor City, Tampa as transnational economic and political centers between 1868 to 1898. In this section we will examine José Martí's *To Cuba*; an impassioned speech to the Cuban cigar workers of Key West in 1894 partially to placate a worker's strike in the island but partially to stimulate workers economic support in favor of Cuban independence. Through the analysis and historical interpretation of this primary source the unit seeks to underline how Key West and Tampa (Ybor City and West Tampa) was part of a transnational community that tied them to Havana and New York as nucleuses of revolutionary activities.

Learning Objectives

Unit I

- Evaluate the political, economic and political factors that incited Cuban migration to Key West and Tampa (Ybor City) in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.
- Identify how early Cuban communities in Key West and Ybor City, Tampa occupy a meaningful place in the history of Cuban independence struggles.
- Make reasonable inferences from primary sources that can transform them into evidence in a historical argument.

Required Readings:

- Poyo, Gerald E. 1975. "Tampa Cigar workers and the Struggle for Cuban Independence." *Tampa Bay History*. 7, (F/W): 94-105.
- Gerald E. Poyo. 2014. *Exile and Revolution: Jose D. Poyo, Key West, and Cuban Independence*. University Press of Florida. Chapters, 5 & 6

- Poyo, Gerald Eugene. 1983. Cuban Emigre Communities in the United States and the Independence of Their Homeland, 1852-1895.
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00847a&AN=usflc.030144644&site=eds-live>. Chapters 6 & 7

In-class activities:

- Sourcing, contextualizing and making inferences from primary sources:

Primary Sources:

- Jose Martí, *The New Pines* (1891) & *To Cuba* (1894)
- Cigar factory picture in Key West
(Detroit Publishing Co., Publisher. Packing cigars, Key West, Fla. Florida Key West Key West United States, None. [Between 1880 and 1901] Photograph.)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016798538>

The second unit is set to explore the transformation of Ybor City from a Cuban exile community to a striving integrated ethnic enclave in southwest Florida right after the Cuban Hispanic American War up till the Second World War in the 1940s. Some of the question that will guide this unit are: What were the internal and external dynamics that made Ybor city became part of Tampa wider social milieu? How Cubans negotiated their identities throughout this transition? What were the turning points that caused irreversible changes within the Cuban community? What remained central for defining the Cuban experience in Tampa? This section will use life histories and music recompiled between 1939 and 1940 as part of the Florida WPA project. These sources will allow the student analyzes how continuity and change are interwoven phenome that permit us to have a consciousness of the inherent contradictions of historical narratives.

Learning Objectives

Unit II

- Explain the turning points in the history of Ybor City between 1898 and 1941.
- Make reasonable inferences from primary sources that can transform them into evidence in a historical argument.
- Explain the historical significance of Ybor City in light of what they reveal about contemporary Cuban communities in Florida.

This teaching module also aims to encourage historical thinking. This particular way of critical thinking is a systematic, structured and creative process which adapts the concepts and methods of historians in the construction of historical knowledge into the classroom. Peter Seixas (2013) defines historical thinking as “the creative process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history”. In particular this module will foster the epistemological concepts of *Evidence* and *Continuity and Change*. The concept of *Evidence* tries to response to how do we know what we know about the past? While *Continuity and Change* attempts to answer, how can we make sense of the complex flows of history? (Seixas & Morton, 2013). These principles will provide students the tools for understanding history as a specific form of knowledge and will allow them to organize and interpret historical sources to postulate reasonable and plausible explanations of the past (Lee & Ashby, 2000).

Required Readings:

- Mormino, Gary Ross, and George E Pozzetta. 2017. *The immigrant world of Ybor City: Italians and their Latin neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985*. Chapters
- Greenbaum, Susan D. 2002. *More than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, Chapters 6 & 7
- Dworkin y Méndez, Kenya C. 2018. "Latin Place Making in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries". *English Language Notes*.
- Perez, Louis A., Jr. 1978. "Cubans in Tampa : From Exiles to Immigrants, 1892-1901." *Florida Historical Quarterly*. 57, (October) 129-41.

In-class activities:

- Sourcing, contextualizing and making inferences from primary sources:

Primary Sources:

- [Enrique Pendas Life History](#), 1935
- [Pedro Barrios Life History](#), 1935
- L.M Bryan *Cigarmakers Union's Dispute* (1938)
Stetson Kennedy Florida Folklife Collection, 1935-1991, Series S 1585, Box 2, Folder 14
<https://www.floridamemory.com/onlinecollections/cigar-industry/documents/labor/>
- Timeline

Picture 1: Mass meeting of cigar workers on strike - Tampa, Florida. 1920. Black & white photonegative, 4 x 5 in. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/10834>>, accessed 10 July 2019.

Bibliography