

Hist 402W, “Cuba and Its Revolution in a World Setting.”

4:20-7 p.m. Mondays. Fall 2015.

Instructor: Prof. Robert H. Holden

Cuba remains one of the few communist-ruled countries in the world, a status it has maintained for more than 50 years, despite the fierce hostility of the United States. The heart of this course is a readings-guided discussion of diverse interpretations of the origins of Fidel Castro’s 1959 revolution, its national and international repercussions, and the relevant global context.

Special attention will be given to the following topics:

- Cuba’s colonial status as a sugar plantation society heavily dependent on African slave labor,
- the Cuban independence



Fidel Castro (center) and his brother Raúl (left) at their mountain hideout in eastern Cuba during the insurgency against the Batista regime in 1957. Image by © CORBIS

movements

- the origins and outcomes of the U.S. war with Spain in 1898
- Cuba’s status as a protectorate of the United States and its struggles with state building and nation building in the early 20th century
- the 1959 revolution and its Cold War context
- the U.S. response to the revolution, including the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Missile Crisis, and the history of U.S. covert action against the Cuba government
- the persistence of communism in Cuba, long after its collapse elsewhere
- Cuban immigration to the United States
- recent political and economic changes in Cuba, including “the China option”
- the Obama administration’s decision in 2014 to re-establish diplomatic relations, which were sundered in 1961.