



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Representations of Cuba

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The international community is looking towards Cuba, trying to puzzle out the direction the country will take now that Raúl Castro has assumed the position of power his brother Fidel had held since January 1958.

Since its discovery in 1492, Cuba has always been a coveted prize due to its location and agricultural wealth. The history of Cuba has always been that of a country seeking its independence and freedom.

This unit is the result of a seminar on *Representations of Democracy in Literature, History and Film* led by Professor Annabel Patterson. The focal point of the seminar was to recognize how there are few successful artistic representations of democracy in literature and art, mainly in the United States, and how to decode these representations. I have chosen Cuba because it is one of the Latin American countries that has almost always been connected to the United States and is the one that has not known what a real democracy is.

My goal for writing a unit on Cuba is to help my students to learn about democracy (and the lack thereof) and other forms of government using film, literature, art and music. In order to do so, I will be using various materials and resources that will include numerous cultural representations of the two political alternatives: those who support the revolution and those who were and still are against Fidel Castro (*anticastristas* , in Spanish) and the communist state: expatriates dispersed around the world. This unit will allow me to introduce different representations, primarily film and literature, but also examples of visual art and music, as instruments to teach Cuban history and develop something many of our high school students lack and is vital to their intellectual growth: critical thinking skills.

The cultural approach when studying a foreign language is crucial. Students need to learn how to communicate in the language of study, but they should also gather a deep understanding of the literature, history and art of the countries where that language is spoken. My teaching philosophy is based on my core belief that the assimilation of both culture and tradition will lead my students to a global consciousness and therefore deepen their understanding and appreciation of all world cultures.

Finding innovative ways to integrate cultural elements of the Hispanic world is always a challenge I try to overcome by developing meaningful interdisciplinary units that will provide my students with the tools to make connections, comparisons between cultures and communities, as well as communicate in the target language through culture.

The unit is to be used in my Spanish II courses at Hill Regional Career High School. Career is a magnet school

of 708 students in New Haven, for students interested in health sciences, business, and technology. The population is 53% African American, 27% Hispanic, 17% White, 3% Asian. About 67% of the students receive subsidized lunch. Even though the unit is to be taught to students at what the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) calls the "novice level", it could be easily modified to be used on upper level courses. Students at the novice level demonstrate some accuracy in oral and written presentations when reproducing memorized words, phrases and sentences in the target language; formulate oral and written presentations using a limited range of simple phrases and expressions based on very familiar topics; show inaccuracies and/or interference from the native language when attempting to communicate information which goes beyond the memorized or pre-fabricated. (1)

Due to the basic level my students have, Spanish will be used as much as possible, but it will be necessary to operate and read some of the works in either bilingual editions and/or English. As for the movies, documentaries and audio resources, all or most of them will be viewed in Spanish with English subtitles, when possible. I consider it crucial for my students to be exposed to the language as much as possible.

The unit will be taught over a period of about 15 to 18 sessions, each of which is eighty two minutes in length. These long block schedule periods will allow me to implement a wide variety of teaching methods and student centered activities.

Cuba

It is important to start the unit with a general overview of Cuba since many of my students have limited, if any, background knowledge with regards to this nation-state.

Overview

The Republic of Cuba is an archipelago located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, less than 150 kilometers (about 30 miles: 5km is equal to 3.1 miles) south of Key West, Florida. It includes the island of Cuba (*Isla de Cuba*) (with about 104, 945 square kilometers,) the Youth's island (*Isla de la Juventud*) (2,200 square kilometers) and several adjacent keys. In terms of population, Cuba is the ninth largest country in Latin America.

There are three principal mountain ranges: Guaniguanico, in the region of Pinar del Río, Escambray in Trinidad and the Sierra Maestra, in Santiago de Cuba. The principal rivers are the Cauto, Zaza and Sagua la Grande all of them with an average length of about ninety-three kilometers.

The territory is divided in fourteen administrative provinces created in 1974 called (from west to east) Pinar del Río, La Habana, Ciudad de La Habana, Matanzas, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spíritus, Ciego de Avila, Camagüey, Las Tunas, Granma, Holguín, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo. There are also 169 municipalities and one special municipality on the Isla de la Juventud.

Cuba is a communist state with one party, the Communist Party of Cuba (*partido comunista cubano* or PCC). Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz held the power from January 1, 1958 until last February 24, 2008 when his illness required his brother Raúl to take his place.

History of Cuba

The archipelago's strategic location at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico between North America, the Caribbean and Central America has been a key factor in its history since the discovery of the island by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The Spanish used Cuba as an operational base for the conquest of Mexico, since the Yucatan's peninsula is only about 150 kilometers away to the west. They also used the island's natural harbors as ports for all the ships sailing between Spain and the Americas.

The United States became interested in Cuba at least since the beginning of the 19th century, not only for its strategic location but also since it became the world's major sugar producer.

In order to fully understand the country and its current political system, I consider it is important to reflect on its history. This is why I am including this section, apart from the fact that it will also be helpful in the classroom since, as a Spanish teacher, I have to focus on the cultural aspects.

Pre-Columbian times

Studies on the early inhabitants of the island(s) could be classified in three main groups: the Guanahatabey (*guanajatabayes*), the Ciboney (*siboyenes* ,) and the Taino (*taínos* .)

The Guanahatabey was the oldest culture on the island. Some archeologists and anthropologists maintain that they might have come from the South of the United States since their artifacts were similar to those of the early inhabitants of Florida. Others, on the contrary, support the theory that they migrated from South America. They hunted, fished and picked fruit and gathered food and lived in caves since they built no houses. Their civilization was in decline when the Spanish arrived. By this time, they had moved to west part of the island.

The Ciboney culture was part of the Arawak, a larger South American group. They, as well as the Taino, arrived in Cuba through the island along the West Indies. They settled in the western part of Cuba and the southwestern peninsula of Hispaniola. They were more advanced than the Guanahatabey. They inhabited in towns near the sea or rivers where they hunted, fished and performed some kind of basic agriculture. Some of them lived in caves, but others built primitive dwellings called *barbacoas* or *bajareques* . The Ciboney, due to their gentle and peaceful character, ended up being servants of the more advanced Taino.

The Taino, the second Arawak group to inhabit the island, were far more advanced than the Ciboney. They settled the central and eastern parts, as well as most of neighboring islands Hispaniola, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. The Taino lived in small villages of round houses with conical roofs, *caneyes* , or rectangular ones, *bohios*, near sources of fresh water. They manufactured textiles, made pottery, stone and wood artifacts (such as powerful canoes.) They also developed a quite advanced economic system based on agriculture: they grew *yucca* (manioc), tobacco, cotton, corn, white and sweet potato.

They were socially organized. At the top of the class line there was the *cacique* , the chief who managed all the affairs of the community and ruled over a specific territory. The *nitaínos* , advisors who supervised the community and were in charge of certain sectors of the population, helped the *caciques* .

These first Cuban settlers were inferior to other civilizations in the mainland such as the Aztec or Maya of Mexico or the Inca of Peru in terms of economic development, social organization, art and technological advances.

19th Century

Many are the countries that have tried to have control over Cuba due to its strategic situation. Spain controlled it during the colonization and kept absolute control over it for centuries. In 1808, Thomas Jefferson tried to buy the island from Spain. There were also many treaties between Spain and other countries (England) to control slaves.

José Martí

José Martí's figure is of most importance when dealing with Cuba. His influence defined a national conscience, both politically and historically. This section is also important since I am planning to have students read and comment on some of his poems and writings.

Much of his life was devoted to Cuba's independence. Martí was a revolutionary activist, political theorist and writer (poet and journalist). He lived in exile in the US for a long time. He was opposed to those influential Cubans who fought for the independence of Cuba from Spain and who wished to form a union with the US. "The hands of every nation must remain free" (1891).

Martí was always concerned with the problems that characterized Latin America: democracy and dictatorship, reform and revolution, the clash between white settlers and indigenous peoples. He was a determined supporter of racial equality.

The son of Spanish immigrants, Martí was still in school at the outbreak of the first independence war in 1868. At the age of 16 he was sentenced to 6 years in prison as a subversive. He was sent to St. Lázaro in Havana. In 1871 he was exiled to Spain.

Soon caught up in intellectual circles, he studied Philosophy and Law at the University of Madrid and Zaragoza. In 1871, when done with his studies, he traveled around Europe. Later he moved to Mexico where his parents were living. In Mexico and Guatemala (where he taught in the university) he had his first experiences with Latin American "caudillos", Porfirio Díaz in Mexico and Justo Rufino Barrios in Guatemala. As a result he became a fervent opponent of military rule.

In 1878, as a result of the amnesty for political exiles, part of the Pact of Zanjón of 1878, he was able to return to Havana.

The Cuban Republic: 1902-1959

The United States military occupation ended when the republic was proclaimed on May 20, 1902 and Tomás Estrada Palma formally took control from the US military governor, Leonard Wood. Estrada Palma was Cuba's first elected president (1902-1906). He was a veteran of exile politics for almost thirty years but not very popular among the revolutionaries. He was accused later on of having privileged Americans over Cubans and having accepted orders from the United States occupying force. Estrada Palma was part of an educated political class that had no prejudice against US occupiers and looked forward to a close and continuing relationship with the Americans after the Independence.

The migration between Cuba and the US had been ongoing for generations and many Cubans moved back and forth easily. Constant communication was maintained between the two communities. In the early years of the republic, almost every one of influence and importance possessed direct experience living in the United

States. American intervention in Cuban affairs was not an insult -- they welcomed it and often, they requested it. Therefore, American intervention was welcomed by the Cuban elite in the early years and supported by the American settlers and businessmen who arrived in considerable numbers. More than 13,000 North Americans had acquired title to land in Cuba by 1905, bringing in millions of dollars of investment. Soon 60 % of the rural properties were owned by American individuals or corporations (15% resident Spanish). (2)

Corruption, violence, military revolts, gangsters, dramatic economic growth, prosperity for a small privileged section of the population and sporadic military intervention by the United States characterized the Republic. Many Cubans had fought for independence (and not for economic annexation) and were disillusioned by this development; but others believed it to be inevitable and hurried to associate with the United States.

In September of 1906, only four years after their initial withdraw, about 2000 United States marines landed in Cuba and reestablished their old base in Cape Columbia. Soon these US troops were dispersed throughout the country, where they stayed mapping the island over the next two years. They left in 1909. The intervention was not a unilateral military action by the United States, but the result of a request by Estrada Palma under the terms of the Platt Amendment. Americans had intervened to prevent the Cubans from fighting among themselves. When elections for the National Congress were organized in 1904, it was evident the state had no capacity to do so fraud-free.

The Republicans secured the victory of more congressmen. The Liberals, in favor of local autonomy, refused to accept the outcome and left the Congress. Believing that his services were indispensable, and backed by the United States minister in La Havana, Estrada Palma campaigned for reelection. The Liberals presented José Miguel Gómez (governor of Santa Clara) who was later to become president. Gómez ended up withdrawing due to the violent atmosphere and the certainty that the government officials would secure the reelection of Estrada. The Liberals then organized an armed insurrection to overthrow the government. In August 1906, armed rebels rallied in Pinar del Río and began to march on Havana. On their way, provincial leaders joined them. In Havana, the all-white government panicked and called for American intervention. Estrada appealed to Washington for military assistance in September. Roosevelt sent two delegates to Havana to try to reach a peaceful solution between the Estradans and the Liberals.

Estrada had his own agenda; he did not want to negotiate. He resigned as president and compelled his cabinet to follow suit. As a result the country was left without a government.

Roosevelt would not abandon American investors and decided to send the Marines to Havana. As a result of this action Charles Magoon ruled Cuba for 3 years. During this period his advisers devised a more reliable electoral system, drew up rules for the state bureaucracy and established a small professional army. He also created a new legal system to replace the codes of the Spanish domination. When Magoon left, Enoch "Bert" Crowder organized drafting committees in which Cubans would be represented (although they often missed meetings). Provincial and municipal elections were held in August 1908, and the Conservative party won. By November the presidential elections were held and the Liberals won with Gómez who ruled until 1913. Magoon, Crowder and the Marines had all abandoned the island by 1909.

Even though the United States' influence in the early years of the republic was pervasive, much of the Spanish domination survived. Spain still had a strong influence over many aspects of the Cuban society. Apart from few modifications introduced during the American occupation, little had changed: there were still many Spaniards in relevant positions, they controlled the industry and commerce, retail trade, and the migration from Spain would continue through the first decades of the republic. General Wood encouraged the immigration of white settlers from Spain observing their rights mindfully since he hoped that they would stay

to run the country. Their property and individual rights were ratified in the constitution and sustained by the military government. Estrada's new republic made no break with the old colonial order, and maintained the racist legislation previously imposed by the Americans. The landowners were to have many problems caused by this whites-only legislation since some of these Spanish immigrants were anarchists or syndicalists who soon became very active in the union movement.

Since the Liberal Party had not done anything to improve the circumstances of the black population in the island, Evaristo Estenoz created the Independent Party of Colour in 1907. Hoping Americans could be persuaded to take up the Afro-Cuban cause, he traveled to the United States to examine the experiences of American black organizations. The Party of Colour was the first real political challenge to the rules of the political order established in 1902 since it divided the Liberal vote within the black community.

In 1912 there was a short racial uprising started by Estenoz. It was the first military intervention since Magoon had left. General Wood sent troops to Guantánamo to protect the sugar estates in the region, not to support Estenoz. This uprising resulted in about 3000 Afro-Cubans killed. Estenoz was killed a month later, in June.

The pattern of corruption went on with succeeding administrations such as Mario García Menocal's (1913-1921) or Alfredo Zayas' (Liberal)(1921-1925), Gerardo Machado y Morales (1925--1933), Fulgencio Batista (through others 1934--1939 and himself 1940--1944 and 1952--1959), Ramón Grau San Martín (1944--1948), Carlos Prío Socarrás (1948--1952)... Seven were the civilian governments from 1934 to 1940, in which Fulgencio Batista manipulated the events behind the scenes.

Out of all these corrupt presidents, Machado y Morales was probably the most notorious since he held power through manipulation and extortion. The United States helped leftist groups to overthrow him in the Revolution of 1933.

In the final years of Socarrás' presidency, some officers sounded General Batista to know if he would support a coup. On March 10, 1952, Batista arrested all the senior officers at Camp Columbia, getting control of the city. Prío Socarrás went to the Mexican embassy to seek asylum. Batista then appointed himself as chief of state. Much of the 1940 constitution was suspended but most people, except Castro and his friends young political activists to whom the coup was a political opportunity for change gave the government the benefit of the doubt.

Castro's Revolution (1953-1961)

On July 26, 1953 an armed attack led by Fidel Castro took place in Moncada, a fortress near Santiago's Central Square. This offensive was part of a bigger plan designed to overthrow the Batista government established by force after a *coup d'état* the year before. The plan was to simultaneously move against the barracks in Bayazo and secure weapons from the arsenal. The plan failed, but the event was a challenge to the regime and laid the groundwork for the July 26 Movement, a revolutionary organization. It also brought Castro's name to prominence all across the island.

Fidel Castro Ruz, son of a white wealthy landowner from Galicia (Spain), went to a Jesuit college and was trained as a lawyer at the University of Havana. He was a brilliant student, orator and athlete; interested in politics from an early age. He appeared to be headed for a conventional political career, preparing for the elections of 1952 as a possible congressional candidate, when his plans were interrupted by Batista's coup.

Castro was regarded at that time as an outstanding figure of his generation. He became one of the most

charismatic and most extraordinary political figures of the 20th century. His revolution changed the course of Cuba's history and he became a leader whose ideals and rhetoric were to be followed by many countries in Latin America ruled at that point by narrow oligarchies carried-over from the colonial era. His impact on many Latin American generations of supporters and detractors was key to the political change and, in most cases, development in these countries.

Under Castro, Cuba became a Communist country where nationalism was more significant than socialism, where the legend of José Martí proved more influential than the philosophy of Marx. (3) His charisma, natural strategic vision and organizing talent gave Castro's group an advantage against Batista's regime. Castro assembled men, trained them and raised funds. He also made preparations for guerrilla warfare and drafted a manifesto that outlined a program for government for the cause.

After the Moncada defeat, some rebels were captured and executed. Fidel escaped to the mountains. Discovered a few days later, a black lieutenant from the Rural Guard saved his life by taking him to the police station in Santiago, instead of the Moncada barracks where he would have been shot. The regime's revenge turned public opinion against Batista's government.

Castro went to trial in Santiago with more than one hundred defendants, his brother Raúl Castro among them. Fidel took their defense and only 26 prisoners were found guilty. Raúl Castro was sentenced to 13 years in prison, since he was one of the leaders. The two-hour long speech Fidel made to justify his actions and to defend himself was the basis of his later revolutionary manifesto. In it, he outlined the "five revolutionary laws": first, return power to people and go back to the 1940's constitution; second, changes on land rights; third, rights to mining; fourth, industrial workers and sugar planters; and fifth, a law attacking corruption. He would also reorganize public education, nationalize privately owned utilities, "restore the land to the Cubans" and provide "employment to the jobless" -- these last two measures were already included in the 1940 constitution. He was sentenced to 15 years in prison on the Isle of Pines, where he joined his brother and some other revolutionaries. After two years, he was released as a result of an amnesty. After spending sometime in Havana, he lost hope in electoral politics and started thinking that the only solution to the crisis was an armed insurrection.

Both brothers flew to Mexico to organize a guerrilla force capable of invading Cuba. There they met a young Argentinean revolutionary, Ernesto Ché Guevara. From then on, Ché would assist the Castro brothers and together they would eventually knock over the Batista government and organize the revolution. With that goal in mind, Castro traveled to the United States. Despite his attempts he was unsuccessful in raising funds from New York, Philadelphia and Miami's Cuban communities. Meanwhile on the island, other groups such as the *Federación Estudiantil Universitaria* (FEU), or sugar-workers, hostile to Batista's regime, were silently plotting a coup.

By May 1956, Fidel Castro had raised enough money to rent a farm in Mexico City, where he was to secretly house and train various supporters, who had come from Cuba and other places, in the tactics of guerrilla warfare. A month later, both Castro and Guevara were arrested and the farm was raided. Former Mexican president Rafael Cárdenas had to intervene in order to guarantee their release. By November, Castro had bought a small boat, the *Granma*, gathered about 82 guerrilla volunteers, and sailed across the Gulf of Mexico heading for Cuba.

The *Granma* landing and the revolutionary war (1956-1958)

The plan for the *Granma* landing was to make it coincide with an attack on Moncada and the police

headquarters in Santiago, so Castro and the *Granma* crew could move unnoticed towards Bayamo and Santiago. The boat landed a couple of days later, on December 2, due to the weather. They were attacked from the air and on land. Some died, others were captured and the rest, though separated from one another, were able to reunite and connect with members of the internal resistance days later in Sierra Maestra.

They soon established regular contact with their urban counterparts from the July 26 Movement. They needed to make sure a continuous flow of men and guns were sent to the mountains. They made plans to strengthen the guerrilla force, expand its operations and to form an urban militia in all the provinces. They also organized a national "civic resistance movement" to prepare for a revolutionary general strike to bring down Batista's government.

It was important to organize the logistics of the guerrilla war, but it was also crucial to secure the agreement among the different political groups opposed to Batista's regime. These political groups were divided into old political parties that hoped for either an eventual electoral outcome or even a military coup the *Ortodoxos* ; and a younger more radical generation, the *Auténticos* , who supported armed resistance. One of the subgroups, the *Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil* (DRE), a terrorist organization dedicated to assassination and sabotage, led by José Antonio Echevarría, had a plan to enter the presidential palace in order to assassinate Batista. Meanwhile Echevarría seized control of Havana's main radio station. The operation took place on March 13, 1957. As a result, Echevarría and many other members of the DRE died, and the incident led to a strengthening of the repression.

In July, some of the *Ortodoxo* politicians agreed to meet Castro in the mountains to discuss their relationship with the Movement. Together, they shaped the "Pact of the Sierra, " a manifesto that called for a civil revolutionary front. Photographs of Castro with these prominent politicians (Raúl Chibás, Felipe Pazos, Roberto Agramonte and Enrique Barrosa) appeared in magazines in Havana, a publicity success for Castro's cause.

By March 1958, Castro's guerrillas in Sierra Maestra felt confident enough to expand their operations in other locations. Raúl left with a group of about sixty-something men and established a second front in the Oriente's north coast, in Sierra Cristal. A third front led by Juan Almeida was opened to the north of Santiago in the same month.

The Communist Party finally decided to support Castro early that same year. It was then that the plan for a revolutionary general strike, always present in conversations and meetings in the Sierra Maestra, started to materialize. Faustino Pérez, the leader of the Movement in Havana, and Fidel Castro signed the manifesto "Total War Against Tyranny" that called for general strike. It also outlined political plans for the post-Batista period. The insurrection, planned for April 9, was postponed indefinitely due to insufficient weapons required to stage various diversionary schemes on the part of the Movement's urban activists.

In the wake of the revolutionaries, early failures Batista became determined to oust the guerrillas from Sierra Maestra. He sent large numbers of soldiers to both Castro's front in the southern mountains and to Raúl's in the north. This offensive lasted for about two months, but the guerrillas were able to hold out. This victory was a turning point in the war. The time for the invasion of western Cuba had come. Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos and others set off to different targets at the end of August. The fighting continued on all fronts throughout the fall. The revolutionaries had a number of small victories.

After two years in the mountains, Castro was on the verge of victory. President Eisenhower had supported Batista supplying weapons. As Castro's victory grew more probable, the Americans gradually withdrew support for the Batista regime, suspending arm shipments on March 18.

By December, the columns of Ché Guevara and Cienfuegos advanced through the province of Las Villas (north-center), until they secured its capital, Santa Clara. Defeated on all sides, Batista's forces collapsed. After losing Santa Clara and expecting betrayal by his own, General Batista, Andrés Rivero Agüero (president elect) and their close associates fled to the Dominican Republic on New Year's eve, 1959. They left a junta with General Eulogio Castillo as head. The junta chose Carlos Piedra, the oldest judge of the Supreme Court as provisional President. Castro refused to accept anything established by the previous regime.

Revolutionary period (1959-)

On January 8, 1959, Castro's army arrives in Havana and begins consolidation of power by calling a general strike in protest against Piedra's government, demanding Manuel Urrutia Lleó be appointed as the provisional president and the liberal lawyer José Miró Cardona as prime minister. Only three members of the new cabinet came from the guerrilla army, and only one from the July 26 Movement.

Days later, the United States officially recognized the new government. Castro appointed himself Military Commander-in-Chief (*Comandante en jefe*) of the armed forces. In February Miró Cardona resigned and, on February 16, Castro became Prime Minister of Cuba.

The worst was yet to come, when many former Batista officials were convicted in revolutionary tribunals of political crimes and eventually executed. This was part of an attempt on Castro's part to get rid of potential Batista loyalists and therefore opponents of the new revolutionary government that could launch a counter-revolution.

In May, the first Agrarian Reform Law was promulgated, expropriating farmlands of many hectares owned by major United States corporations and forbidding foreign land ownership. The friction with the United States, the ideological radicalization (towards communism) and the bad publicity Castro's regime had acquired when some of Batista's leaders were publicly brought into trial before revolutionary tribunals and the proceedings were televised, deteriorated Castro's relations with the United States.

Initially, the United States, which had recognized the Castro Government on January 7, followed a "wait and see" policy. Although tension arose in connection with the public trials and executions of Batista supporters, serious differences did not emerge until after the Agrarian Reform Law had been approved.

In an attempt to change all this, Castro visited Washington in April 1959. Even though President Eisenhower refused to meet with him, Fidel talked with vice-president Nixon.

The land reform was the turning point in the US relationship with Cuba. When the National Security Council met in June, it was decided that Castro would have to go. The United States government's objective was to adjust its actions "in such a way as to accelerate the development of an opposition in Cuba which would bring about ... a new government favorable to US interests". (4) From then on, institutions such as the Department of the State and the CIA would look for ways to bring about Castro's downfall. This anti-Castro movement was more of an economic decision than a political one. Cuba did not establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union until May 1960.

The first contact with the Soviet Union took place in July in Cairo, when the Russians made an agreement to purchase sugar from Cuba. By October, Alexandr Alexiev, a diplomat and KGB agent arrived to Havana to visit. Some time after, a deputy of Khrushchev, Anastas Mikoyan, sent to the island, signed a sugar deal with the Cubans in February 1960. This was the first of many agreements not only with the Soviet Union but also with

several Soviet allies: Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc. By this time, the United States' plan to overthrow the Revolution was to sabotage of Cuba's sugar refineries the country's source of wealth. President Eisenhower liked the proposal but did not think it was strong enough. Sabotage attacks, usually by CIA-funded exiles in small planes on the island, started soon after. In April, relations between the two countries deteriorated further due to Cuba's sugar quota. The Russians and Chinese immediately offered help followed by Castro's nationalization of all major American properties on the island: sugar mills, plantations, oil refineries, electric power and phone utilities, banks, hotels, cinemas, etc.

In November the United States declared an Embargo on trade with Cuba. It was now forbidden to export anything, except medical supplies and food. When Castro restricted the staff of the United States embassy to eleven, the United States withdrew its ambassador on January 1961. By then the United States was training groups of Cuban exiles in Central American camps for an attack on the island. An attempt of an overthrow seemed propitious since Castro's support was decreasing.

The exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs (Bahía de Cochinos) (5), in April 17-19, 1961 was one of the major strategic errors of the United States in the twentieth century, reinforcing Castro's control over Cuba, ensuring the permanence of the Revolution and driving him into the Soviet camp. Although the Cuban government did not know the exact date of the attack, they knew about it. At the last minute, John F. Kennedy cancelled some of the air raids. The failure of the operation eliminated the entire Cuban underground since the regime arrested many real and suspected anti-Castro forces. The United States decided then to isolate and strangle Cuba economically by pressuring its allies throughout the world. Also, as a result, the "Operation Mongoose," closely overseen by Robert Kennedy, would comprehend clandestine operations in Cuba.

The Bay of Pigs attack accelerated the soviet military involvement in the island. As a result, new trade and cultural agreements were signed, as well as economic and technical aid.

Cold War Cuba

By mid-1962 the Soviet Union had secretly introduced nuclear missiles and bombers in the island. Through this action, they aimed to alter the balance of power and force the United States to accept a settlement of the German issue, as well as to protect Cuba from any future hostile actions.

On October 22, President Kennedy announced publicly the identification of Soviet missiles on Cuba and his intention of instituting a naval blockade of the island and requested the Security Council to consider a United States resolution calling for "the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons" (6) The US naval blockade began two days later. On October 26, Khrushchev sent a letter to president Kennedy in which he agreed to move the missiles and bombers if the United States would agree not to invade Cuba. Kennedy and his advisers were happy to accept the offer, the missiles and bombers were removed under the United States aerial surveillance, and the crisis ended formally at a press conference Kennedy convened November 20. After the crisis, Fidel Castro increased contacts with China, proclaiming his intention to maintain close relations with all socialist states. All this increased Cuba's leverage with the Soviets, who had not taken Castro's opinion into account during the missile crisis, and secured him more assistance.

Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union improved significantly in 1968, when the Cuba endorsed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. As a result, the Soviet Union increased its aid to the country. By the 1970's the United State's ability to keep Cuba isolated was declining. In 1975, the Organization of American States (OAS), withdraw all sanctions previously imposed to the island in 1962. Mexico and Canada developed closer relations with Cuba allowing trade and reopening cultural and diplomatic contacts. They hoped to foster

liberalization in Cuba but there was no substantial easing of repression against domestic opposition.

Cuban exiles in the United States increased in size, power and wealth but failed to foment a strong enough anti-Castro movement in the island. On April 6, 1980, a group of Cubans seeking political asylum crashed a lorry into the Peruvian embassy in Havana. Within days, about 10,000 Cubans had sought asylum. After long negotiations they were allowed to leave for Costa Rica and ultimately arrived in Miami. Shortly after Castro announced that anyone who wished to leave island would be able to do so through the port of Mariel. The so-called Mariel Boatlift also enabled Castro to empty prisons, detention centers and mental hospitals, sending them to the United States. Over 125,000 Cubans migrated to the United States before the exodus ended on mid June.

Post Cold War Cuba

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 caused a crisis in Cuba. This, along with the United States's tightening of the embargo caused a major economic crisis that led to another migration exodus and numerous popular uprisings in the early 1990's being the "Maleconazo" the most notable.

By the later 1990's, Cuba had economic relations with most of the Latin American countries as well with many European Union ones, providing loans and aid to the country.

Future of Cuba: Raúl Castro

Fidel while recovering from a surgery temporarily passed on his duties as President of the Council of State, President of the Council of Minister, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party and Commander in Chief of the armed forces to his brother, Raúl Castro. In February 2008, Fidel Castro resigned as Cuba's President, ending 49 years of uninterrupted rule, naming Raúl his successor.

Analysts are divided on what kind of leader he might make. Now that he is in power, he seems to be pushing further economic liberal measures.

Cuban Cinema

The efforts the United States to isolate Cuba with the economic and cultural embargo for nearly two decades, did not impede Cuban cinema, poster design or music to develop different art manifestations to claim Cuba's political views.

The revolutionaries had always recognized the artistic and educational supremacy of film. Fidel Castro, well aware of it, ensured the creation of the First National Congress on Education and Culture, which pointed in the late 1960's to television, cinema, radio and press as "powerful instruments of ideological education, molders of the collective consciousness whose use and development must not be left to improvisation or spontaneity." (7)

Only three months after the overthrow of Batista, the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC), was founded. In fact, there was a previous revolutionary film organization called *Cine Rebelde* .

Havana was one of the first places in Latin America exposed to the moving image in 1897, when the first Lumière films were making their debut.

The role Cuban cinema from the 30's to the 50's was to furnish United States and Mexican Film Companies with exotic sets for their productions. During the twenty years preceding the revolution, national film was characterized by escapist tropical musicals, melodramas, and detective flicks. The industry primarily produced advertising shorts for theaters and television, newsreels for local consumption, technical or scientific films for specialized audiences and pornography.

During the fifties there were a couple of film societies -- *Nuestro Tiempo* and *Visión* -, where the only serious film activity came about. García Espinosa and Gutiérrez Alea's *El megano* (The Charcoal Worker, 1954), a denounce of the hardships of the charcoal production in the island, is an antecedent of post-revolutionary cinema.

The ICAIC gave priority to documentaries due to ideological and economic factors. From 1959 to 1977, about 600 documentary shorts (including scientific, educational and technical films), and more than 800 weekly newsreels were made.

The growth in awareness and social sensitivity on the artists, who wanted to document the euphoria of the rebel victories and the popular response to social changes, placed them in an exceptional position as observers of their own national reality.

Cuban documentary production could be divided into five thematic categories: domestic politics, historical films, cultural documentaries, didactic documentaries and, films dealing with Cuba's role in international affairs. As for the central themes common in all Cuban films, history and underdevelopment should be mentioned.

Cuban Art: Posters

Cuban posters possess an enormous artistic power and social impact due to the historical and social implications of the Revolution along with "a unique confluence of conditions." (7)

The production of posters was extraordinarily prolific, by the time the Soviet Union collapsed; Cuban artists had produced about twelve thousand posters. This was in part due to the fact that the State had not always supported the arts, but also had institutions such as the ICAIC (Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry), *Editora Política* (EP- the official publishing department of the Cuban Communist Party) and OSPAAAL (the Organization in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America) which produced them.

The posters, and the movies-especially documentaries- offer formidable representations of whatever it is they portray: national pride, sports, health, cultural, social or political events, etc.

Classroom Activities

Strategies

One of the goals when teaching the unit, is to provide students with the tools and knowledge to better understand the complex history and culture of Cuba by being able to decode many of its cultural, social, political references, themes and symbols.

As much as I would like to ignore the fact, I know my students have probably never been exposed to a serious approach to Cuba. Some probably have a vague idea of its location and a few might have heard about the Cold War or Ernesto "Ché" Guevara. The unit will be introduced by questioning what they really know, in order to hopefully prompt some kind of interest.

The opening activity will be a projection of different still images (taken from the films we will work with later in the development of the unit) (9) of relevant moments in the history of Cuba, without giving the students any kind of information. I will let them decide and, hopefully someone will recognize something. I will call different students and ask them to describe the pictures.

I do not expect them to know what all the pictures represent, but I will ask them to choose one of them and write a 5-8-sentence caption for the illustration. I will make emphasis on the value of images as palpable representations of reality. A couple of students will be asked to read their captions out loud and then I will go over the pictures again briefly explaining them. Right after this, students will be asked to brainstorm on their knowledge on Cuba; they will be writing the information in a graphic organizer while I will be doing exactly the same thing on the board.

Students then will be asked to write at least five different things they would like to learn about the country of study.

The following two of days, I will introduce relevant historical information in order to provide the students with the necessary background knowledge to start thinking and analyzing things by themselves. I will alternate the way of presenting the information: power point presentations, readings with questions to discuss in groups...

Comparative time-line

Once the necessary background knowledge has been presented, students will be asked to create a comparative time-line. They will work in groups of two or three. (I will be the one deciding the groups in order to make sure they are equally balanced.)

Students will include the main historical events in the United States, Cuba and the rest of the world. They will have freedom choosing how to represent the information graphically, but they will fulfill some requirements, such as the number of events, etc, provided in a detailed rubric.

"Discussing Literature"

Due to the amount of information and time the unit will take, students will be working with poems more than anything else. Two texts will be used: Carlson and Hijuelos' *Burnt Sugar Caña Quemada* and Francisco Morán's, *The Island of my Hunger: Cuban Poetry Today*.

Both anthologies are bilingual and will allow my students to work in poems in both languages. Students will be asked to work in pairs and will be given first the same poem to work with (as the unit develops, different pairs of students will be asked to work with different poems so they can decode them and talk about them to the other students). Before asking them to work on the meanings of the poems, the teacher will ask a student to read the English version and then another student the Spanish version. Sets of questions will be given to students in order to deeply work in the poems.

"Discussing Movies"

Film is the ideal instrument to explore culture in the language classroom since we can examine, analyze and contrast various aspects portrayed in the movies as well as develop student's proficiency in language skills, such as listening comprehension and/or speaking.

In this part of the unit we will watch excerpts of: *Balseros* (Spain, Carles Bosch / Josep María Doménech, 2002); *Cuba: The 40 Years War* (USA, Meter Melaragno & Jim Burroughs, 2002); *Diarios de motocicleta* (Motorcycle Diaries) (Argentina-USA-Cuba-Germany-Mexico-UK-Chile-Peru-France, Walter Salles, 2004); *Free to Fly: The U.S.-Cuba Link* (USA, Estela Bravo, 2004); *Great Day in Havana* (USA, Laurie Ann Schang / Casey Stoll, 2001) and *Young Rebels* (USA-Cuba, Anna Boden / Ryan Fleco, 2005)

These movies have been selected because of their direct relation with the topic of the unit, so the excerpts will be intertwined with the explanation of the material. For example, when going through the history of the revolutionary years, I will show an excerpt of *Cuba: The 40 Years War*. We will view the part in which the veterans from both fronts talk about their experience of the Playa Girón (Bahía Cochinos) invasion.

Artistic Manifestations

Posters

Every day, as they enter the classroom, students will have a transparency of a poster. (10) They will be asked to start the class describing (in English) what they think the poster represents in a piece of paper. Different students will have to read their response and then, for 5 minutes, the class as a whole will discuss and reflect on the poster answering questions about the historical period the poster refers to, point of view of the artist, theme, etc.

When working in this section in depth, at the final stage of the unit, we will view fragments of the documentary *Great Day in Havana* (USA, Laurie Ann Schang / Casey Stoll, 2001.) This movie is perfect to introduce the richness of Cuban Art to the students. The fact that the artists talk about their work will bring a perfect opportunity for discussion.

Debate

Shortly before the end of the unit, I will divide the class in two groups. One group will represent the dissident group (let's say an anti-Castro association of Little Havana in Miami,) and the other half of the class will represent many Cubans who still live in the island and firmly believe in Castro and the Revolution.

Students will have some time in a class period to get organized and discuss how to most effectively defend their position in order to make a valid argument and persuade their opposing side. Students will get a rubric and some strategies for effective speech as well as a "mini-spiel" on the importance of dialectical respect. They will also have to complete some tasks both days the activity will be worked on, in order to make sure they do not lose focus and utilize their time properly. I will be helping both groups. The second day, when the debate will take place, there will be an impartial moderator, a social studies teacher, if possible.

Sample Lesson Plans

Lesson One. History: Introduction to the Cuban Revolution

(This lesson plan is to be developed in an 82-minute class. However, it can be changed according to teachers' needs)

Goals

To introduce students to the complex political situation of Cuba; to help them to discern and make connections between causes and consequences in history; to reach the understanding of other cultures to reinforce and expand their knowledge of other disciplines (history, in this case.)

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Develop understanding of other countries and cultures.
2. Practice their reading comprehension skills.
3. Build on their oral reading skills.
4. Understand the importance of history as part of the identity of countries.
5. Read and gather information of a text written in Spanish in order to select the main ideas.
6. Expand their vocabulary.
7. Identify and express relevant information orally.

Materials

Text on the main events of the Cuban Revolution in Spanish previously adapted by the teacher to the appropriate level of the students, timeline graphic organizer, maps of Cuba.

Initiation

"Pass the bull" strategy: I usually start my classes passing around a foam toya bullasking a variety of questions: grammar, vocabulary, opinion on matters we have already discussed in class, etc. It is a useful strategy because you assess students daily and it helps to start the class on a good tone, since students seem to like it. In this particular case, students will be asked what they know about the Cuban Revolution.

Procedure

1. The teacher will ask different students to write the responses on the board (in Spanish) so students can correct answers and go on adding up to their classmates' answers.
2. Different students will be asked to read the text on the Cuban Revolution out loud in turns.
3. Students will have 5 minutes to reread the text and to underline the concepts or vocabulary they do not know or understand.
4. Students will ask the new words in turns; those students who think they know the answer will raise their hand and answer upon teacher's request, so we can do the exercise in an orderly manner. (I like students to ask questions of vocabulary to their classmates since they get an opportunity to practice and interact in the target language; I either answer when no one in the class knows, or ask different students to look the words up in the dictionary.)
5. The teacher will ask students questions about the text in order to find out if they have understood the main events and ideas.
6. The teacher will provide a more detailed explanation on the main concepts again to make sure they are understood, using Spanish as much as possible.
7. Students will write in the graphic organizer what they consider to be the most important concepts or ideas of the lesson.

Closure

To conclude the lesson the teacher will ask the students to brainstorm what they have learned that day.

Assessment / homework

For homework students will be asked to write a 25-30 line paragraph answering the following: Identifica y enumera los principales acontecimientos y acciones que desencadenaron la revolución Cubana e intenta explicar cómo se podría haber evitado (Identify and enumerate the crucial events and actions that led to the Cuban Revolution and how could they had been avoided)

Lesson Two. Artistic Representations of Cuba: Revolutionary Posters

(This lesson plan is to be developed in an 82-minute class. It could be modified according to teachers' needs)

Goal

To initiate my students to the process of viewing, interpreting and recognizing artistic manifestations with an aesthetic and critical perspective.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Practice their reading comprehension skills.
2. Express reactions to a poster and therefore build on their oral skills.
3. Observe and describe specific details of posters or paintings.
4. Recognize different Cuban political or historical figures and/or events.
5. Read and gather information of a text written in Spanish in order to pair up the description of the posters to the actual product.
6. Expansion of vocabulary.

Materials

Numbered transparencies of a variety of revolutionary and political Cuban posters (10), description of the posters written Spanish numbered Xerox copies that will be given to students, overhead projector and screen.

Initiation

Teacher will "pass the bull" asking students questions about the Cuban Revolution its key figures, events and physical places, already discussed in the classroom.

Procedure

1. The teacher will give students a set of untitled, separated brief descriptions of different revolutionary posters.
2. Different students will be asked to read the descriptions aloud.
3. Students and teacher will closely look at the numbered posters using the overhead projector. The teacher will ask specific questions to different students (e.g.: ¿Qué ves en este poster? What do you see in the poster? etc.)
4. The teacher will divide the classroom in pairs and will give students time to give another look to the posters in order to take notes of what they consider important.
5. The teacher will give students 5 to 8 more minutes to discuss the poster with their peers in order to pair these visual representations with their descriptions. One "group" at a time will describe and explain a poster and will reveal the appropriate description for it.
6. The teacher will ask individual students to come up to choose a poster in order to bring it home to describe it in detail as homework.

Closure

Students will write the name of the poster they liked the best on a piece of paper and give 3 reasons for their choice.

Assessment / homework

Students are asked to bring a copy of the poster they have chosen and write a 20-25-line essay explaining it.

As a result of this lesson, students will be assign a project by which they will create a poster, with a reasonable timeframe to complete it.

Lesson Three. Audiovisual Representations: Movies

(This lesson plan is to be developed in an 82-minute class as well.)

Goals

To expose students to (oral) authentic materials (11) in order to trigger their capacity of attention to culture and to develop their critical thinking skills.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to:

1. Develop their listening comprehension skills.
2. Recognize many of the Cuban cultural aspects we have previously worked with during the unit.
3. Connect and compare different ways of presenting information.
4. Be able to recognize the intention different authors (directors) have with their "representations."

Materials

Movie(s) (in Spanish with English subtitles when possible) I am thinking of playing very short relevant fragments of documentaries such as *Balseros*, *Cuba: The 40 Years War* and *Free to Fly: The U.S.-Cuba Link* to sample opposite political ideologies in one hand, and brief fragments of *Diarios de Motocicleta*, *Lista de Espera* as examples of fiction; LCD projector, computer, speakers, DVD Capture (computer program to take still images from movies.)

Initiation

"Pass the bull" activity asking students to explain or describe what do they value or look at when watching a movie. There will be a brief discussion and explanation of basic film studies cues in order to help them to learn how to watch movies.

Procedure

1. The teacher will divide the class in groups of about 4 students.
2. Students will be asked to get into their groups before viewing the different fragments of movies.
3. There will be a preview of the fragments with a succinct explanation from the teacher, so the students know what to expect. The teacher will also explain to the students that they might want to reflect on what they are watching because, during the second screening of the fragments, they will have to take still images.
4. Students and teacher will watch the fragments for the second time: each group will be able to take 10 still images. Students will respectfully just tell the teacher to take an image by saying "foto" out loud.
5. After the screening, students will get into their groups to put together their ideas and notes. They will have enough time to discuss and answer some of the questions the teacher has circulated. These questions have been designed in order to help students to reflect on the main points of the excerpts.
6. Each group will have to approach the teacher in order to get their still images and therefore prepare to present them to the rest of the class (another day), giving all kinds of explanations on the why, how, when...

Closure

To wrap up the lesson, 7 minutes before the bell rings, students and teacher will discuss student's reactions to the films/fragments.

(A follow up lesson will be necessary.)

Endnotes

1. ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners
<http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3327> (accessed May 5, 2008)
2. Irene Wright, *Cuba* (New York, 1910), 502.
3. Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven: Yale Nota Bene-Yale University Press, 2005), 180.

4. Rex A. Hudson, ed., *Cuba: A Country of Study* (Washington DC: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 2002)
5. Also known as the invasion at Playa Girón.

6. Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (Haven: Yale Nota Bene-Yale University Press, 2005), 205.

7. Julianne Burton, *Revolutionary Cuban Cinema*, Jump Cut, no 19 (December 1978)
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC19folder/CubanFilmIntro.html>

8. Lincoln Cushing, *¡Revolución! Cuban Poster Art* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003), 7.

9. There are many computer programs to take still images of movies, such as Capture DVD.

10. Most if not all the posters will be taken from Davidson and/or Cushing (in the bibliography)

11. Authentic materials would be material "created by native speakers for native speakers." 2005 Connecticut World Language Curriculum Framework. October 2005.

Bibliography

Carlson, Lori Marie and Hijuelos, Oscar, ed., *Burn Sugar Caña Quemada: Contemporary Cuban Poetry in English and Spanish*. New York: Free Press, 2006.

Collection of poems of some of the best Cuban and Cuban American poets of the twentieth century chosen by the Cuban American writer Oscar Hijuelos and the translator Lori Marie Carlson.

Chanan, Michael. *Cuban Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. Account of Cuban cinema before and after the revolution, setting individual films and filmmakers within the structure of Cuba's social, political, and cultural history.

Cushing, Lincoln. *¡Revolución! Cuban Poster Art*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003.

Collection of a variety of posters of Cuba's 1960's through the 1980's.

Davidson, Russ, ed. *Latin American Posters: Public Aesthetics and Mass Politics*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2006.

Political and cultural gallery of posters of Latin American social and political history during a time of crisis and turmoil.

Gott, Richard. *Cuba: A New History*. New Haven: Yale Nota Bene-Yale University Press, 2005.

Exhaustive, meticulous and easy to read history of Cuba.

Gracia, J. E., *Borland Identity, Memory, and Diaspora: voices of Cuban-American Artists, Writers, and Philosophers*. Edited by Lynette M.F Bosch and Isabel Alvarez. Albany: State University of New York Press, c2008.

Interviews with nineteen prominent Cuban-American artists, writers, and philosophers who tell their stories and share what they consider important for understanding their work.

Guevara, Che. *Guerrilla Warfare*. University of Nebraska Press: 1998.

Book that includes three of Ché Guevara's most influential essays describing his tactical philosophy of fighting a guerrilla war in Latin America.

Hudson, Rex A., ed., *Cuba: A Country of Study*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 2002.

Laviana Cuetos, María Luisa. *José Martí: la libertad de Cuba*. Madrid: Ediciones Anaya S. A.; Biblioteca Iberoamericana, 1988.

Morán, Francisco, ed. *The Island of my Hunger: Cuban Poetry Today*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2007.

Bilingual anthology, presents the work of a new generation of Cuban poets who explore themes such identity, exile, and the multiple cultures that form their experience. This anthology brings together poets living in, and in exile from, Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Web Resources

Casa de América. <http://www.casamerica.es/> (accessed May 15, 2008.) Detailed information about all the Latin American countries.

Cubacine: El Portal del Cine Cubano. <http://www.cubacine.cu/> (accessed July 22, 2008) Amazing and exhaustive resource of Cuban cinema, from movies to actors, festivals...

Filmography

Azúcar amarga (Bitter Sugar) (Cuba-Dominican Republic, León Ichaso, 1996)

Story of two young Cubans who fall in love in spite of their opposite political views.

Balseros (Spain, Carles Bosch/Josep María Doménech, 2002)

(Documentary). The story of Cuban refugees who risked their lives in homemade rafts to reach the United States in 1994, and how life is like for those who succeed.

Cuba: The 40 Years War (USA, Meter Melaragno & Jim Burroughs, 2002)

(Documentary) Five Cuban-American veterans of the Bahía Cochinos assault go back to Havana forty years later for an international conference devoted to the invasion.

Diarios de motocicleta (Motorcycle Diaries) (Argentina-USA-Cuba-Germany-Mexico-UK-Chile-Peru-France, Walter Salles, 2004)

Biographical fiction film about the memoir and journey of a young Ernesto Guevara through Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela.

Fidel (USA, Estela Bravo, 2001)

Documentary about Fidel Castro, covering 40 years of Cuban Revolution. Rare Fidel

Castro footage.

Free to Fly: The U.S.-Cuba Link (USA, Estela Bravo, 2004)

Documentary about the difficulties of traveling to or from Cuba and how the U.S.

Embargo severely limits the degree to which U.S. citizens can legally travel to Cuba.

Great Day in Havana (USA, Laurie Ann Schang / Casey Stoll, 2001)

(Documentary.) Havana artists: painters, sculptors, filmmakers, poets, musicians and choreographers share their worlds and their art to proudly display their city and their identities.

Habana Blues (Spain/Cuba/Francia, Benito Zambrano, 2005)

Two young Cuban musicians, Ruy and Tito, share the same dream: to become famous and finally leave Havana.

Historias de la revolución (Cuba, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1960)

Overview of the insurrection against Batista's dictatorship through three stories: *El herido*, *Rebeldes* and *La batalla de Santa Clara*.

La vida es silvar (Life is to Whistle) (Cuba, Fernando Pérez, 1998)

Stories of three unhappy characters struggle between love, hate, promises, the truth and prejudices.

Lista de espera (Waiting List) (Spain-Mexico-Germany-France-Cuba, Juan Carlos Tabio, 2000)

Dozens of passengers wait for the bus to arrive in a bus terminal. Disorder and chaos reign when the bus breaks down and cannot leave. Forced to spend the night together and perhaps the next few days, everyone will try to come up with their own solutions, revealing the human being's ability to overcome with generosity and solidarity the toughest circumstances.

Más allá del mar (Cuba-USA, Lisandro Perez-Rey, 2003)

Documentary on the Mariel Boatlift of 1980 when thousands of Cubans fled to the United States. Combining archival footage from within Cuba with recent interviews of those who came over.

Miel para Oshun (Honey for Oshun) (Cuba, Humberto Solas, 2001)

When he was a child in the sixties, Roberto moved with his father from their home in Havana to create a new life in Miami. Thirty-two years later, after the death of his overbearing father, Roberto returns to Cuba in the hope of finding the mother his father claims abandoned them both.

Soy Cuba (I am Cuba) (Soviet Union/Cuba, Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964)

Sergei Eisenstein's propaganda masterpiece that started a week after the Cuban

Missile crisis. The plot explores the world of Batista's Cuba.

Suite Habana (Cuba, Fernando Perez, 2003)

The documentary was filmed with fictional cinema techniques depicting a day in a life of thirteen real people.

Young Rebels (USA-Cuba, Anna Boden / Ryan Fleco, 2005)

(Documentary) The camera follows five Cuban hip-hop groups and two producers over the course of a Havana summer.

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