



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2023 Volume II: Latinx Histories, Cultures, and Communities

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## Exploring Puerto Rican History and Film Portrayals

Guide for Curriculum Unit 23.02.01, published September 2023  
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The Puerto Rican History Through Film unit aims to connect class concepts to media stereotypes for students in the American History Through Film elective in grades 10 to 12. Students learn about concepts surrounding the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico while deconstructing the stereotypes often used to imagine the island and its people by reading primary and secondary sources and watching *West Side Story*. The curriculum, divided into ten 90-minute sessions, culminates in an innovative final project. Students work in pairs or small groups to create a historically accurate movie poster that counters stereotypes about Puerto Ricans in New York City using resources from Hunter College's Center for Puerto Rican Studies. They present their research methodology, design, findings, and a reflection on how they used *West Side Story* as a teaching tool. The final project encapsulates their semester's progress in research, writing, and presentation skills, focusing on themes such as Latinx stereotypes in film, Puerto Rican ties to New York City, and the relationship between media and historiography. Overall, the unit provides a rich and engaging learning environment in which students are tasked to challenge stereotypes and represent more nuanced narratives.

(Developed for United States History through Film, grades 10-12; recommended for U. S. History, grade 10, and Film Studies and Black and Latino Studies, grades 10-12)

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