

CASTRO'S CUBA

This course will be a history of Cuba with an emphasis on Cuba from the 1950s to the present. In the process of studying how Castro came to power and why the relations between Cuba and the United States became so involved, we will also look at the long relationship between Cuba and the United States and the larger world issues that affected this relationship.

We will begin with a survey of the history of Spanish exploration and conquest in the Caribbean and how Cuba became the most important Spanish colony in the area. A side trip into the days of the "Spanish Main" and the Age of Piracy will show that Cuba was important to world affairs from the late 1500s on. Then we will study Cuba as part of the great age of empires of the 17th and 18th Centuries.

The United States enters the picture next. We will narrow the focus a bit and look at how the new United States becomes involved in the Caribbean. As the 19th century progresses Cuba becomes a bigger part of American economic activities in the Caribbean and numerous plans. Meanwhile the Cubans slowly evolve from the most loyal of Spain's colonies to one in almost constant state of rebellion. This era ends with the Spanish-American war and the independence of Cuba.

The first half of the 20th century in Cuban history is dominated by its relationship with the United States and the search for stable government in Cuba. We will take a more detailed look at the evolution of Cuban politics and political institutions and the rise of the Cuban Dictator Batista in the middle of the 20th century.

Then on to Castro and his Cuban Revolution of the late 1950s. We will follow Castro's early career, first revolts, exile and then why he was able to overthrow the ruling dictator. Then we will take a look at the various ideas about how and why the Cuban Revolution became a Communist Revolution. We will track the growing tension between the United States and the new Cuban government and what brought about the final break.

Cuba in the Cold War will make up a major part of our class. We will look at the contest between Castro, the Kennedys and Soviet Premier Khrushchev that took place during the early 1960s culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis. We will see what kind of government Castro creates and how he rules Cuba and how he pushes Cuba to become a major player in some of the most important Cold War events in South America and Africa. The final decade of the Cold War is a busy one for Cuba and we will spend some extra time on this era.

Finally, Cuba after the fall of the Soviet Union. We will look at how Cuba has weathered the change in the world order and why only now are the U.S. and Cuba seeming to finally normalize relations.