

# Hampshire in Havana

## Cuba Project Abstracts

### Theme: **Cuban History, Culture & Identity**

---

The abstracts listed here are for projects done on the Hampshire in Havana Cuba program, related to the theme of Cuban Culture & Identity. Projects are listed by year beginning in 2008, with the most recent year first and then in alphabetical order by last name. For questions about specific projects, please contact the Global Education Office.

---

**Name:** Jason Drill  
**Year:** S2017  
**Tutor:** Dannys Montes de Oca  
**Title:** "Art-Body-Nation"  
**Medium:** Essay

This project explores how contemporary Cuban artists use their bodies in response to nationalist discourse and their repercussions in art. I investigate how the experiential body provides spaces to alternatively imagine the nation, or for alternative expressions of nationalism to emerge. Eduardo Hernández Santos uses the bodies of nude Cuban men to express national identity as a contingent product of discourse between language, bodies, and nationalism, implying that the nation and body are in constant negotiation. René Peña's use of his own body to disidentify with the documentary subject parodies a history of documenting Revolutionary nation building, and his work questions how subjects become national in the first place. Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo uses her own body and the bodies of others to express national belonging as a transnational process, delinked from territorial soil. Rocío García reinterprets the Revolutionary desire for *libertad* as an erotic desire to leave Cuba.

**Name:** Asa Needle  
**Year:** S2017  
**Tutor:** Vivian Martínez Tabares  
**Title:** "Blackness and Contemporary Cuban Theatre"  
**Topic:** Blackness, Contemporary Cuban Theatre, Racism  
**Medium:** Essay?

To talk about Blackness in contemporary institutional Cuban theatre is to talk about interconnected and imbricated traditions, themes, sources, techniques, and goals.

There is the legacy of slavery and resistance, in representations of the *cimarrón*, or escaped slave, and the *palenque*, or self-freed slave community. There is the influence, or direct reinterpretation, of Cuban religions with African roots, such as Santería, the *orishas*, and the *patakinés*. There is the history of the racial impersonation through Blackface theatre starting in the middle 19th century and the nationalization of Blackness in the early 20th, which both make their legacy felt today. And there are the antiracist and antisexist projects that contemporary theatres engage in. I interviewed five prominent theatre-makers whose work engages with this matrix of Blackness, older established artists who have experienced and worked through the trajectory of Cuban history and its theatre. In these interviews we discussed themes such as the U.S. and tourism, marginality and gender, puppetry and children's theatre, and the role of public theatre in socialist society. I also analyze plays I saw throughout my time here, connecting these performances to the thematic above to illustrate the gamut of contemporary theatrical concerns.

**Name:** Sophie Frank

**Year:** S2017

**Tutor:** Zoe Díaz

**Title:** N/A

**Topic:** Reproductive Culture in Cuba, Motherhood, Economics, Medicine

**Medium:** Reproductive Health Essay?

This project is a short-term examination of the experiences of birth, pregnancy and motherhood in Cuba. 8 women between the ages of 30 and 87 were interviewed, using broadly states questions in order to attain answers that may shed light on how memories of pregnancy, ideas of maternity, and the specificities of prenatal care are voiced and expressed. Interviews were analyzed in order to define the reproductive cultures of Cuba, and how it is uniquely shaped by its medical system, economic and social policies and history. Results were compared with reproductive health and policy in the United States, for the sake of contrasting the different medical and political backgrounds, and also for the sake of examining how to hegemonies of Western medicine make different bodily experiences similar, and where they stand alone as being formed by society and nation. These interviews can be used to show the trajectories of the changes in Cuban healthcare since the Revolution, and can also be used just for the sake of understanding how these women remember their birth stories, memories from pregnancy and the significance of motherhood.

**Name:** Maya Brinton

**Year:** S2017

**Tutor:** Margarita Mateo

**Title:** N/A

**Topic:** Women, Poetry, Feminism, Identity

**Medium:** Essay?

My project is the study of five female Cuban poets, Dulce Maria Loynaz, Georgina Herrera, Nancy Morejon, Fina Garcia Marruz, and Lina De Ferria, and the ways in which these women have influenced me as a poet, and my poetic practice, as well as an in depth analysis of poems in which I find striking. With this analysis I aim to explicate what is important about this work, as well as why the poetry from these women is valuable to examine closely, and with urgency. I do this by looking at these poems through a feminist lens, with a focus on how they navigate gender, nationality, race, and class. I ask how poetry can recreate realities in which women are vulnerable, and as a result powerful. I also wrote a series of poetry for this project, that mirrors some of the poetry I have read. With my own work, I hope to illuminate my connection to the poetry of these five women. This is intricate, in that there is no clear connection, because sometimes influences are undefinable. I hope to honor the work of these five poets in my analysis, as well as their illuminate their influences on me in my own poetry.

**Name:** Nadia Milad Issa

**Year:** S2017

**Tutor:** Bárbara Balbuena

**Title:** “¡Oni Yemayá! Bailando Rezos Encima de el Piso”

**Topic:** Regla de Ocha-Ifá, Dance, Music, Blackness, Womxnhood

**Medium:** Ethnographic Essay and Dance Performance

My project in Cuba was to study Regla de Ocha-Ifá, a Cuban popular traditional religion of origin Yoruba, its manifestations in both music and dance, and the influences of the ritual dances of the Orishas in Danza Moderna. I also specifically looked at the relationship between Afro-Cuban womxn dancers with the divinities, fundamentally Yemayá. I analyzed the connections and differences between spaces of professional dance, and the context of sacred spaces within the ceremonial ritual festives in this religion. The journey of this investigation is deep and personal, since I begun practicing Ocha, I now have an element of performance that is more profound, ancestral, and incredible. I feel the guidance of the Orishas, particularly when I dance. I wanted to know what has Ocha, and the Orishas, gifted to the Afro-Cuban womxn dancers who are practitioners of the religion, and those who are not initiated. For me, it was a dream come true, to be able to take Danza Moderna and Folklorica dance classes as well as having first hand experiences with ritual dances. This has filled my soul with happiness and love for the *Tambores*, *Güiros* and *Cajónes*. For the final presentation I will perform a co-choreographed solo of Today Yemayá's *yakotá*, *omolode*, y *chachalokafu* toques. Aché to all!

**Name:** Tulipan Velasquez Farley

**Year:** S2017

**Tutor:** Cary Diez

**Title:** “Dialogues Between the Holbox Mandolina and the Cuban Tres”

**Medium:** Essay and Music Performance

The way we play our instruments changes them, and they change us too—through music we dialogue across distances and beyond borders. This study proposes to investigate the elements that have contributed to the creation of a Cuban identity through musical expression, centering the *tres cubano* as a vehicle of national tradition. The focus is on the characteristics and processes that make an instrument uniquely local; the *tres* embodies transformation of its foreign chordophone precedents not only in the modification of its physical form, but in the way it is played, in the genres that have come from it, and in its influence on a wide variety of other genres. Its physical and musical characteristics illustrate the processes of transculturation that are key to expressions of Cuban identity. The instrument is a result of its unique context, and yet at the same time, it has become “universalized;” transcending its original genres, time, and place. The *tres* is a key component of Cuban traditional music, which continues to influence contemporary manifestations of music of all kinds.

**Name:** Rachel Utz

**Year:** S2017

**Tutor:** Lilia Núñez

**Title:** “*Cuentapropismo* and *cooperativas* in Socialism?”

**Topic:** Cooperatives vs. Private Businesses in Cuba, Workers Conditions and Experiences

**Medium:** Essay

My initial interest for my final project was simply about *cuentapropismo* in Cuba, but after reading *Non-state Enterprises in Cuba: Building Socialism?* written by Camila Piñaro Harnecker, I decided to focus in the differences in experiences of workers in the private sector and workers in *cooperativas*. I was interested in this because I had seen how *cooperativas* functioned in the United States, and I thought they could be a way to improve conditions for workers in the non-state sector in Cuba. I studied how the economic reforms of the 1990s and of 2011 and 2013 have impacted these workers in the non state sector in Cuba and compared the experiences of workers in private businesses and in cooperative businesses. I did this by looking academic research on the non state sector, as well as reading an extensive amount of magazines and newspapers, both in print and online. I also conducted interviews of two groups of workers in two different restaurants: one privately owned, and the other a cooperative. I found that there are many differences in the perceptions of workers in the two sectors, both about their work and experiences as workers and about the regulations that guide the non state sector. I also found that many of the complaints of workers in the non state sector coincide, regardless of whether they work in a cooperative or private business. I ended my work with thinking of possibilities for improvement of labor conditions in the non state sector, both through in depth academic study and through widespread education of the public about the rights that workers have according to Cuban law.

**Name:** Sydney Burt  
**Year:** S2017  
**Tutor:** Jaime Rodríguez  
**Title:** “The Plazuela of the Ursulinas: Foco de Centralidad”  
**Topic:** Architecture, Urban History, Restoration in Old Havana  
**Medium:** Architecture Research and Proposal

During my time in Havana, I studied the architectural and urban history of the city and was able to use my knowledge to propose a restoration project in Old Havana. The Plazuela de las Ursulinas has a rich history and was identified by the Office of the City Historian as a site with the potential to be an important urban center (*foco de centralidad*). Informed by a thorough analysis of the site's urban and architectural context, this project makes recommendations to fulfill this potential with expanded green space, a new building with cultural significance, and strengthened infrastructure of the existing buildings around the Plazuela.

**Name:** Joel Bueno  
**Year:** S2017  
**Tutor:** Jorge Bermudez  
**Title:** “The Walls Speak: Official and Popular Visual Communication in the Streets of Havana”  
**Medium:** Essay?

My project dwells on the visual and spatial communication: What do we say/institutionalize/define through visual images? I study how the visual defines us and how we are defined through the visual. I research how people exchange and understand images and symbols in particular and how they relate to each other in relation to national identity, history and representation. In Cuba today, one sees walls painted with revolutionary slogans, coexisting with other mural paintings made by spontaneous artists or anonymous people. In between the official street art, whether made by the government or by spontaneous artists moved by the Revolution, you find the anguished faces of souls, a masked man always accompanied by his question mark, and a happy zombie. While the current Cuban government once began as a revolutionary socialist movement, it has become the point through which power is centralized and the walls, a medium through which its power and belief systems are transmitted. Artists such as Yulier, Fabian and Ozmany, challenge this ruling state, co-opting the walls for their own empowerment and the empowerment of others.

**Name:** Graciela Rodriguez  
**Year:** S2017  
**Tutor:** Lourdes de los Santos  
**Title:** “Roads”  
**Topic:** Artistic Processes, Personal and Political Art, Identity  
**Medium:** Video Ethnography

With this project I attempted to find a refuge in art that would allow me to ponder upon the artistic processes made by individuals in Cuban art. At the same time, I investigated the intersectionality between the personal and the political through art. When artists create a work of art, they are not always thinking that it could serve as activist purposes or if it will make its way in history of their country. However, many times artists create their works inspired by the present and the context that surrounds them. Through video ethnography I aimed at making visible the feelings involved in the process of creation of a work of art as well and its contribution to the development of society. I worked with four artists/art collectives: The Colectivo Artístico Trance, The José Martí Community Workshop in Old Havana, the visual artist and 'artist', Nancy Cepero and artist and visual anthropologist, Celia González. With the work I have tried to raise a red flag to the subtle changes that are affecting the human condition to somehow have a better understanding in the way through which individual identities are built in a given social context.

**Name:** Mikaela Gonzalez.

**Year:** S2016

**Tutor:** Eduardo Hernández

**Title:** "Art and Social Criticism: Revolutionary?"

**Medium:** Print, collage

Throughout the three months I spent abroad in Cuba, I sought to understand the Cuban reality through informal conversations, daily observations, and encounters with prints and photographs from the Revolution. I attempted to unravel some of the complexities defining daily life in La Habana, my research finally taking the form of a collage that offered my interpretation of several pivotal shifts that have taken place since the 1960s. My mural-like collage contained my critique, beginning with pieces of prints and photographs from the beginning of the Revolution and slowly transitioning to my own prints and drawings that reflect what I have learned in my time on the island. My intention was to question certain issues I encountered, such as the weight of the patriarchy, the devastating role of tourism, the daily struggle of a low-salary state worker, the still-dominating imperial intentions of the United States, and the powerful influence of the divisa currency (CUC). These pieces culminated into a visual brainstorm, questioning if and how the economic crisis of the 90s and the now creeping presence of globalization have changed the faith and ideology of Cubans towards the power of Revolutionary socialism.

**Name:** Cray Novick

**Year:** S2016

**Tutor:** Lourdes de los Santos

**Title:** "Una Rosa Para Una Flor"

**Medium:** Documentary Film

Documentary video works use the microphone and camera to record an audio-visual index of reality. Rendering two-dimensional, aural-visual representations from this multi-dimensional and sensory space inevitably involves processes of synthesis, translation, and approximation—indicators of subjectivity and voice. This project is an exploration of Cuban memory and experience—the influential voices that shape perspective and the personal views that function within that context.

In this work, I (en) counter culture through interviews and engaging with the creative process. Art mediates a synthesis of information between the lived experience and the work formed. This film at once explores the formation of stories in Cuba through these mediums and their respective creators while forming a new story in their filmic retelling. Through this method, I hope to learn more about my subjects' voice, their personal narrative, and their relationship to popular tellings of Cuban history and culture.

**Name:** Jennifer Peña

**Year:** S2016

**Tutor:** Josefina Suárez

**Title:** “Black Women in the 1961 Literacy Campaign”

**Medium:** Essay

My project is an anthropological work which explores the experiences of young black women during La Campaña de Alfabetización, or The National Literacy Campaign in 1961. President Castro announced the emergence of a literacy campaign as a means to eradicate the high levels of illiteracy throughout the island that created class divides. Throughout the course of a year the literacy rate went from 77% to 96%. Out of the 200,000 Cubans that volunteered as teachers, 105,000 of them were young adults between the ages of twelve and nineteen and over half of these volunteers were women. The mass mobilization of young teachers to the countryside of Cuba became so effective that by 1962 the literacy rate in Cuba was well above that of most countries in the world, including the rest of Latin America and even, by some estimates, the United States. During my interviews I had the pleasure of hearing the retellings of their favorite childhood memories during this special time in their lives; taking part in this marvelous and uniting effort to make Cuba great while also taking charge of their future.

**Name:** Sarah Shannon

**Year:** S2016

**Tutor:** Mirta Rodríguez Calderón

**Title:** “Más Allá de las Estadísticas —

An Ethnographic Report on the Declining Birth Rate of Cuba”

**Medium:** Essay

With a current birth rate of 1.49 children per woman, the Cuban birth rate sits well below the average for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as significantly lower than that of countries in similar economic situations. Through ethnographic field work, I looked beyond statistics and into a variety of social indicators including cultural, political,

socioeconomic, and family life, as well as female subjectivity in contemporary Cuba to better understand why there continues to be a declining birth rate. My data was collected through formal and informal interviews, a survey, as well as general observations I made by living in Havana. The piece recognizes the successes of maternal healthcare and women's equality that Cuba has experienced while simultaneously examining the social factors that are inhibiting Cuban women and their partners from starting or growing their families.

**Name:** Mercer Gary

**Year:** S2014

**Tutor:** Alfredo Prieto Gonzalez

**Title:** "Cuban Nationalism in Times of Change"

**Medium:** Essay

Based on qualitative data collected from interviews in Havana in the spring of 2014, this essay is an addition to conversation on the so-called crisis of nationalism in Cuba. Though the first years of the Revolution were marked by the spirit of "revolutionary" nationalism visible throughout Cuban society, the dawning of the Special Period weakened this sentiment for many citizens, leaving mere state rhetoric in its place. I will argue that state nationalist rhetoric today fails to inspire the public and in fact conflicts with affective national feeling and inclusive, truly revolutionary ways of conceiving of the nation. After tracing the evolution of state-produced nationalist rhetoric, I will present several conflicts posed by the fusion of nationalism and socialism, the relationship between Cuban nationalism and the United States, the use of national heroes in state discourse, and the exclusionary and oppressive roots of nationalist rhetoric. Finally, using the work of Michael Warner, I will offer an analysis of alternative discourses on nationalism and the *publics* and *counterpublics* they create.

**Name:** Hanna Lauritzen

**Year:** S2014

**Tutor:** Lily Nuñez

**Title:** "Cuentapropistas Women in Havana"

**Medium:** Essay

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Cuban government has been dramatically restructuring their economy, which has resulted in rapid social stratification. These reforms have included the "rationalization" of the workforce employed by the state. Workers dismissed from state employment are meant to find new jobs in the emerging private sector, or *cuentapropismo*. Because women are the majority of professional and technical workers employed by the state, rationalization puts them in a particularly vulnerable position. Therefore, it becomes crucial to assess to what extent the new private sector is accessible to women. Disturbingly, the percentage of female *cuentapropistas* has remained at around 26% since the opening of the sector in the 90s. To better understand how women from diverse backgrounds enter into the private sector, I conducted ethnographic interviews with twelve female *cuentapropistas*.



My paper demonstrates how the failure of the Revolution in challenging the sexual division of labor both in and outside the home has limited the opportunities for women to enter the private sector, and relegates them to highly traditional, low paid work within *cuentapropismo*. In addition, I analyze the ways in which race, class, level of education, and family structure intersect with gender to facilitate or limit different women's access to the private sector. For women who have been able to enter into *cuentapropismo*, I examine the ways in which their social advantages and disadvantages are reproduced within the sector. I conclude with a discussion of how *cuentapropismo* fits within Cuba's socialist system, and suggest some methods to support women's access and success in the private sector.

**Name:** Susana Rajala

**Year:** S2014

**Tutor:** Magda González-Grau

**Title:** "Reforming Subjectivities: An Analysis of Young Cubans' Aspirations and Values in the Era of Social Re-stratification"

**Medium:** Essay

The "generation gap" between Cuban youth who grew up during the Special Period and older generations is a prevalent topic of discussion in both U.S. academia and official and popular Cuban discourse as well. Many characterize Cuban youth as being consumerist, materialistic, politically apathetic, and lacking values and respect for the rules of society. Thus, for my project I initially set out to explore the "generation gap" through interviews with 12 *habaneros* between the ages of 23 and 35 about their values, commitment to the socialist project, and aspirations for the future. As my project progressed, however, my initial framing of "youth's" values and aspirations began to break down. My research gradually revealed that I could not discuss individuals' values and aspirations in terms of the homogenous category of "youth," because young Cubans have very different prospects in the emerging economy. Referring to Cuban sociologists' analyses to provide me with a structural perspective on the effects of the post-Soviet economic reforms, I have mapped out the socioeconomic positions of my interviewees within the contemporary political economy and their location within the process of social re-stratification that has been taking place over the past 20 years. Finally, I found an empirical diversity in my interviewees' values and aspirations for the future that correlated with their relative position within the new political economy that was outlined in the majority of sociological analyses. While I initially identified four categories of individuals, they eventually collapsed into two, based on a crucial difference: those who had significant or consistent access to CUC versus those who did not.

**Name:** Faustino Vidal (Tino)

**Year:** S2014

**Tutor:** Javier Castro Rivera

**Title:** Reglas de la Calle

**Medium:** Film

This documentary was inspired by *Suite Habana* by Fernando Perez. I filmed the life of a Cuban who has to "luchar" for a living, showing a single day in her life. Moving away from the traditional way of filming documentaries with interviews and talking heads, I wanted to focus on cinematographic language, relying more on the images to inform the viewer. Additionally, I wanted to produce a film with no major climax or linear time line, as in *Suite Habana*. My film, "Reglas de la Calle," starts with the protagonist, Regla at the end of her day, making dinner and getting ready for bed. Next, we see Regla waking up in the morning and completing the multiple jobs she performs in order to make her living: washing and ironing clothes, making dulces to sell on the street, and cleaning staircases of nearby buildings. The film ends with Regla making her bed, beginning another day of "la lucha." Using only image, sound, and music, this documentary tries to have the viewer recognize the work Reglas does in a day both outside and inside the home.

**Name:** Christopher Daly

**Year:** S2013

**Tutor:** Gerardo Chijona

**Title:** "Reality of Ruins: The Life Within"

**Medium:** Creative Writing

Through Chris's wanderings and writings he encountered stories that Havana's environment tells. The power of storytelling is the power to influence and change thinking. Narrating can empower or condemn. Chris hopes that through his stories he can reveal the characters of life he's met here to dispel fetishizing narratives of ruins as devoid of life and stuck in time. These stereotypes fantasize about what was, rather than focus on the contemporary. Cuba's ruins are not frozen in time, but very much alive in the present. Chris's field research was conducted in everyday living spent writing to encompass as much of the city as he could. Throughout his study he incorporated characters such as Hotel Trotcha, Havana's sound, ISA, the dead, the Hershey factory, the ocean, a love-stricken tree, and others to broaden the scope of what defines Cuban life to examine the components of the Cuban identity as it is in Havana. His work grew out of an interest in the people and life within the ruins, finding much more that he writes about in his work. His creative writing project is accompanied by a photographic component of twenty-five color prints. These capture some of the characters and concepts that inspired his writing. His written work is composed of short stories, poems, and non-fictional narratives, which draw on Cuban poetry, films, and academic texts. His overall goal was to be able to show insiders and outsiders alike the beauty of life that dwells here as he found it for himself.

**Name:** Monique Baron

**Year:** S2012, F2013

**Tutor:** Margarita Mateo & Eduardo Hernández

**Title:** "(Sin) Privacidad", "Si cocinas como caminas, me como hasta la raspita: A History of the Cuban Piropo"

**Medium:** Documentary Photography

Monique's field research was based on two multi-generational families living in Havana. Their living situations are uniquely Cuban--their apartments may not be suitable for their needs, but due to post-Revolutionary housing changes, they have changed their needs to fit the apartment. Monique spent an average of four to six hours a week with each family. She photographed daily events within the household, attempting to understand how each family functions within the physical space of their home. Through interviews and conversations, she explored generational differences that exist within these homes. Monique's final project was a documentary photography exhibition of 25 color prints, each 40 by 30 cm.

**Name:** Noah Brau

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** David Motola & Jaime Sarusky

**Title:** "Galleta Con Pasta de Perro Caliente y Mayonesa: Jews in Cuba and the Idiosyncrasies of an Anomalous Community"

**Medium:** Essay

Latin American Judaism is a topic that has been, "Overlooked by Latin Americanists as too few and too marginal to affect the area's development, they have likewise been regarded by Jewish scholars as outside the course of Jewish history." (Laikin, XI) Nevertheless, while the Jewish community of Cuba today only numbers around 1500, "Jubans" have been a topic of interest for Jews throughout the diaspora. After the religious "re-opening" that accompanied the Special Period, many Cubans with Jewish roots have chosen to return to their synagogues and their traditions after three decades of pertaining to another "religion": Marxism. What has caused the religious revival in Cuba? Why are so many Jews motivated to reclaim their Jewish identity? Noah's project is a self-reflexive journey through the Cuban Jewish world using his own North American Judaism and culture as a point of reference and the reading of historical texts and articles together with the interviews with Jewish leaders and members of this community in Cuba.

**Name:** Nicola Chávez-Courtright

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** Magda González-Grau

**Title:** Aquí, Luchando

**Medium:** Play

Nicola's time in Havana was spent conducting, transcribing, and editing over a dozen interviews with tobacco-sellers, informal tour guides, jineteros and jineteras (sex workers who cater to tourists), street vendors, and specialists to write her play, " Aquí, Luchando." The play was created as a piece of documentary theater; that is, all of the characters exist in real life, and their words are taken verbatim as the dialogue. " Aquí, Luchando," brings to life the informal economies that have grown out of the country's large tourism industry, and examines the relationships between Cuba, Cubans, and foreigners. Tourism, as the pillar of Cuba's economy, has been a relatively new

phenomenon in the years since the Revolution that has fundamentally changed the fabric of Cuban society. "Aquí, Luchando" examines how these changes have been interpreted and absorbed on a micro level, and looks at what it means when survival depends on selling an image (or a body) to the outside world. The play also portrays Cubans' thoughts on the social divides that an ever-growing tourist economy has created and/or exacerbated, and the complex and conflicting relationships between Cubans and yumas (foreigners). "Aquí, Luchando" will be staged at Hampshire College in fall 2012 as a bilingual multimedia play that will involve audio and visuals recorded during the course of Nicola's fieldwork

**Name:** Everett Defieux

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** Mavis Alvarez

**Title:** "(Agri)cultos, la Fuerza de Supervivencia Autóctona: A Socioeconomic Analysis of Cuban Campesinado"

**Medium:** Essay

Everett's field work research project consisted of an examination of the following: the origin and evolution of campesinos and their organizational structures in the context of Cuban agrarian history, an investigation into campesino cultural and socioeconomic identity, and an exploration of the role of small farmers and campesinado in national food sovereignty, agroecology, the cooperative movement in Cuban society. This investigation consisted of textual research in books, scholarly articles and publications, government reports, and roundtable discussions. For another facet of his research, Everett conducted a series of interviews with eminent agrarian scientists and representatives from a number of relevant organizations, including The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), and the Fundación Antonio Núñez Jiménez del Hombre y la Naturaleza; small farmers; and members of cultural institutions which manage the preservation and development of distinct campesino artistic tradition. In his final research paper, Everett analyzed how the campesinado facilitated the agricultural transformation during the Special Period and sustained the ongoing development of the current model of agricultural production founded on the valorization of cooperatives, environmental sustainability, and small scale cultivation.

**Name:** Jaime Hamre

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** Niorka Núñez

**Title:** "Luchando por la identidad: How Cuban food culture survived the Special Period"

**Medium:** Essay

Through food, Jaime's research opens with the formation of the Cuban nation--when the Spanish colonizers brought rice and pork to Cuba, African Criollos invented el congr', and Cuba unknowingly trapped itself into an unending cycle of wheat importation upon abandoning its cassava bread experimentations--arguing that food has always been a fundamental part of the Cuban identity and an indicator of its history and the socio-

political state of its people. She claims that this could never be truer than during the Special Period when the material foundation of the Cuban diet disappeared, and Cubans were pushed into a culture of "resolver"--to obtain food (i.e. informal economic exchanges, dependence on friends and family, and small-scale self-subsistence) and by inventing with what was available. Rooted in historical research and interviews with families and food experts her analysis concludes that in the waves of globalization and crisis that have washed instability over the island, Cubans have remained rooted in their food identity, continuing the struggle to surpass the Special Period, which many Cubans believe still exists today.

**Name:** Samantha King

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** Julio César Guanche

**Title:** "Sin el negro Cuba no ser'a Cuba: Impacts of Race in Cuba"

**Medium:** Essay

Samantha's research explores the topic of race in post Revolutionary Cuba. Beginning with a brief introduction to the history of race, her 38-page analytical paper focused on how the Revolution sought to eradicate race through means of legislation and its eventual silencing of the topic within social discourse. Race resurfaced during the Special Period (1989-2006), augmenting problems of prejudice and racism that had previously existed but lain dormant during the 1970s and 80s. With this amplification emerged artistic and intellectual discourses designed to publicly address the problems that persist today. Samantha's essay explores some of these works along with political demands in an attempt to realize some possible changes in the way racial prejudice interacts with and impacts the general Cuban public.

**Name:** Sentinaro Sojwal

**Year:** S2012

**Tutor:** Alfredo Praetor Gonzalez

**Title:** "Exoticism and the Tourist Imagination: An Examination of Cuban Female Identity at Home and Abroad"

**Medium:** Ethnography

In her ethnography, Senti addresses the sexualized and racialized construction of Cuban women in the tourist imagination and examines the juxtaposition between this simplified production and the ideas of Cuban femininity and identity that exist within the nation itself, from the voices of its women. The accounts from Senti's field research illuminate the interconnectivity of the discourses of imperialism, nationalism, femininity, and globalization and highlight select significant effects of a tourist economy on Cuban women's lives and self-identification in the nation today. Drawing on academic texts and personal interviews with Cuban women (ranging from scholars to university students to a woman in the sex trade), Senti explored colonial legacies, the historic construction of the mulatta, sex tourism in Havana today, contemporary Cuban sexual attitudes, and the impacts of reggaeton, Cuba's most popular music, on female identity and sexual

expression. Senti upholds that the commodified image of Cuban women that is proliferated today defines her as an exotic object for tourist consumption and silences her voice in the surrounding discourses of history and nationalism, serving a kind of erotic imperialism.

**Name:** Jaffer Abid

**Year:** S2011

**Tutor:** Julio César Guancho

**Title:** "From Enthusiasm to Despair: Intellectuals and Cultural Policy in the First Decade of the Cuban Revolution"

**Medium:** Essay

Jaffer's project centered upon an examination of the role and position of intellectuals in Cuba between the years 1959-1971. Through the decade of the sixties and into the first years of the seventies, Jaffer identifies three moments that defined the location of intellectuals in the new Cuban society. The first was Fidel's famous speech "Words to Intellectuals," which set the parameters for cultural policy in the revolution. His phrase "Within the revolution everything, against the revolution nothing" began to give form to the idea of what was permissible in the revolution and asked intellectuals to work for it. The second important moment Jaffer cites, was Ernesto Che Guevara's essay "Socialism and Man in Cuba." This piece problematized the question of the role of the first generation of intellectuals in revolutionary Cuba: his argument here was that intellectuals of this generation who were committed to the revolution could not be true revolutionaries. Here, Che complicated questions concerning this generation, asserting that "we cannot graft pears out of elm trees." Jaffer locates the third and final moment, which brought an end to the expansive and romantic conception many intellectuals held in the first decade of the revolution as the 1971 Congress on Culture and Education. This disastrous moment strangled intellectuals' cultural freedom and brought about the next phase of intellectual life in Cuba: the Grey Years.

**Name:** Lia Campos

**Year:** S2011

**Tutor:** Esther Suárez

**Title:** "José Martí' and the Revolution: a Look Inside the World and Imagination of Cuban Children"

**Medium:** Essay

Lia's project involved an attempt to understand the values communicated to children, and their understanding of these values, in post revolutionary Cuban society. She sought to explore this particularly in the age group of 7 years old to 12 years old. Lia undertook to examine this problematic in a variety of contexts. Her central arena of study was children's theatre but she gradually expanded her search for subjects to include children outside the specific context of theatre, and to examine a range of literature produced for consumption by children. As she interviewed children and adults who worked with children (particularly in theatre), she came to understand that perhaps the most useful way to get at the idea of values was to look first at the messenger.

In the case of Cuba, she identified Jose Marti, Cuba's National hero, who played the central role as unifier during Cuba struggle for independence from Spain, as perhaps her most useful signifier. In contemporary Cuba, she argues, Marti serves as the channeler for values which the Cuban revolution wants to communicate to children: above all, a belief in the centrality and importance of patriotism and related to this, self-sacrifice, community, unity, and anti-materialism. Cuban children are exposed to Marti as a historical figure and in his writings in children's theatre, but as well, in multiple other contexts: schools, film and literature.

Lia's final essay focuses upon the messages conveyed through the figure of Marti, and the contexts in which this happens: as a result, she has produced a rich, contextualized study of the distinctive nature of the values the revolution has sought to communicate to children.

**Name:** Angela DiBattiste

**Year:** S2011

**Tutor:** Alfredo Prieto González

**Title:** "Our guys in Havana: Ten Years of Hampshire College in Cuba

**Medium:** Oral history

Angela's project involved laying the foundations for an oral history of the 10-year old exchange program between Hampshire College and the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC), particularly as it has reflected itself in a complex and rich meshing and collision of cultures at every level and in every context. While Angela interviewed a selection of the tutors who have, over the years, been involved in the project, as well as its administrators and the heads of the households in which students have lived, her focus, in this initial stage of her project, centered on the currently participating students. She carried on interviews with these students (who number, this year, thirteen,) at two moments of their stay in Cuba, in order to get at the dynamics of their experiences, and in particular, to get at the ways in which their perceptions of themselves in Cuba, and of Cuban society.

**Name:** Hanna Grieb

**Year:** S2011

**Tutor:** Margarita Mateo

**Title:** "Journeying into Darkness: A Literary Exploration of Special Period Havana"

**Medium:** Thesis paper

The Special Period prompted a shift in the focus of Cuban women's literature due to the inconceivable way sociopolitical developments rapidly changed their lives. Writers that experienced this dark era came to know a different Cuba, a Cuba that suffered a painful and dramatic change since the days of their youth. Hanna's intensive examination of literature incited by this traumatic period formed the basis of a composite work that includes several analytical essays and fiction narratives.

Hanna channeled most intensive efforts into the examination of Mirta Yáñez's most recent novel, " Sangra por la herida" (2010). Within this complex novel she sensitively unravels the resonant voices of a large cast of habaneros, who reflect upon los años duros of their past and present. In an entirely related context, she conducted an interview with a writer and economist Josefina de Diego, exactly of the new generation of woman writers, entitled "Mis recuerdos son como un rumor que me acompaña siempre." Throughout their discussion, Diego reflects upon the creative force yielded by remembrance and recognizes her work as "pequeños testimonios de esta cotidianidad." The finished interview has been accepted for publication by one of the most important journals dealing with Cuban culture.

Woven into her work, Hanna endeavored to meditate upon the ravages of recent history in her own fiction. In these short narratives, she considered the ways in which the Special Period directly and indirectly impacts the lives of those around her. Her literary investigation enhanced her understanding of the way a writer can wield literature as a transgressive instrument to inspect, reflect, and complicate popular histories embedded within society.



**Name:** Kristina Moss Gunnarsdóttir  
**Year:** S2011  
**Tutor:** Jaime Rodríguez  
**Title:** "Suspended in Space"  
**Topic:** Role of public spaces in Havana  
**Medium:** Essay

Kristina's field research project involved an investigation into the role of public space(s) in the development of Havana. After a careful examination of the evolution of public spaces in the history of the city, she undertook a detailed analysis of the importance of monumental public spaces and their messages during the Revolution. The cultivation of the central revolutionary idea of 'Todos' is explored through a visual examination of various key revolutionary sites and their current use or disuse. In particular, she focuses upon what are now, in a sense, empty signifiers: the vacant Plaza de la Revolución, the Capitolio, and the steps of the University, looking at their role in the assembly of the revolutionary imaginary.

Her analysis of the 'death' of these spaces led her to question the role of vallas (billboards) played in the construction of 'the public'. In so doing, Kristina raises critically important questions: Has the repetition of revolutionary slogans, unchanged from the 60s, lost the ability to communicate with the public? Does a unified Cuban public exist? Are there new messages that could incite a (re)unification of the public? Kristina has based her project around the critically important idea that the liberation of language within public space(s) is indispensable in inciting discussion and reflection about the status quo.

**Name:** Rebecca Hanssens-Reed  
**Year:** S2011  
**Tutor:** Ambrosio Fornet  
**Title:** "The Cuban narrative of 1960-1980: The Development of the Revolutionary Conscience"  
**Medium:** Essay

Rebecca's project focused upon the threads of change in continuity in Cuban literature in the twenty years after the triumph of the revolution: the historical and euphoric vision of the future in the sixties, and the subsequent rupture represented by the 1970's Grey Period. What remains constant through this twenty years, Rebecca argued, was the writers' intent to give testimony, to situate their writing in relation to the revolution, however they were defining it. If the literature of the 60s focused upon critical realism and most particularly the conflictive and interactive relationship between the personal and the course of the Revolution, in Grey Period, writers molded their work around socialist realism with flat or little interest in exploring language and complex character development. She traces these threads, in their continuity and disruption through a series of novels, short stories, and plays that were published during these two decades, including: Jesus Diaz' *Los años duros*; Eduardo Heras Leon's *Acero*; Edmundo Desnoes' *Aquí me pongo*; Miguel Cossio's *Sacario* and Norberto Fuentes' *Condenados del condado*.

**Name:** Rudi Cohen

**Year:** S2010

**Tutor:** Juan Valdés Paz & Aurelio Alonso

**Title:** Pensamiento Crítico: Historia, contenido y desarrollo

**Topic:** Pensamiento Critico

**Medium:** Essay

My project in Cuba centered around the review Pensamiento Critico, which came out of the philosophy department at the University of Havana and was published from 1967 to 1971. To learn about the review I studied with Juan Valdes Paz and Aurelio Alonso Tejada, who were both involved with the philosophy department during this time. The final product of my semester is a paper that has three main parts. First, it attempts to describe the socio-political context out of which P.C. emerged, because it was this context that allowed an opening for that kind of critical heterodox publication. Second, I argue that P.C. was part of a larger cultural project that also consisted of the philosophy department and the Instituto de Libro, since all of them had the same group of intellectuals involved that, among other things, promoted a similar critical position of orthodoxy. Finally, I attempt to show the kinds of developments that can be found in P.C. in as many forms as possible, such as its reflection of important political moments, the emergence of new international leftist movements that grabbed their attention, and the reflection of the intellectual development within the group that was publishing it. I plan on continuing to work on this project in the coming two semesters in order to expand the paper and get a better idea of the impact of P.C. in current Cuban intellectualism.

**Name:** Sean Fletcher

**Year:** S2010

**Tutor:** Marlen Domínguez & Ana María Gonzalez

**Title:** Giving Signals of Culture

**Topic:** Cuban Deaf community and their language

**Medium:** Essay

My time in Cuba was split between studying Spanish and Cuban linguistics with two professors from the University of Havana and being a field ethnographer in the Cuban deaf community. My final project was a sociolinguistics paper that looks at aspects of the Cuban deaf community and their language. While in Cuba I had one meeting per week with my tutors where we looked at linguistic concepts pertinent to Cuban Spanish, and I also simultaneously studied both Spanish and the Lengua de Señas Cubana (Cuban Sign Language, LSC) so I would be able to communicate with the deaf community.

**Name:** Aymee Malena

**Year:** S2010

**Tutor:** Margarita Mateo

**Title:** "¿Y qué de los que se quedan?/What Happened to the Ones Who Stayed?"

**Medium:** Essay

Cuban emigration to the United States has been mostly studied by sociologists and historians from a social, economic, and political perspective. However, the personal life stories of people who stayed behind have not always been thoroughly documented. My paper attempts to unravel the impact of emigration from the perception of those who have stayed behind through the literary and film narratives of artists who live and work in Cuba.

**Name:** Meghan Maloney

**Year:** S2010

**Tutor:** Esther Pérez

**Title:** "Conceptualization of the Cuban Literacy Campaign. A Different Approach to Popular Education"

**Medium:** Essay

My paper draws on the subject of the 1961 Literacy Campaign in Cuba, while at the same time I reminisce about my own views on Popular Education. The work is structured through seven topics: "structure of the Campaign," "Mobilization of the alfabetizadores," "the cartilla and the manual," the myth of the simple transition from guns to pencils," the army of 'alfabetizadores,' "The follow-up," and "The final public demonstration." Each one of these subtopic are substantiated by readings and viewing of films, interviews to 'alfabetizadores' and 'alfabetizados,' as well as by those who conceived and organized the campaign.

**Name:** Alicia Eddy-Quintana

**Year:** S2009

**Tutor:** Cirenaica Moreira

**Title:** N/A

**Medium:** photography

In many respects the history of Latin America has contributed to the rise and presence of the male-dominated social code of Machismo. My story begins with man's fear of losing power when their Other gains her own. This series of images began in Havana, Cuba in the spring of 2009 and will continue for years to come. It is a study, both personal and public, where identity and power are the focal points. I have attempted to create a figure of a man: a man who makes it easier for me to hate than love. This masculine figure has no reverence for me and therefore I often have contempt for him. Yet while my frustration with this man overpowers my ability to love him, I still have faith in him. Thus the images try to be respectful. They present the respect I have for him and the respect I wish was reciprocated. The images are close, detailed, and deep to

show the intimacy I feel towards him while still displaying the detachment I believe exists. The camera serves as this separation. The lens of the camera allows me to get as close as possible while still representing a metaphorical severance. Thus, I am left with this contradiction. The photos are the beginning of my attempt to break this contradiction and to mend our fractured relationship.

**Name:** Hira Nabi

**Year:** S2009

**Tutor:** Rebecca Chávez

**Title:** N/A

**Medium:** Film

The film is set in El Vedado, in La Ciudad de La Habana in the spring of 2009. Fifty years after the Revolution, it looks at the life of a family living at a time of political change and controversy. Set against the backdrop of the housing crisis in La Habana, and strictly regulated emigration laws, the film tries to make sense of the poetics of space presented in this decadent and decaying city of desires.

Filmed entirely in La Habana, the movie follows Maylin, a young woman of 25, as she makes her way through life, completing her degree at La Universidad de La Habana, trying to break free of the social conventions and political restrictions that limit her will to create a new way of life.

**Name:** Sofya Peysakhovich

**Year:** S2009

**Tutor:** Marta Núñez

**Title:** Finding 'Family' in the Cuban Context: Paradoxes and To "Resolver"

**Medium:** Essay

The family unit is typically entwined prominently in one's lived experience—it is felt every day, if only through what seem to be mundane interactions and habits. I came to Cuba to study characteristics of the Cuban family. As it turned out, through my time in Cuba, I ended up not only learning about gender relations in the family unit, the celebration of the quinceañera, and the topic of migration within the family, but also interrogating my own conceptions of what 'family' means to me. I concluded with, through my study of the three themes, seeing 'family' as not just an idle space in which people carry out their individual stories, but as a dynamic unit in and of itself, creating out of tensions and paradoxes new meanings.

**Name:** Christopher Simrell

**Year:** S2009

**Tutor:** Alfredo Prieto Gonzalez

**Title:** Who Gave You Those Clothes? Words, Weapons and Yumas

**Medium:** Essay

The concept of "identity" is complex and dependent on the viewpoint of those who are asked to articulate it. This project is based on neighborhood identity. It is rooted in the premise that perhaps the best way to understand contemporary Cuba is to break the island down, and then break this city of Havana down, and ask those who live and work in particular barrios to articulate their concept of personal and communal identity; to ask them to articulate the processes of construction and negotiation of identity within the context of the barrios in which they live, and within 21st century revolutionary Cuba in general. I have focused on two specific neighborhoods (barrios), which, while both are within La Ciudad de Habana, are geographically separated and historically independent: Cayo Hueso, in Centro Habana, and Pogolotti, located to the west of the city center in municipality of Marianao.

The project has taken form as one piece of writing built on historical research, personal experience, and interviews with various members of the communities discussed. The piece is broken into chapters that while are all bound by the themes of identity negotiation and community identity in the context of the revolution today, deal also with the topics of tourism, religion, as well as historical and contemporary perceptions of Cuba in the United States and the use of metaphor. The piece is written in a somewhat creative-writing style and beyond discussions of Cuba attempts to engage with and discuss the reality of writing about Cuba as a U.S. citizen and my position as a writer in that context.

**Name:** Claire Weissbluth

**Year:** S2009

**Tutor:** Nelson Rodríguez

**Title:** Corazón de la Ciénega

**Medium:** Documentary film

My documentary film, which is a collaboration with another young filmmaker named Luis Enrique Benitez, is a portrait of the lives of the people in La Cienaga de Zapata. The film captures their daily activities and documents the ways in which they live in a very poor, isolated, rural environment. Most of the people in the little town of Pálpite, where we stayed during the making of the film, make their living either by making charcoal or fishing for catfish.

There are four interviewees in the film: Dunia, a young mother struggling with the difficulty of being deaf and raising her son; an old carbonero who describes the changes he has experienced in his life making charcoal before and after the Revolution; "El Abuelo," who describes the process of raising animals and producing fruit with a cooperative, and Mar'a, a young woman with heart problems.

Making this film was a great chance for me to get to know the countryside here in Cuba; I feel fortunate to have built a relationship with various families there. They did everything they could to welcome us into their community, and truly opened their homes and their hearts to us. For this reason the film is called "The Heart of La Cienaga."

**Name:** Daniel Berg

**Year:** S2008

**Tutor:** Aldo López-Gavilán

**Title:** The Cuban Casa de Cultura: Ni se compra ni se vende

**Medium:** Essay

During my time in Cuba, I investigated the Casa de Cultura, a state-run institution that organizes activities for the production and appreciation of art. In my concluding analysis I tried to do three things: 1) provide a map of the structure and principles of the Casa (i.e. the activities they put on, the coordinators and their responsibilities, the mission statement, and levels of autonomy in the individual Casas); 2) look at how the Casa is located-ideologically as well as in practice-in the network of other commercial and state-run spaces that pertain to art and culture; and 3) explain how the Casa acts as a government institution, implementing the "cultural project" of the state. Implied in the last objective is the question: What is the agenda of the state in this volatile post-Fidel era?

It begins to become clear that the already-existing gray areas of Socialism have begun to expand. The market and the state coexist like never before. And this is the new environment in which art and culture and their respective institutions are monitored and manipulated. Discussed in the paper are the ways in which the state-run aspects of the Casa cause problematic elements (i.e. restrictions on content). But the general conclusion is that the Casa provides a refreshing display of the benefits of socialism in a society where these values are rapidly being replaced with those of the dominant world. With its efforts to safeguard tradition, bring together the community, educate the youth, and provide resources to amateur artists, the Casa de Cultura is a model for any aspiring non-profit art institution.

**Name:** Emma J. Brewster

**Year:** S2008

**Tutor:** Reynaldo González

**Title:** Taste of a Nation: National Identity Through Food-Based Memory

**Medium:** Essay

Cuando vine a Cuba, quer'a estudiar como se relaciona la comida y la identidad. Lo que he encontrado es una conexión y un proyecto demasiado grande para acometer en toda su complejidad en un semestre. Por eso, mi proyecto aqu' es el principio de un trabajo más grande. Aqu' hay unas viñetas que hablan sobre un plato de comida especifica. Con esta prueba se puede empezar a entender como los cubanos usan la comida para explicar su comprensión del mundo, y como la comida refleja las relaciones entre Cuba y el resto del mundo. Unas comidas, como el ajjaco, representan no sola una tradición, sino que sirven como metáfora para la mezcla de ra'ces de que ha desarrollado 'una cubanidad,' y otras, como el queso, iluminan la situación compleja de la econom'a diaria en el pa's. Juntos mis viñetas tratan de temas de identidad, salud, globalización y cambio. Las impresiones de Cuba que está presentado aqu' viene de mis conversaciones, entrevistas y observaciones y también la literatura como revistas,

libros de cocina y otros art'culos. Ojala que presente un dibujo que refleja la situación verdadera aqu' con respeto a las palabras y visiones de mis informantes, maestros, y amigos.