

University of Texas at El Paso

Syllabus Spring 2022

Special Topics in Dance – Afro-Cuban dance - CHIC-4350, (AFST-3390), (DANC-4340)

Professor: Neri Torres

Email: fntorres@utep.edu

Class meets T-TH, 1:30 pm - 2:50 pm, Fox Fine Arts A-452

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00pm – 2:00pm - By appointment –Virtually via Blackboard Collaborate

“Your belly knows more than your head and as much as your thighs. That is the strong black grace of your naked body. Yours is a sign of the jungle, with your red necklaces, your curved gold bracelets, and that dark alligator swimming in the Zambezi of your eyes”- Nicolás Guillén

Course Description:

This course explores the expressions of Cuban dance most related to black identity. Students will examine the history, spirituality, and aesthetics of selected dance forms derived from various African ethnic groups (Bantu, Yoruba, Arara and others) and their descendants. In addition, students will become familiar with different movement patterns, traditional chanting and complex rhythms that have crossed over time and nationalities to contribute to popular culture. Features live drummers.

The goals of this course are to:

- 1- Facilitate the appreciation of traditional Cuban dances of African origin and its connection to ritual practices.
- 2- Provide students with the skills to map the geographical location and dislocation of diverse cultures of the different African groups displaced during slavery and their impact in shaping Diaspora culture and systems of beliefs that influence today's pop culture.
- 3- Facilitate students in gaining an insight into the process of transculturation, creolization and cultural retention and their impact on dance in the Western hemisphere and the world.

- 4- Equip students with Caribbean movement literacy and competencies.

Objectives

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the process of creolization and transculturation in relationship to the cultural diversity of colonial Cuba and their impact in shaping a national identity,
2. Analyze the intersections of gendered and Afro-Atlantic spirituality.
3. Examine the contribution of religious expressions in developing a distinctive cultural identity for Afro-descendants in the Cuban Diaspora.
4. Develop an understanding and embodiment of the dance forms and rhythmic patterns surveyed.

Required Readings

Fernández Olmos. Margarite and Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth, Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería, New York University Press, 2005.

Recommended: Sublette, Ned Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo

Note: Other readings and articles will be provided during the semester. You will find them under a folder named Articles on Blackboard.

Course expectations

- Students are expected to log in on Blackboard once a week to follow up on readings and additional material used for the class
- Students should expect to spend 1.5 to 2 hours working on readings and assignments each week.
- Reading summaries (a paragraph long synthesizing the main idea of each article) should be turn in on time to get appropriate credit.
- Students are expected to be on time for the movement sessions; a lateness greater than 10 minutes over the allotted days of absence lowers the final letter grade by one letter.
- Written work must be submitted by its due date to be accepted. Late work will only be accepted in extreme cases and with a doctor's note. If you are having questions or concerns with how to do an assignment, email me as soon as the issue arises.
- *Readings must be done **before** each class under which they are assigned.*

Academic Dishonesty: Any form of academic dishonesty: cheating, plagiarizing, or taking a test for another student is considered a very serious matter at UTEP. Our library webpage provides good information on what UTEP considers Academic Dishonesty and what steps the university takes in such cases. Please review this information at: <http://libraryweb.utep.edu/research/plagiarism.php>

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

If a student is quarantining or is not present F2F *because of COVID or COVID symptoms*, as long as the student contacts the instructor and attends class remotely (via Zoom), that does not count as an absence provided that the student submits a reflection of the lecture (1 page, single-space, Times New Roman).

In case of extended injury or illness, the student must contact the instructor to discuss possible accommodations, course continuation or to consider dropping the class.

Four courses that meet twice a week (F2F and/or synchronously), the maximum amount of absences allowed without failing the course is 4. The 5th and 6th absences will result in a drop of ½ letter each in the student's overall grade. At the 5th absence, regardless of the student's current course standing or grade, the student automatically fails the course. Three tardies (over 10 minutes late) count as one absence.

In the event of international bridge closures, the student needs to contact the instructor as exceptions may be made and make-up course work assigned.

In the event of highly unusual or extenuating circumstances, a student may petition the course instructor and department chair for permission to continue in a course.

MAKE-UP WORK

Make-up work will be given only in the case of a documented emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to me—in advance if at all possible—and explain with proper documentation why you missed a given course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

All phones must be turned off and stored with the exception of personal emergencies or any similar imperative (or that is required in class)

Technical Support

If you do not know how to use Blackboard – go to Tech Support Room 300 at Library immediately. Do not wait until you are having problems. You can contact Help Desk via email, helpdesk@utep.edu, by phone 747-5257. Hours are M-F 7a-8p, Sat 9a-10p and Sun 12-4p.

Grading Policy

Course Work **40%**

Weekly assignments:

- Reading/video responses and discussions (4 to 8 points each). They will be evaluated for their content (individually or in group). Summarize weekly readings, unravelling their meaning is oriented to familiarize you in depth with terminology, vocabulary and concepts that will broaden your vision about Afro-Cuban culture in particular and Caribbean culture in general. *You must generate one question per reading and also respond to a classmate's question. All reading summaries are due to be uploaded on Blackboard on Sunday at midnight; you must read the corresponding article fully **prior to coming to class.***

Practical **30 % (15 points each**

- One Midterm and one Final exam). Based on variations on a specific style learned in class.

Written **20% (10 points each)**

- 2 Quizzes –on class material and readings. Take home, open book.

Final Project **10%**

- **(Due Monday, May 2nd)** Presentation: Choose a carnival or a Caribbean dance form across nations – discuss historical formation, evolution, dance form, commodification, gender or class issues. (5 minutes presentation and 3-page, 12 Times New Roman, double space, paper -to turn in at the end of presentation). Number of research sources required for this work: 3 (more are also welcome) Demonstrate and teach 24 counts to classmates (Rubric will be provided during the semester). Due Monday,

Self-Reflection paper

10%

- You will respond to questions related to questions such as: How did your appreciation of Caribbean dance change by this course? What new skills/knowledge did you acquire? How is your culture reflected in the way you move or the way others move? Why do you think this factor is important or not? (2 pages, Times New Roman 12 pts.) (**Due Wednesday, April 27th**).

Total: 140 points

Note: Syllabus may be subject to change according to the arrangement and needs of the class.

GRADING SCALE

A = 90 +
B = 80 – 89
C = 70 – 79
D = 60 – 69
F = < 59

In this course, we will explore the diverse spiritual landscape of the Caribbean with a focus on Cuba, looking at common religious practices and sacred traditions found across the Caribbean. Of particular concern will be mapping the contours of ritual adaptation, accommodation and change. We will thus pay attention to the specific patterns of innovation as sacred practices are transplanted from Africa and transformed in its Afro-Atlantic context. To this end, the aesthetic, material and performative dimensions of ritual practices will be foregrounded as we examine how sacred traditions have helped shape the dynamic qualities of Cuban dance, culture and social life. In addition to exploring the range of sacred dances/spiritual expressions and ritual practices of the Caribbean, we will also situate the region's religiosity as a form of intangible heritage.

Course Timeline

Week 1, 1/18: Discuss syllabus.

Readings:

Fernandez Olmos, Paravisini-Gebert, Creole Religions of the Caribbean...

Introduction pp 1 – 12.

- cosmological orientation
- aesthetic and performative dimensions within rites/ceremonies
 - Oricha dances: **Eleggua** - Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 38 – 41.

Week 2, 1/25:

Readings:

Fernandez Olmos, Paravisini-Gebert, *The Oricha Tradition in Cuba: Santeria or Regla de Ocha* pp 24-38.

- Oricha dances: **Chango** - Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 42 – 43.

Week 3, 2/1

Readings:

Fernandez Olmos, Paravisini-Gebert. *Historical Background* pp 13-23

- Oricha dances: **Ochun** - Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 45 – 46

Week 4, 2/8 Gendering the Sacred

Readings:

Eni Achu Iya, The concept of gender in our religion

Vidal, Ortiz, Sexuality Discussions in Santeria

- Oricha dance: Ogun - Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 41 – 41.

Week 5, 2/15 *The Drums*

Readings:

○ Nodal, Roberto, The Social Evolution of the Afro-Cuban Drum.

- Oricha Dance: Yemaya. Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 43 – 44.

Week 7, 2/22

- Oricha Dance: Oya. Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 46 – 47.

Week 8, 3/1

- Oricha Dance: Ochosi. Survey of profile of main Orishas (read before coming to dance class) pp 49 – 50.

Week 9, 3/8 **Midterm**

Quiz (on Blackboard, Tuesday, March 8th) and Practical Exam (on Thursday, March 10th)

Week 10, 3/15

SRING BREAK

Week 11, 3/22

Arará – influence on popular dance Mambo

Readings:

Argüelles Mederos, Aníbal, *Cuba: La Regla Arará*

Week 12, 3/29

Gaga – Haitian presence in Cuba

Readings:

Hume, Yanique, From Bush to Stage: The Shifting Performing Geography of Haitian Rara and Cuban Gagá.

Week 13, 4/5 Congo cycle (Yuka, Palo and Makuta)
Video screening

Week 14, 4/12 Rumba and Columbia

Readings:

- Daniel, Yvonne, Rumba; Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba, pp 63 –75.

Week 15, 4/19 Carnival (Conga and comparsa)
The Carnavalesque and Festive Arts

Readings:

- Knauer, Lisa Maya, Consuming Slavery, Performing Cuba: Ethnography, Carnival and Black Public Culture.

Week 16, 4/26 Semester Review and Final Presentation (**Thursday, April 28th**)

Week 17, 5/3 Quiz (**on Blackboard, Tuesday May 3rd**) and Final Practical Exam (**Thursday, May 5th**)

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Important Dates:

Quiz #1 – Tuesday, March 8th

Quiz #2 – Thursday, May 5th

Practical #1 – Thursday, March 8th

Practical #2 – Thursday, May 5th

Final Project Presentation – Thursday, April 28th

Self-Reflection Paper – Wednesday, April 27th.

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Dance performance:

You are invited to attend the Faculty Dance Concert “Motion Bound,” February 10th through the 13th @ The Wise Family Theater.

For dates and ticket prices please refer to our website:

<https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/theatre-dance/>

Note: Students can receive extra credit for attendance to the concert.