

University of Florida
Department of Political Science
Fall 2025
Matherly 0118
MWF 9:35-10:25AM

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Grinter Hall 331

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-10:30, and by appointment

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Politics of the Caribbean (LAS 4935/POS 4931)

Course Description

This course will consider the Caribbean as a subject of political study. It will consider the political forces that have impacted the Caribbean since colonization, after independence, and those who are still in a territorial, dependency, or colonial status. Some of the topics that will be discussed in the class will be colonialism, decolonization, imperialism, geopolitics, nationalism, populism, authoritarianism, clientelism, democratization, drug trafficking, neoliberalism, and migration. Finally, the course will consider if we can effectively approach the Caribbean as a single object of study, or whether we should understand it as a more fluid political region.

Course Objectives

Students will debate the common themes of Caribbean politics; analyze how the field of political science has contributed to the understanding of the Caribbean. Also, students will analyze the contributions from other fields that have tried to address power dynamics in the Caribbean.

About the Syllabus

Based on the composition of the class, our progress discussing these issues, elements beyond our control, and student needs, this syllabus is flexible and may change. Throughout the semester, you will be notified of any changes that might emerge. During the first day of class the professor will read and explain this syllabus at length. It is the student's responsibility to understand the requirements for this class and asking all the appropriate questions about this document to the professor. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalogue.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance>.

Readings

The assigned texts are required and available at the UF Bookstore and through the UF library database. It will be our source of discussion and used extensively. In addition, during the course the professor will offer required readings that will be available on our Canvas page identified by a C in the syllabus. This syllabus is a living document, and in case of changes in the readings students will be properly notified.

Class Texts

Stephan Palmié and Francisco Scarano. 2011. *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ferdinand, Malcolm. 2022. *Decolonial Ecology*. Cambridge: Polity

Braziel, Jane Evans. 2023. *Street Art and Activism in the Greater Caribbean*. New York: Routledge.

Writing Requirements and Grade

The grade will be based on reaction papers (10 points), first short paper (20 points), a mid-term examination (20 points), second short paper (20 points), a second examination (20 points), attendance (5 points), and participation (5 points).

Reaction Papers (10 points)

Class members will be asked to submit via Canvas 490-500 words, single spaced- reaction paper every Monday and Friday before class (unless told otherwise by the professor). The reaction paper should not be a summary of the readings, but instead it should: *ask probing questions, propose what might come next, compare or contrast this reading or concepts to another paper or concepts we have discussed in class, highlight important implications of the work for understanding Caribbean Politics*. The rubric and specific details will be made available on Canvas. The grade scale for this assignment is 0 points for papers that were not submitted, 1 point for a satisfactory submission and 2 points for a remarkable submission. The professor will randomly grade six weeks, and out of those six reactions papers the five papers with the best grades will be used to calculate your grade. Papers that are not submitted through Canvas will be penalized. Please familiarize yourself with Canvas.

Two Four Page Papers (20 + 20= 40 points)

Students will read one of the books (see above) and address the question offered by the professor. The assignment will rely only on the selected book as a source.

Midterm Exam (20 points)

The mid-term will be held during class hours. Blue books will be required, and the student is expected to complete the exam during the exam period.

Second Exam (20 points)

The second exam will be due at the end of the semester. The format of the exam will be announced in a timely fashion during the semester.

Participation (5 points)

Students are expected to attend and be active components of the class and discussion. It is expected that by the end of the semester all students have participated by offering quality contributions. The rubric for participation will be posted on our Canvas page. If you do not feel comfortable by participating in class, feel free to send me an email with your thoughts to casuarez@ufl.edu.

Attendance (5 points)

The professor will take attendance either by roll book, canvas, or index card. Students are therefore allowed three absences from days of class without penalty. Any absence after the

third one will be penalized by taking three points per missed class. A student who leaves the class before it is over will not be considered as present in terms of attendance. Written evidence will be required in order to justify absences. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of their number of absences during the semester. If a student has any questions about their attendance on a particular day, this issue should be brought up in writing no later than the following class.

Grade scale

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	59 and below

The Canvas grade book will be updated as class assignments are graded. Please note that the grade book does not include the grades for Participation and Attendance.

Concerns with a Grade

In the case that a student disagrees with a grade that concern should be presented in writing. This statement should be handed in writing the next class day after receiving your grade. The merits of the concern will be evaluated taking into consideration how deeply the student is thinking about the subject at hand, and whether the student can provide textual evidence to justify their claim. After careful evaluation, I will notify the student about my decision and adjust the grade accordingly if applicable.

On Timeliness

Students are expected to turn in their assigned work on time through Canvas, not email. If students are not able to turn in their work on time through Canvas, they will have offer written evidence in order to justify the tardiness. If said evidence is not produced one letter grade will be deducted per day after due date.

Academic Honesty

An important component in academic work is recognizing one's work as well as others. During this course, Chat GPT will not be permitted for any work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not allowed. **Any violations of the academic honesty policy will be vigorously pursued. All students are expected to adhere scrupulously to the University policy concerning academic honesty.** To respect this principle students are expected to abide by the Academic Honesty Policy. A copy of the Academic Honesty Policy can be found in the following link, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the policy. Following these guidelines will assure that original academic work will be recognized and celebrated.

In Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Incompletes

Students who have not completed the required class work will only be evaluated by the work that was turned in by the day it was due. Incompletes will only be awarded under exceptional circumstances. Incompletes will be given when students comply with the following conditions, (1) notifying the professor two weeks prior to the last day of class, (2) providing written evidence for the medical condition, or situation that has prompted the student to request an incomplete. The student and professor should agree upon a proper arrangement on how the missing work will be submitted. The student will have the following semester as the time period to complete the missing work; failure to do so will result in an E.

Accessibility

Testing accommodations and other needs will be addressed for students with proper documentation. Please make sure to inform me of these needs in writing during the first week of class. Retroactive accommodations will not be considered. In case of questions about Disability Resource Center feel free to contact them at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Classroom interaction

Respect is required at all times. Textual evidence is crucial when engaging in intelligent academic debates. Please make use of this tool when elaborating your arguments in the classroom. Refrain from comments that are not related to class discussion. Video or audio

recording of the class is not allowed (unless following UF's in class recording policy). Finally, the use of cell phones is prohibited. The topics we discuss in this course may be controversial and may touch upon deeply held positions or beliefs held by you or your classmates. While I want to encourage open discussion, I also encourage you to consider how your interventions affect others. How we say something is often even more important than what we say; if you are struggling with how to articulate your questions or reactions to the readings please inform the professor.

Course evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

I. Introduction

(8/22) Review course syllabus.

II. Settlement and Early Colonization

(8/25) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, *Introduction, Chapters 1, 2*.

Questions for discussion: What type of social structures did the European forces encountered in the Caribbean? What type of influence did geography and ecology played in the colonization of the Caribbean?

(8/27) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapter 6.

Questions for discussion: Why the Caribbean transitioned from an economy driven by settlers and natives to one driven by slaves? Were there any significant differences in terms of how each metropolitan country asserted its power?

III. On Democracy, Political Parties, Clientelism and Oligarchy

(8/29) Reading: Sutton, *Caribbean Politics*. C

Questions for discussion: Are there any common thread that defines what constitutes the Caribbean? How does the author characterize Caribbean politics?

First Paper Prompt will be distributed (9/3)

(9/3) Reading: Johnson-Myers and Campbell, *The Cost of Politics*. C

Questions for discussion: How have Caribbean democracies dealt with women's representation in politics? What type of barriers have women candidates have faced?

(9/5) Reading: Sutton, *Westminster Challenged, Westminster Confirmed*. C

Questions for discussion: Why there has been so much activity in terms of constitution reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean? Can it be argued that any conclusive results have emerged out of the activity in the Commonwealth Caribbean?

(9/8) Reading: Quinn, *Conventional Politics or Revolution*

Questions for discussion: How well did the NJM and NJAC work in addressing the flaws of Westminster model? Was revolution or conventional politics more successful in implementing progressive policies?

(9/10) Reading: Veenendaal and Corbett, *Clientelism in small states: how smallness influences patron–client networks in the Caribbean and the Pacific*. C

Questions for discussion: What is clientelism? Is clientelism any different in the Caribbean?

(9/12) Reading: Roitman and Veenendaal, *'We Take Care of Our Own': The Origins of Oligarchic Politics in St. Maarten*. C

Questions for discussion: Why do the authors make reference to oligarchies? Why have oligarchies prospered in the Caribbean?

IV. Caribbean Integration

(9/15) Reading: Pantojas García, *Economic Integration and Caribbean Identity*. C

Questions for discussion: How can regional integration be achieved in the Caribbean? What are the political forces that threaten said integration?

(9/17) Reading: Bryon, *Developmental Regionalism in Crisis Rethinking?* C

Questions for discussion: Why has CARICOM been slow about integration? How can CARICOM integrate with Latin America in an effective way?

First Paper Due (9/17)

V. Sovereign Countries

A. Commonwealth Caribbean

(9/19) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapters 20, 23, 35.

Questions for discussion: Is there a common political history to what is the Commonwealth Caribbean? What are the distinctive traits of these islands?

(9/22) Reading: Lodge, *Whitehall in the Caribbean*. C

Question for discussion: How can colonialism impact the institutions and doctrines of independent nations? Did CARICOM nations have a unique experience when it comes to institutional arrangements during the colonial period?

(9/24) Reading: Seguino, *Micro-Macro Linkages between Gender, Development and Growth*. C

Questions for discussion: How do gender differences impact the economic development of CARICOM countries? What type of actions can states take in order to remediate this inequality?

(9/26) Reading: Girvan, *Assessing Westminster in the Caribbean*. C

Questions for discussion: How crucial was the Westminster model for the West Indies? What type of support did the Westminster had?

B. Haiti and the Dominican Republic

(9/29) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapters 18, 37.

Questions for discussion: How have these two countries shared La Hispaniola? What are some of the major challenges today?

(10/1) Reading: Stoyan, et al. *Trust in government institutions*. C

Questions for discussion: Are there any differences to how each country goes about trusting their institutions? What are the possible explanations?

C. Cuba

(10/3) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapters 22, 34.

Questions for discussion: Could it be argued that Cuba has had a democratic regime at any point of the 20th century? What are some of the challenges that the current regime and the Cuban people face today?

(10/6) Reading: Hansing and Hoffman, *When Racial Inequalities Return*. C

Questions for discussion: How was the Revolution able to bring more racial equality to Cuba? Why is Cuba recently seen a turn towards greater racial inequality?

Midterm (10/8)

VI. Colonies, territories, and others

Colonialism and Neo Colonialism

(10/10) Reading: Girvan, *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism in the Caribbean: An Overview*.

C

Questions for discussion: How does Girvan distinguish Colonialism from Neo-colonialism? Would it be accurate to say that colonialism is over in the Caribbean?

A. Puerto Rico

(10/13) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapters 29, 36.

Questions for discussion: Is Puerto Rico's reality any different than the rest of the islands of the Caribbean? How can we best characterize the relation between Puerto Rico and the United States?

(10/15) Reading: Lecours and Vézina, *Politics of Nationalism and Status in Puerto Rico*. C

Questions for discussion: What is the role that the use of that nationalism has played in Puerto Rico? What is the status question all about?

B. Dutch Caribbean

(10/20) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapter 14.

Questions for Discussion: What was the political structure of the colonial Dutch Caribbean?

(10/22) Reading: Wathey, *The Dismantlement of the Netherlands Antilles*. C

Questions for Discussion: What led to the end of the Netherlands Antilles? What is the current political composition of those islands?

Second Paper Prompt will be distributed (10/24)

(10/24) Reading Veenendaal, *The Dutch Caribbean Municipalities in Comparative Perspective*. C

Questions for Discussion: What does it mean that Caribbean islands have now become Dutch municipalities? Were the residents of those islands in favor of that move?

C. French Caribbean

(10/27) Reading: Palmié and Scarano, Chapter 23.

Questions for Discussion: How was the transition for the peasantry from slavery to emancipation?

(10/29) Reading: Borie and Fraser, *The politics of expertise in building back better*. C

Questions for discussion: What has been the impact of climate change on the islands? What type of responses have been put in place in the French Caribbean?

(10/31) Reading: Théodose, *Martinique is ours, not theirs!* C

Questions for discussion: How much of the social movement that emerged an unpredictable experience? How different was the Martinique experience from that in Guadeloupe?

D. US Territories

(11/3) Reading: Roopnarine, *St. Croix's Secession Movement in the USVI*. C

Questions for discussion: What have been the arguments for the secession of St. Croix from the USVI? Are there procedural policies in place in order to facilitate secession?

F. UK Overseas Territories

(11/5) Reading: Yusuf and Chowdhury, *The Persistence of Colonial Constitutionalism in British Overseas Territories*. C

Questions for discussion: What do the authors call Colonial Constitutionalism? What are the attitudes of BOT residents about the present constitutional relationship?

VII. Current Challenges

A. Neoliberal Challenges

(11/7) Reading: Clegg et al. *The global financial crisis and its aftermath*. C

Questions for discussion: How has the financial crisis has impacted the dynamic between these non-sovereign islands and the metropolitan power? Does being under the influence of different metropolitan powers make any difference?

B. Debt

(11/10) Reading: Fridell, *Debt Politics and the Free Trade 'Package'*. C

Questions for discussion: How have free trade agreements has placed a number of islands in debt? How can the Caribbean escape economic agreements that put them at risk?

C. Climate Change

(11/12) Reading: Taylor et.al. *Climate Change and the Caribbean*. C

Questions for discussion: Has climate information been incorporated into the developmental plans and policies of the region? What are the implications of climate change for the Caribbean?

Second Paper Due (11/12)

(11/14) Reading: Rhiney and Baptist, *Adapting to Climate Change in the Caribbean*. C
Questions for discussion: What does the current literature on climate change on the Caribbean has to say? What type of policy implications have come out of current scientific knowledge?

(11/17) Reading: Perry, *Epistemic Silences, Subversive Politics*. C
Questions for discussion: How have post disaster responses assisted in the consolidation of neoliberal policies? What type of post disaster response does the author advances?

D. Self Determination

(11/19) Reading: Lecours, *Islands of Self-Determination*. C
Questions for discussion: Why is secessionism is an alternative of not significant support in the Caribbean? How can institutions influence Self Determination politics?

E. International Relations

(11/21) Reading: Tudoroiu, *Taiwan in the Caribbean*. C
Questions for discussion: What type of conflict has developed in the Caribbean over the recognition of Taiwan? How has China's expansion in the region impacted Caribbean-Taiwanese relations?

(12/1) Reading: Albright, *The Political and Pragmatic Determinants of Chinese Development Finance in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008–2019*. C
Questions for discussion: What type of Caribbean based theories are part of the author's theoretical framework? How do they understand China's growing presence in the Caribbean?

Second Exam TBA