LGBTQ Movements and Advocacy in Dominican Republic
(2 credits), Winter/Spring Semester 2011

Instructors: Monroe France and Celiany Rivera-Velázquez

This service-learning course will explore gender and sexuality-based social justice movements, non-governmental organizations and queer cultures in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, specifically in island of Dominican Republic. We seek to contextualize the Dominican Republic as a geopolitical ideological site with shared historical, cultural and linguistic manifestations with other Islands that compose the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, namely Cuba and Puerto Rico. We will specifically explore culturally-specific mechanisms through which different feminist and LGBTQ Dominican groups and organizations have generated consciousness around the realities of people who experience discrimination because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Students who enroll for the course are expected to engage in experiential learning. The course will include four class meetings at New York University and a two-week service trip to the cities of Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata and Santiago in Dominican Republic. We will take an intersectional approach to understand how issues of class, religion and race affect the lives of people that live outside gender and sexualities binaries. This class focuses on metropolitan spaces because these hold such rich histories of struggle with Western ideals of development and because of the different marginalized cultures and subjectivities that inhabit “the city” as landscape. Because this class has a special interest in interrogating if sexuality is fundamentally different when experienced in an urban context, it is especially important for students to know that Dominican Republic shares island space with the sovereign nation of Haiti. Therefore, during our trip we will pay special attention to how the face and public service of the major Dominican cities may have transformed a year after the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010. And how does this affect both, Dominican and Haitian queer men and women.

In preparation for the trip and throughout the extension of the visit, students will get the opportunity to meet with various professors, non-for-profit organizational leaders, clinicians, queer activists and performers to gain a better sense of the work done around various social issues. The main goal is to understand the complexities around the fact that many Caribbean countries still criminalize same-sex acts. The course seeks to generate more in-depth understandings of the ways in which ways the criminalization of LGBTQ bodies in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean inform the experience of LGBTQ people living in these areas—at the individual, the interpersonal and the ideological level?

The materials covered will scope from theoretical frameworks to hands-on expertise of how gender and sexuality advocacy has been and continues to be conducted in the Caribbean and Latin America. For two out of the four classes in NYU, we will have panel discussions. One will be about legal and policy issues, the other will be about queer cultures, activism and performance in contemporary Santo Domingo. Each class meeting will involve a combination of discussion of readings and exercises aimed at developing a knowledge base of social movements, a greater sense of civic responsibility and skills on being effective public servants. The faculty will facilitate the in-class discussions, while two teaching assistants (Alternative Break site leaders) will facilitate the out of class learning experiences and trainings. One of these teaching Assistant will be a Graduate Student from the Silver School of Social Work.
Assignments/Grading:

In addition to active participation in the discussion seminars, field visits, and service project, students will participate in daily reflection activities, maintain a reflection journal, and write a 6-8 page final paper.

Service participation: Not graded but mandatory component to complete course; approximately 40 hrs of service

Class Participation/Attendance: 30%
Daily Journal: 15%
Two-page Reading Response Paper: 15%
Six to eight page Final Paper: 40%

Class Participation (30%): Class participation is an important element of our course and can take several forms: making informed comments, asking or responding to a question posed by us or your classmates, and generally showing that you have thought about a topic or a case. Frequently, we will break up into groups to discuss the intricacies of a specific issue. Class participation also includes active participation in the reflection activities and in any agency visits while abroad.

Written Assignments:

• Reading response paper to assigned readings for the course (15%, 2 pages)

Everyone will write one response paper (2 pages double spaced) based on an overall response of readings prior to trip departure. This paper should be a critical analysis that should engage all the readings that we’ve done in preparation of classes and guest lecturers (even if we directly didn’t discuss them in class). Due date: January 3rd at Pre-departure meeting.

• Journals (15%, approximately 15-20 entries)

You are asked to keep a reflective journal of your class discussions and daily service work while in the community. This will include your personal reflections and reactions. You will receive instructions and a suggested format of the journal. Due date: Monday, January 24th by 5 PM. (Please submit to the front desk staff at the NYU LGBTQ Student Center, 602 Kimmel Center.)

• Final Paper (40%, 6-8 pages)

In this final paper you will examine one social issue in the Dominican Republic and the movement built around it. This paper should take a comparative approach, and should cover an issue discussed in class or while on the site visits. Please include aspects of your service experience in the paper. Due date: Friday, March 11th by 5 PM. (Please submit to the front desk staff at the NYU LGBTQ Student Center, 602 Kimmel Center.)
Class Sessions Prior to the trip

December 4
Introduction to LGBTQ Terminology and Dominican Cultures

December 11
Development of LGBTQI Movement (Jacqueline Jiménez-Polanco, guest lecturer)
Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Dominican Art (Maya Horn, guest lecturer)

December 16
LGBTQ Dominicans in New York City (Yosely Castillo, guest lecturer)

Classes during Alternative Break Trip in DR (subject to change)

Wednesday, January 5
TBD, Guest Lecturer, Dominican History and Culture

Friday, January 7
Contemporary LGBT Movement Experiences (Leonardo Sanchez and Lorena Espinosa, guest lecturer)

Monday, January 10
How US policies and practices impact the Dominican Republic (Centro Franklin, guest lecturer)
Work/Life Experiences as Trans Individuals in DR (Cristian DuMont, TRANSSA, guest lecturer)

Thursday, January 13
Anthropologist and INTEC Professor: Alternative Social Movements in DR (Fatima Portorreal, guest lecturer)

Classes after trip:

TBD (1-2 classes)
Required Course Readings


Supplementary Reading (available on Blackboard)


**Suggested Readings / Film**


