LGBTQ Movements and Advocacy in the Dominican Republic (2 credits)
Winter/Spring Semester 2012

New York University: Silver School of Social Work, LGBTQ Student Center, and Center for Student Activities, Leadership and Service’s Alternative Break Program

Instructors: Monroe France and Celianny Rivera-Velázquez, PhD

This service-learning course explores gender and sexuality-based social justice movements, non-governmental organizations and queer cultures in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, specifically in the island of Dominican Republic. We 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 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 3 pre-departure class meetings at New York University, 12 consecutive days of lectures and service in Santo Domingo and a post-trip meeting. 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. This class has a special interest in interrogating the ways in which sexuality is fundamentally different when experienced in an urban context.

In preparation for the trip and throughout the extension of the visit, students will get the opportunity to meet with various professors, non-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 and where alternative gender expressions under scrutiny by the State. 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 is conducted in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Prior, during and post trip classes and reflections must combine the information obtained from the readings as well as the different service projects, which are aimed to develop a strong 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.
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 8-10 page final paper.

Class Participation/Attendance: 25%
Three-page Reading Response Paper: 15%
Daily Journal: 20%
Eight to Ten Pages Final Paper: 40%
Service participation: Not graded, but mandatory component to complete course; approximately 40 hours of service.

Class Participation (25%)

Class participation is an important element of our course and can take several forms. It could be from making informed comments, to asking questions posed by lecturers and presenters, to generally showing intellectual curiosity or domain of a topic by actively listening and engaging in conversation.

Pre Departure classes, post trip classes and written assignments will be delivered:

Kimmel Center for University Life
NYU LGBTQ Student Center
60 Washington Sq. S, Suite 602
New York, New York 10012

Reading response paper to assigned readings for the course (15%, 3 pages)
Due date: Friday, January 6 by 1 pm.

Everyone will write one response paper (3 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 for pre-departure guest lectures.

Journals (20%, approximately 15 - 20 entries)
Due date: Monday, January 30 by 5 PM.

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. Submit to the front desk staff at the NYU LGBTQ Student Center.

Final Paper (40%, 8 – 10 pages)
Due date: Friday, March 20 by 5 PM.

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. Submit to the front desk staff at the NYU LGBTQ Student Center.
Class Sessions Prior to the trip

January 4
Overview of Dominican History
Guest lecture by Dr. Melissa Madera

Assigned Readings:


Supplementary Reading (available searching book title in Google Scholar, 23 pages):


Homework
Mariano Barroso’s “In the Time of the Butterflies” Movie
Optional Screening: January 4 at 3:30 pm at NYU LGBTQ Student Center

January 5
State of Contemporary LGBTQ Issues in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean
Guest lectures by Dr. Tanya Saunders (Cuban contemporary LGBTQ issues) and Olga Orraca (Puerto Rican contemporary LGBTQ issues via video conference), moderated by Dr. Celiany Rivera-Velázquez.

Richard Webb from ProWorld does a pre-departure speech.

Assigned Readings:


January 6
Open discussion about some of the topics we will be exploring in DR. Possible topics may include: colonial legacies, contemporary LGBTQ movements around the world, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean as a concept, history of the role of queer lesbians in theGBTQ movement, youth homelessness, the intersection of LGBTQ experiences and religion/spirituality, HIV AIDS and the LGBTQ community, sex work, transgender women and sex work, LGBTQ presence on college campuses and the United States’ influences in countries around the world.
Overview of the Schedule during the Visit in DR (Meet Joselina Fay and Marianela Carvajal from Republika Libre via Skype)

**Supplementary Reading** (in Spanish, so not mandatory):
Informe de Derechos Humanos en la Republica Dominicana 2010.  
[http://spanish.santodomingo.usembassy.gov/hr2010-repdom-s.html](http://spanish.santodomingo.usembassy.gov/hr2010-repdom-s.html)

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

**January 8**  
Alternative Social Movements in the Dominican Republic  
Fatima Portorreal, INTEC Professor  
Discussion of the agenda and political work of alternative social movements in the Dominican Republic; focusing on rural, feminist and Hatian-Dominican movements.

**January 10**  
Iglesia Comunidad Metropolitana (Metropolitan Community Church)  
Wilkin Lara, Senior Pastor  
Introduction to the Iglesia de la Comunidad Metropolitana in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

**January 11**  
Consejo Presidencial del SIDA (Presidential Council for AIDS)  
Dr. Luis Rodriguez and Dr. Tony DeMoya  
Introduction to the work of COPRESIDA, a gobermental agency which seeks to reduce the impact and spread of HIV and AIDS epidemic through concerted political, programmatic and financial efforts.

Afuera Hay Aire  
Screening of the first film documenting the LGBT community in the DR. Film will be followed by a panel discussion with film participants.

**January 13**  
Chris King/Marlenee Bennedock Dumont, Executive Director  
Introduction to TRANSSA the first Dominican organization for female-identified Transsexuals, Transgender and Transvestite individuals.

**January 16**  
Danilo German, Leader of UniGTH  
Introduction to the work of the organization Universidad Gay, Trans y Hombres que Tienen Sexo con Hombres (UniGTH). (University Organization for Gay, Trans and Men that have sex with men.)

**Classes after trip:**

**TBD (1-2 classes in February and March. To be coordinated by site leaders/TAs)**
Supplementary Readings (most available through Blackboard)


Suggested Readings / Film (not available through Blackboard)


