

Syllabus

Title: Survey of Cuban Musical Genres

Instructor: Rolando J. Gomez

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Meeting Times: TBD

Materials: Texts, audio, and video materials will be provided.

Course Purpose, Goals, and Objective

This class will provide an overview of multiple genres from Cuba and the Cuban diaspora in the United States. We will learn the fundamental characteristics of each genre, and how they develop into modern styles such as *Salsa*, *Timba*, and *Latin Jazz*. Assignments will focus on drawing connections between genres by looking at what musical characters are shared and developed. By the end of the course, students should have a concrete understanding of how Cuban music functions and how different aspects of it manifest throughout the diaspora in the United States and across the globe.

Class Dynamics

Every class will be in the form of a lecture accompanied by musical examples and some class discussion in response to new materials and ideas. Students are expected to attend class, take notes, keep up with assigned readings, and listenings.

There will be a total of 3 small papers (~750 words) and one large final paper (~1500 words).

Requirements

Completion of 3 assignments and the final project.

Assignment #1

Choose two genres from each group. Write a detailed description of what expectations are associated with the genre. Make sure to include details on instrumentation, rhythm, form, influential figures, and standard songs. It may help to compare and contrast the two genres you chose.

Group 1

Rumba
Guaguanco
Conga
Changui
Punto Guajira

Group 2

Son
Cha Cha Cha
Bolero
Bolero Son
Bolero Cha
Charanga
Guaracha
Danzon

Assignment #2

Both *Salsa* and *Latin Jazz* use aspects of the fundamental Cuban genres. Choose either a set of *Salsa* songs or *Latin Jazz* songs and investigate how they utilize, reference, or manipulate these genres. Sometimes a tune that was in a form such as the *Son* will be turned into a *Salsa*, feel free to compare and contrast two arrangements of the same tune.

Assignment #3

Choose to either compare an artist who produces *Timba* with one who produces *Salsa* or compare an artist who produces *Nueva Trova* with one who produces *Boleros*. Compare musical qualities and investigate what aesthetic differences there are.

If you are unsure of what artists to compare here are some examples:

Timba v. Salsa: Los Van Van and Fania

Nueva Trova v. Bolero: Pablo Milanes and Vicentico Valdes

*Note that artists are not imprisoned to the one genre they are known for.

Final Project

Choose a 21st Century Cuban Musical Artist and provide a detailed description of their life, career, and music. Then analyze how their music relates in one way or another to some of the genres we discussed throughout the semester. Be specific about what musical characteristics are shared and what effect they give on the music.

Supplemental Materials:

These materials are optional but should be helpful for writing your papers. They are all available in the Conservatory Library.

- *Origins of Cuban music and dance: changüí* by Benjamin Lapidus
- *Cuban fire: the story of salsa and Latin jazz* by Isabelle Leymarie
- *Cuban music : from son and rumba to the Buena Vista Social Club and timba cubana* by Maya Roy

Schedule:

Week 1

Rumba, Guaguanco, y La Conga

Week 2

Changüí y Punto Guajira

Week 3

Son y Cha Cha Cha

Week 4

Bolero, Bolero Son, Bolero Cha

Week 5

Charanga, Guaracha, y Danzon

Assignment #1 Due

Week 6

Cubop, Mambo, Latin Jazz

Week 7

La Salsa

Week 8

Ballada y La Salsa Romantica

Assignment #2 Due

Week 9

La Timba

Week 10

La Nueva Trova

Assignment #3 Due

Week 11

21st Century Developments

Week 12

Extra Week

*To be used in case of a setback, suggested topic, or discussion for the final paper.

Final Project Due