SEMINAR 1: Happiness in Contested Spaces: History, Politics, and Difference in the Americas

Lecturer: Don E. Walicek, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

Course Description

Examining happiness in the broad scope of the complex social history of the Americas, this course consists of three main parts. Part one examines central aspects of the human experience that can be used to better understand and critically assess statements about happiness and their manifestations across different cultures, moral geographies, and time periods. Exploring the nexus between happiness and memory, the second part focuses on the consequences of contact between the Indigenous people of the Americas and Europeans involved in the colonization of the region, debates about the rights and futures of non-European (Indigenous, African, and Asian) peoples, and contemporary scholarship that theorizes genocide, coloniality, and other episodes of violence. Part two also considers how enslaved African and Afro-Caribbean peoples and other marginalized groups created languages, cultural traditions, and world-views that allowed them to foster happiness and hope within their individual lives and in society at large. Finally, the seminar's third part will deconstruct the well-known phrase "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" from the U.S. Declaration of Independence and consider its impact for different societies and social groups. Students enrolled in this seminar will have the opportunity to plan and develop a short research project that involves the analysis of colonial-era archival materials.

Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Describe main currents in the study of happiness in the humanities and social sciences.
- Identify how happiness has been expressed in a variety of social, historical, and linguistic contexts within the history of the Americas.
- Explain how various struggles for freedom (e.g., struggles against slavery, colonialism, imperialism) relate to cultural traditions and world-views that have fostered happiness within Caribbean contexts.
- Identify ways in which language, meaning, and related sociolinguistic phenomena are implicated in political struggle and humans’ quest for happiness.
- Develop arguments about the significance that the phrase “the pursuit of happiness” in the U.S. Declaration of Independence has had on different groups and societies in the Americas.
- Design a research project that shows how knowledge of history can contribute to a more ethical and sustainable future.
## Topics and Schedule

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 [https://reason.com/2006/04/01/the-myth-of-the-passive-indian-3/](https://reason.com/2006/04/01/the-myth-of-the-passive-indian-3/) |
| 2021    |                                                                        | Interview - Walter D. Mignolo. In *E-International Relations*, (June 1, 2017)                                                        |
|         |                                                                        | [https://www.e-ir.info/2017/06/01/interview-](https://www.e-ir.info/2017/06/01/interview-)
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**Readings**


