

Course #2
Contemporary Problems, Politics, and Potentialities in Puerto Rico (SOC 190GS)
Professor: Vanesa Ribas

Course Description

An exploration of political governance and “decolonization” in the context of Puerto Rico and its history, this course introduces students to a variety of contemporary struggles to address the problems Puerto Ricans face and move Puerto Rico beyond its political status impasse. Significantly, the course centers the epochal disaster for PR that was Hurricane Maria in 2017 and the imposition of an unelected junta in 2016 to (mis)direct fiscal affairs in the wake of the Island’s debt crisis. The social, economic, and political context of the Island preceding these events is given attention. Within this, the focus turns to the myriad ways in which Puerto Ricans organized, resisted, and continue to struggle for change. Alternative visions of Puerto Rico’s future are examined.

Course Format

Our class will be structured as a seminar. Students will prepare short memos on readings and discussion questions before each class. Active participation in seminar discussions will be important. We will also make several excursions to sites of interest related to our course topics and readings. Finally, guest speakers will enrich our class discussions on several occasions.

Course Objectives

- To sensitize students to the current challenges faced by various segments of Puerto Rican society, especially poor and marginalized communities.
- To expose students to a wide range of social movement organizations and actors effecting change in contemporary Puerto Rico.
- To encourage students to reflect on their own positionalities, and the dynamics of power in contemporary societies.
- To develop a critical understanding of how history shapes present day experiences around various forms of inequalities.
- To gain experience developing research proposals on particular sociological issues.

Course Evaluation and Grading Scale

At the end of the seminar term, you will receive a letter grade, based on the following assignments and grading scale:

Participation (20%): Attendance is mandatory. One unexcused absence is allowed.

Journals (40%): Students will keep a journal during the term. At least one journal entry of at least 250 words is required per week (4 total). Journaling is an opportunity to document your experiences in and out of the classroom, reactions to readings, reflections about excursions or guest speakers, and other observations or questions about your experiences in Puerto Rico.

Discussion Questions (15%): Students will submit one discussion question related to the topics and readings per class.

Proposal Presentation (25%): Students will work in groups of 3 to prepare a three-page proposal to further study an issue or movement we cover in the class, or related to course material. The proposal will give an introduction to the sociological significance of the topic, discuss at least three sources on the topic, and suggest a research question and study design. Students will present their proposal to the class.

A	=	93-100
A-	=	90-92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76
C-	=	70-72
D	=	60-69
F	=	Below 60

Required Readings

The following book is required for this class. Additional readings will be provided electronically to the class. We will also draw some readings from the #puertoricosyllabus project.

<https://puertoricosyllabus.com/>

Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm. 2019. Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBron, eds. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Excursions and Guest Speakers

Haciendo agroecologica (day tour, alternative farm and learn about food sovereignty)

Casa Pueblo (day tour, learn about solar energy)

Centro apoyo mutuo (day trip, learn about mutual aid networks)

Cantera (local half-day tour, meet with organizers and learn about San Juan estuary communities' struggles)

Antonio Martorell art studio

Samuel Lind art studio

Guest Speakers TBA

Class Guidelines

1. Attend class and excursions and be ready to start on time.
2. Read all materials for the assigned day and turn in assignments on schedule.
3. Contribute to class discussions.
4. Check your email account daily.
5. Check the course Canvas site regularly.

Contacts

You can reach me by email at vribas@ucsd.edu. This is especially convenient if you have a quick question. If you'd like to talk to me outside of class, I encourage you to stop by during my office hours.

Office Hours

I have office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12:00 to 1:00 pm. If you can't make these hours, please let me know and we'll arrange another time. You might come to my office hours if you have a question about a reading you don't understand, want to review a concept we've talked about in class, or would like to discuss how you're doing in the class. Regardless of your particular question or concern, I encourage you to stop by.

Policies and Procedures

UCSD's policy on academic integrity will be in effect throughout this course for all assignments. As an academic community, none of us can afford to tolerate academic dishonesty of any sort, including plagiarism or otherwise cheating. Let me be clear, I take academic integrity very seriously. Please talk to me or visit the University's website if you have any questions about what constitutes academic integrity: <http://www.ucsd.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/index.html>

Class Schedule

To be determined