

Lehman College
Department of Latin American and Latino Studies
Spring 2024

LAC 224 (47016): DOMINICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

LEH 354 (53917) / LTS 224 (47018)

Mondays, 6 – 8:40 PM

Room: Carman 231 | Hybrid

Instructor: Wilfredo José Burgos Matos

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Office Hours: By appointment



Firelei Báez (Dominican-American artist). *How to Slip Out of Your Body Quietly*, 2018. Gouache on paper, 70 × 118 inches.

There is solid archival evidence that in the Spring of 1613 a Dutch merchant ship named Jonge Tobias arrived in the Hudson Harbor to explore the potential wealth of the area, especially the potential for trade with the local Native Americans for animal furs that could be resold in Europe's garment market. The ship's crew included a black or mulatto free man "born in Saint Domingo" (the Spanish colony-island in the Caribbean also known as La Española) and whose name appears spelled as Jan Rodrigues in the few pages of Dutch notary records that have survived on the matter, currently held in the City Archives of Amsterdam, the

Netherlands. After spending some time in the Hudson area, the sources state that the Dutch captain decided to return to the Netherlands with his crew, only to find out that Juan Rodríguez did not want to continue the trip to Europe and wanted to stay in the Hudson Harbor instead, and even threatening to jump overboard at the first opportunity if he was forced to go on the ship to the Netherlands. Ultimately, the captain agreed to leave Rodríguez behind and left for Europe.

“Juan Rodríguez: A Largely Unknown Historical Figure”
in *Juan Rodríguez and the Beginnings of New York City* (2013)

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: The study of the migration, settlement, incorporation, labor market, culture, and identity of the Dominican community in the United States.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Credited as the first immigrant in New York City, Juan Rodríguez, a native of the island of Santo Domingo, set off a transformative episode for the Dominican people in 1613. An unsung representative of an island, Rodríguez was clear: if he were forced to leave the Hudson Harbor, he would jump overboard at the first opportunity. Unbeknownst to him, a couple of centuries later, Dominicans owned up to the urge to remain in place by making New York City theirs and now being the biggest minority group in the northeast. Spread all over the country, their journey has left an indelible imprint in the multiple manifestations of the contested monolithic term “Latinidad.” This course will map their presence with an intentional focus on music, literature, and social media as driving forces of expression for Dominican people globally. We will study the works of Angie Cruz, Elizabeth Acevedo, Aventura, Romeo Santos, André Veloz, Proyecto Uno, Sandy y Papo, Fulanito, Santiago Cerón, Las Chicas de Nueva York, LeJuan James, LaChikyBomBom, La Bella Chanel, among others. We will engage with the theoretical works of Silvio Torres Saillant, Ramona Hernández, Lorgia García Peña, Jossianna Arroyo, Omaris Zamora, Angelina Tallaj, and others. In all, we will create a sonic, literary, and relational map of the Dominican experience in the United States and the implications of their contributions to the country's society today. Moreover, departing from the United States as a diasporic epicenter, we will look at how an island culture becomes global in the neoliberal networks that bind all living beings together and their understandings of race and blackness, gender, class, and other social and political identities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to:

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view via a comparative analysis of theoretical and interdisciplinary methodological approaches that are central to Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies.

- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned arguments to support a thesis in written and oral forms, and through multiple pedagogical tools available to them (i.e., Perusall, VoiceThread).
- Examine how the Dominican community negotiates its presence in American society through culture, literature, art, and other forms of expression.
- Analyze, discuss, and compare Dominicans in the U.S. within the broader Latinx society and how they influence or are influenced by race, ethnicity, class, gender, beliefs, or other forms of social differentiation from both historical and contemporary perspectives.
- Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions via the preparation of an oral history.



Photo by Ricky Flores. 1992 Washington Heights Riots.

MATERIALS

All materials are or will be available on Blackboard.

GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation	20 %
VoiceThread Assignments	15 %
Perusall Assignments	15 %
VoiceThreads Assignments	15 %
Oral History Project	25 %
Final Reflection Essay	<u>10 %</u>
	100%

1. Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are always required, and they are a significant part of your grade. Only one absence is excused. If you will miss a class due to an emergency, an email to your instructor is highly appreciated. Your VoiceThread participation falls into this category as well.

2. VoiceThread Assignments

VoiceThread is a multimedia presentation tool that enables users to create and share interactive slideshows incorporating images, videos, documents, and audio. Its unique feature is the ability for viewers to leave comments on individual slides using voice, text, or video responses. This tool is widely used in educational settings for facilitating discussions, collaborative projects, and online classes. It supports diverse learning styles by allowing students and educators to engage with content and each other in a dynamic, accessible way. VoiceThread enhances online learning experiences by promoting active participation and fostering a sense of community among participants, regardless of their physical location.

VoiceThread will be embedded into Blackboard and will be used mostly to comment on audiovisual materials. At times, we do not get the opportunity to express all of our ideas in the classroom. VoiceThread will give us an opportunity to participate and engage further. Think of our use of VoiceThread as a way to continue our conversation outside of the classroom. Given that our course is hybrid, it will help us to strengthen our learning bond even if we are not meeting in person.

3. Perusall Assignments

Perusall is an online platform designed to enhance the learning experience through interactive reading. It allows students and educators to collaboratively annotate texts, facilitating discussions directly within the reading material. This platform is often used in educational settings to engage students, encourage a deeper understanding of the material, and foster a community of learning through shared annotations, questions, and insights. Perusall supports various document types and integrates with learning management systems, making it a versatile tool for modern, interactive education.

There will be three engagement assignments on Perusall. All will use close reading as the primary methodology for analysis.

You must have the following code and URL to get access to my course on the platform:

UNIQUE COURSE CODE: BURGOS-MATOS-HU762

UNIQUE COURSE URL: <https://app.perusall.com/join/burgos-matos-hu762>

For an introductory guide on how to use Perusall, please go [here](#).

4. Oral History Project (1)

Students will prepare an on-camera oral history. In one session that must not last more than 30 minutes (min. 20 minutes), they will interview a person of Dominican descent. Students will be trained in best practices and co-create a questionnaire from which a conversation will be had with the informant. The five guiding themes of the course will be considered to build an interconnected corpus. Students must accompany their oral history with a transcription. The oral history interview may be conducted in English, Spanish, or Spanglish.

5. Final Reflection Essay (1)

Upon completing the Oral History Project, you will write a final reflection essay using what you learned from your interviewee and relating it to all the materials discussed in class. You are expected to turn in a short essay of a minimum of 5 pages and a maximum of 8, excluding bibliography. You may use Chicago, MLA, or APA style guides to format your essay.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Statement Against Discrimination

Each of you deserves an environment where you can learn, grow, and express yourselves without fear of judgment or bias. My commitment to you is to actively uphold these values and to address any behavior that contradicts them.

I want to make it unequivocally clear that our classroom is a place of inclusivity, respect, and safety. Discrimination of any form – whether based on race, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity, religion, disability, or any other characteristic – will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Notice on Sensitive Topics

In our upcoming discussions, we will be addressing topics that may be sensitive or challenging for some, including subjects like abuse and violence. While I am committed to conducting these classes with the utmost care and respect, recognizing the potential impact these topics can have, it is important to prioritize your well-being.

If at any point you find the material distressing or triggering, please know that it is entirely acceptable and understandable to step out of the classroom for any duration that you need. Your mental and emotional health is of paramount importance.

Should you choose to leave, I encourage you to reach out to me via email. This will allow us to discuss any concerns or questions you might have, and to explore alternate ways for you to engage with the material in a manner that is comfortable for you.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Use of AI

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
- Fine tuning your research questions;
- Finding information on your topic;
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited. Failure to comply with this policy will lower your class grade by a total of 5%.

Use of Electronic Devices

Although notebooks are preferred, electronic devices (only laptops and tablets) may be used for taking notes and must not interfere with the learning process. Cellphones are highly discouraged as note-taking devices in class. When using a laptop or tablet, you must turn the sound off so that you do not disrupt other students' learning. If you are doing anything other than taking notes on your laptop, please sit in the back row or exit the classroom so that other students are not distracted by your screen.

Urgent Needs

It is difficult to study if you are hungry, houseless, or unsafe. There is no shame in taking advantage of resources available to you and your family at Lehman College. Here are a few:

- [Emergency Resources at Lehman](#)
- [Lehman Student Emergency Fund](#)
- [On Campus Food Bank](#)
- [Student Life](#)

Academic integrity

All work in this course is your own. While I encourage you to form study groups, each person is graded individually and on the assumption that the work you submit is your own. Any use of artificial intelligence or outside sources in writing or assignments of any kind must be cited properly. You are responsible for completing all of the work of the class. It is your responsibility to keep track of your work: deadlines, assignments, group projects and more.

Cheating and plagiarism, including use of artificial intelligence to write papers—whether intentional or unintentional—will not be tolerated and the consequences will range from receiving no credit for an assignment or exam to receiving a failing grade in the course, depending on the severity of the act. This is true also of anyone who aids or abets cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism means using any ideas that are not your own without proper citation. We will discuss citation formats and methods for proper use of primary and secondary source material in detail during the course.

Please review the CUNY-wide policy on academic integrity [here](#).

Accommodating Disabilities

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, phone number, 718-960-8441 or disability.services@lehman.cuny.edu.

Instructional Support Service Program

The Instructional Support Services Program is one of the places where students can seek tutoring and other support on campus. The ISSP provides appointment-based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing and academic skills workshops.

The SLC offers support in the sciences. To obtain more information please visit their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp>, or please call the ISSP at 718-960-8175, and the SLC at 718-960-7707. Click here for this semester's ISSP workshops and services.

COURSE CALENDAR

Subject to change.

P = In Person

HS = Zoom

HA = Asynchronous Activity

DAY	MATERIALS	ASSIGNMENT
Day 1 (P) 1/29	Introductions Syllabus DISCUSS <i>The Dominican-Americans</i> (Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3)	
Day 2 (P) 2/5	READ <i>The Dominican Americans</i> (Chapters 3, 4, 5) Discuss ORAL HISTORY PROJECT	VoiceThread 1
Day 3 (P) 2/22 (Thurs)	WATCH AT HOME <i>My American Girls: A Dominican Story</i> READ <i>Making New York Dominican</i> ("From Quisqueya to New York City")	VoiceThread 2
Day 4 (HA) 2/28 (Thurs)	READ AT HOME <i>Islands Apart</i> by Jasmine Méndez	Perusall Assignment 1
Day 5 (HS) 3/4	READ HALF of <i>Undocumented</i> by Dan-el Padilla Peralta READ Undocumented Latinx Life-writing: Refusing Worth and Meritocracy by Stacey Alex	
Day 6 (HS) 3/11	FINISH READING <i>Undocumented</i> by Dan-el Padilla Peralta	Perusall Assignment 2
Day 7 (P) 3/18	WATCH TOGETHER <i>Nueba Yol 1</i> (1995)	VoiceThread 3 Inform about interviewee for

		oral history (Blackboard)
Day 8 (HA) 3/25	READ <i>Dominicana</i> by Angie Cruz and Translating Silence into Story: An Interview with Angie Cruz by Ylce Irizarry	
Day 9 (HS) 4/1	FINISH <i>Dominicana</i>	Perusall Assignment 3
Day 10 (HS) 4/8	<i>Dominican-American Art</i> WATCH TOGETHER WORKS BY MANY ARTISTS (special focus on Scherezade García) READ AT HOME Selections from Abigail Lapin Dardashti's work	
Day 11 (HS) 4/15	<i>Dominican Social Media Personalities</i> WATCH TOGETHER SELECTION OF La Bella Chanel, La ChikyBomBom, and LeJuan James READ AT HOME Respect My Ratchet: The Liberatory Consciousness of Ratchetness by Montinique Denice McEachern; selections from <i>Caribes 2.0</i> by Jossianna Arroyo	VoiceThread 4 Turn in Oral History Project via Google Drive folder.
Day 12 (HA) 5/6	<i>Language and Race in the Diaspora</i> READ AT HOME She Speaks Better than Jennifer López: Cardi B's Spanish and Afro-Latinidad	VoiceThread 5
Day 13 (HS) 5/13	<i>Migrating with Music</i> READ Dominican Bachata: Moving from El Campo to the Garden by Deborah Pacini Hernández <i>Preserving the Heritage</i> STUDY TOGETHER A History of Dominican Music in the U.S. and the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute – NEH Digital Humanities Project	
FINAL WORK	Final Reflection	Turn in Final Reflection Essay via Blackboard.

