Due to a growing interest in Cuba, and its evolving political relationship with the United States, in the last two seminars offered we have focused on Cuba as an example of racial and cultural interaction in Latin America. Our sources have included The Maids of Havana, a novel by Pedro Pérez Sarduy; Biography of a Runaway Slave (based on interviews of Esteban Montejo in the 1970s by Cuban journalist Miguel Barnet) and Black in Latin America, a four part PBS video series, and accompanying text of historical, political, social and cultural commentary with the same title, both by Henry Louis Gates. The film series and text cover Cuba as well as Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Peru, and Brazil.

So far, the student enrollment of every “Black in Latin America” seminar I have taught has reflected the diversity that is DePaul. Students may share personal experiences and expect confidentiality from their classmates. I encourage students to speak directly and with passion, but also with courtesy and respect. In the classroom, difference of opinion – with other students, with the texts, or with the professor (!) – can be an advantage for all. Through exposure to different points of view, we may all expand our own knowledge and perception.

—David Akbar Gilliam
Associate Professor
Dept. of Modern Languages

Instructor Spotlight:
David Akbar Gilliam

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From the Director

As the City of Chicago prepares for the NFL Draft, we’re busy planning our own Spring tradition: the annual Chicago Quarter Best Practices conference on May 29. If you’re teaching Chicago Quarter in the coming year, please plan to attend! We don’t require a great deal in terms of training, but we do ask that you attend this with your teaching team. As veterans of the program know, the purpose of these classes goes beyond the topic of your individual section. The overall goal is to help new DePaul students transition into becoming successful university students in an urban setting. That calls for all three teaching team members strategizing how best to prepare them. Your academic portion should be representative of a 100-level DePaul course (not easier than 100-level, but also not 300-level). If you haven’t responded yet to the Outlook invitation, please do so ASAP. If you can’t find the invitation, please email Maria Hernandez at mhernand@depaul.edu.

Chicago Quarter faculty, you also should have received an email giving you the chance to connect with and request staff professionals and/or Chicago Quarter Mentors for your teaching team (this is not required). You can email requests to nsfc@depaul.edu.

Focal Point Seminar faculty, we look forward to seeing many of you in a couple weeks at our quarterly Faculty Chat, which this time will be at 10:30 on Friday, May 8.

Finally, I encourage you to attend the 20th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference this Friday. This wonderful conference supplements the training we’re able to provide at Best Practices. For more information, click http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Conference/index.html.

—Doug Long