

Cold War America
HIST 389: 001
Fall Semester, 2014
Sam Lebovic

Class Details

Time: TR: 10:30-11:45 am.

Location: Planetary Hall 212

Office Hours: Thursday, 3-5, or by appt

Contact Details

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Office: Robinson Hall B 375C

Course Description

How did the Cold War change American politics and culture? Covering the period from the end of WWII to the election of JFK, this course explores the variety of ways that Americans experienced the early Cold War. We will discuss the construction of the Cold War order, both at home and abroad, by studying the politics of international confrontation, the Korean War, McCarthyism, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, as well as such social developments as consumerism and suburbanization. We will also analyze widespread discontent within Cold War America by exploring the histories of feminism, rock'n'roll, the beat generation, and the civil rights movement.

Learning Goals

In this course, students will:

- Become familiar with the history of the early Cold War in the U.S., including basic events, trends, and developments.
- Develop an understanding of the political and social attitudes of a variety of Americans in a period of change and challenge.
- Think critically about the relationship between politics, economics and culture in Cold War America, and about the relationship between domestic politics and foreign affairs in American history.
- Critically analyze a range of primary and secondary sources making arguments about the history of America during the Cold War.
- Write analytic essays that present original and critical thinking in a clear, coherent and sustained argument.
- Engage in thoughtful classroom discussion about course materials.

Class Requirements

There are two types of reading assignments for this class: there is background reading for each of the four sections of the course; and for each class I have assigned a selection of articles and essays. These articles are available on the course blackboard page. You must read the articles listed for each class *before* class so that we can discuss them collectively. You can read the background readings before we begin a new section, as we work through a section, or before the exam at the end of the section, depending on your preferred study method. But they will provide background and context for the other readings so it is recommended you read them first, particularly if you are unfamiliar with the period.

Class outlines will be posted as word documents on the course website by 9am on the morning of the day's class. They are designed to provide a broad overview of the day's class and to help you take notes during class—printing or downloading them prior to class is recommended. They are not summaries of the readings or my lecture, and will not help you to make up missed classes.

1) Participation (10% of final grade)

Participation is essential to the success of this class as well as your success in it. I will not lecture a great deal; instead we will discuss the readings and issues in the course as a group. In the first place, then, you should feel free to ask me questions at any point. And you must come to class having completed the reading assignment for the day and ready to talk about the arguments and ideas in the texts. The better you read the class materials, the better the conversation, and the better the conversation, the better the class. Come to class with questions about the readings (including sections or ideas that you found to be unclear or confusing), comments and thoughts about their arguments (including their strengths and weaknesses), and notes on how these readings connect to the themes of the course and other readings in the semester.

During discussions, I expect everyone to respect the contributions, questions, and comments of others – disagreements are great, but they must be expressed respectfully and thoughtfully.

The lectures and discussions are designed to help you learn, and I expect you to take advantage of them. There is no formal penalty for missing a class, out of respect to you, but missing numerous classes will reduce your participation grade and will inevitably have an impact on the quality of your preparation for the assessments.

In class, I expect you to show courtesy to me and your fellow students – please turn your cellphones off, please use laptops only for taking class notes and accessing readings, and please do not arrive late or leave early. If you need to leave early on a particular day, are waiting on an urgent call etc., please bring this up with me before class begins. If students are using laptops for anything other than accessing readings or taking class notes, I reserve the right to ban laptop use and require students to bring printed copies of the reading to class.

You are not required to bring the background readings to class, but you must bring copies of the other readings so we can refer to them during our discussion (e-copies are completely fine).

2) 3 Mini-exams (15% of final grade, combined) – Sep 18, Nov 4, Dec 4.

On three occasions we will have twenty-minute mini-exams in class. The format for these mini-exams will be identical – there will be five short-answer questions, of which you must answer four. Each question will be worth 2 points. The questions will ask you to identify and explain the significance of central ideas, developments, and events in America's Cold War. To prepare for these exams, you should revise both your lecture notes and the readings in consultation with my class outlines.

Each mini-exam will examine only the material we have covered since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative).

Sample short questions:

What was the Truman Doctrine, and why was it significant?

Who was Eugene Dennis, and why was he significant?

When Betty Friedan wrote about "the problem that has no name," what did she mean?

3) First Paper (20% of Grade) DUE in class on Oct 9**4) Second Paper (30% of Grade) DUE in class on Nov 25**

Both papers will ask you to critically analyze some of the texts we have read in class. I will distribute the list of questions (you will have options) and more detailed instructions in advance of each assignment. But to help you prepare for this assignment as you are doing your class reading – pay attention to broad themes and developments in the course and our discussion, and think comparatively about the readings. How do they fit together? Where do they agree and disagree? What connections or contradictions do you notice? What assumptions do they share? The essays will ask you to make an argument about the material for the course, so the more engaged you are with the course and the readings all semester, the easier this task will be.

Papers will be due in class, in hard copy.

5) Final Take-Home Exam (25% of final grade) DUE Thursday, Dec 11 by 5pm.

The final for this course will be a take-home exam, issued on the last day of class. I will provide you with an academic article about America during the Cold War and you will write an essay critically analyzing the argument of that article based on the material we have covered over the semester. We will discuss the exam further closer to the end of the semester, and we will devote a portion of the final class to review. The paper needs to be emailed to be (slebovic@gmu.edu) as a word doc by the due date.

There will be no final written exam during the scheduled exam period.

Textbooks

There are two books required for this course:

- 1) Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2003, 978-0192801784
- 2) Ellen Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*, Bedford/St Martins, 2nd ed, 2001, 978-0312393199

Both books are available in the bookstore in the Johnson Center, and on 2-hour reserve in the Johnson Center Library. Feel free to purchase them elsewhere if you'd like, or to get e-books, but please make sure to get the correct editions.

All other readings for the class are available as pdfs on the course site on Blackboard (<https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>)

Make-Up Exams and Extensions

If you cannot attend an exam for any reason you must contact me **before** the exam begins. If you miss an exam without contacting me in advance, you will receive a zero for the assignment. If it is impossible for you to make an exam, speak to me well in advance.

Essays are due in class on the day they are due. I will not accept late papers, and will only grant extensions in advance, and on a case-by-case basis.

In general, if something happens in your life to interfere with your work for this course, please inform me as soon as possible so we can work together to make sure you stay on track to succeed in the class.

On Academic Integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity (<http://oai.gmu.edu/>) for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.

You should familiarize yourself with the Honor Code, which is available at: <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/masons-honor-code/>.

If you have any questions, concerns or confusion about this policy during the semester, please bring them directly to me – I'll be happy to help, and it is better to be safe than sorry.

Communications

Students in this class need to check their GMU email accounts regularly throughout the semester – I will rely on the mailtool in blackboard to communicate all announcements, such as changes to the syllabus or to class meetings.

I will endeavor to respond to all emails within one working-day of receiving them. I am regularly away from my mail in the evenings and on the weekends, so while I *will* respond to your mail, I may not do so instantaneously. (I generally deal with my email between 3 and 5 in the afternoon.) I will check and respond to email more regularly in the immediate lead-up to exams and assignments in order to handle more urgent questions.

My office hours are between 3 and 5 every Thursday afternoon – please feel free to stop by if you want to discuss anything related to the course or your studies. If your schedule is tight, you are welcome to email me so that we can arrange an appointment at a particular time. Throughout the semester, I am also more than happy to meet by appointment if you cannot make my office hours – just send me an email or speak to me after class.

Special Accommodations

If any of these course policies pose a particular hardship for you, please come and speak to me directly.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Add/Drop Deadlines

- Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): September 2, 2014
- Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course): September 26, 2014
- Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course): September 29 - October 17, 2014 (undergraduates only)

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tue, Aug 26 Introduction

Thu, Aug 28 Our Image of Cold War America

Jon Wiener, *How We Forgot the Cold War* (2012)

Section 1: The Creation of the Cold War

Background Reading: Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, 1-77

Week 2

Tue, Sep 2 America in 1945

Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, 27-45 (1994)

Thu, Sep 4 Debating the Cold War

George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (1947)

Harry Truman, "The Truman Doctrine" (1947)

Walter Lippmann, "The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy" (1947)

Week 3

Tue, Sep 9 The Cold War Solidifies

Truman, "Special Message to Congress on the Threat to the Freedom of Europe," (1948)

NSC Report, "The Position of the US With Respect to Korea" (1948)

NSC-68 (1950)

Thu, Sep 11 Historians Debate the Origins of the Cold War

Christopher Lasch, "The Cold War, Revisited and Re-Visioned" (1968)

John Lewis Gaddis, "The Emerging Post-Revisionist Synthesis on the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* (1983)

Responses to Gaddis (1983)

Week 4

Tue, Sep 16 Waging the Cold War

David Riesman, "The Nylon War" (1951)

John Foster Dulles, "Speech to Council on Foreign Relations" (1954)

Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, selections.

Thu, Sep 18 Mini-exam 1

No reading – in class screening of *Salt of the Earth* (1954)

Section 2: Cold War Politics

Background Reading:

Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism*, 1-107; McMahon, *The Cold War*, 105-121

Week 5

Tue, Sep 23 Communists and Anti-Communists

Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism*, 107-133

Thu, Sep 25 Red Scare: Spies

Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism*, 134-176

Week 6

Tue, Sep 30 Red Scare: Subversives

Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism*, 177-196, 226-249

Thu, Oct 2 Repression

Schrecker, *Age of McCarthyism*, 197-225, 262-274.

Week 7

Tue, Oct 7 The End of Ideology?

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Center" (1948)

Daniel Bell, "The End of Ideology" selections

Thu, Oct 9 First Papers Due

No reading – in class screening of *Ace in the Hole* (1951)

Week 8

Tue, Oct 14 – No Class (B/c of Columbus Day Recess, Monday classes meet on Tuesday)

Section 3: Cold War Culture

Background Reading: James Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 311-375 (1997)

Thu, Oct 16 Affluence?

John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, selections (1958)

Warren Susman, “Did Success Spoil the United States?” 19-38 (1989)

Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, selections (1962)

Week 9

Tue, Oct 21 Work

C. Wright Mills, *White Collar*, selections (1951)

Kurt Vonnegut, *Player Piano*, selections (1952)

Thu, Oct 23 Suburban Domesticity

John Cheever, “The Enormous Radio” (1947)

Richard Yates, “The Best of Everything” (1961)

Clifford E. Clark Jr., “Ranch-House Suburbia: Ideals and Realities” (1989)

Jane Sherron De Hart, “Containment at Home: Gender, Sexuality and National Identity in Cold War America” (2001)

Week 10

Tue, Oct 28 Individualism?

David Riesman et al, *The Lonely Crowd*, selections (1950)

Thu, Oct 30 Mass Society

Irving Howe, "This Age of Conformity" (1954)

C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, selections (1956)

Week 11

Tue, Nov 4 Mini-exam 2

No Reading – in class screening of *Eyes on the Prize* (1987)

Section 4: Cold War Discontent

Background Reading: Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 1-58 (2007)

Thu, Nov 6 Civil Rights: Personal, Local and National Struggles

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, selections (1952)

Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*, selections (1995)

Adam Green, *Selling the Race: Culture, Community and Black Chicago, 1940-1955*, selections (2006)

Week 12

Tue, Nov 11 Civil Rights as Decolonization

Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*, selections (1997)

W.E.B. DuBois, *An Appeal to the World* (1947)

Thu, Nov 13 Cold War Civil Rights

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, selections (2000)

Southern Manifesto (1956)

Week 13

Tue, Nov 18 Alienation

Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (1955)

Norman Mailer, “The White Negro” (1957)

James Baldwin, “The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy” selections (1961)

Thu, Nov 20 Feminism

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, selections (1963)

Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958” (1994)

Week 14

Tue, Nov 25 Sexuality (Second Paper DUE in class)

Wini Breines, “The Other Fifties: Beats and Bad Girls” (1994)

Thu, Nov 27 No class (Thanksgiving)

Week 15

Tue, Dec 2 Rock’n’Roll

George Lipsitz, “Land of a Thousand Dances: Youth, Minorities and the Rise of Rock’n’Roll,” (1989)

Susan Douglas, “Why the Shirelles Mattered” (1994)

Thu, Dec 4 Mini-Exam and Take-Home Exam Distributed

Take Home due by Thursday, Dec 11 by 5pm (emailed to me – slebovic@gmu.edu)