

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

History 499, Fall 2015
Robinson Hall, B205, 4:30-7:10
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00
Robinson B353

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***The Long Cuban Missile Crisis: From Hiroshima to Havana,
1945-1963***

THIS IS A “RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP” COURSE

This seminar is the capstone experience of your history major. As such, it is designed to help you research and compose a professional historical essay, the sort of paper your professors write. The experience will give you the opportunity to incorporate historical methods and analysis that you have learned in previous history classes. The process will proceed in three steps. First, we will read and discuss a variety of texts related to the seminar topic. During these early weeks you will choose a research topic. After several weeks our attention will be devoted to research and writing drafts of your papers. Finally, in the last few weeks of the semester every student will have the opportunity to present a synopsis of his/her paper to the class. Details will be further described in class.

Grades will be based on class participation, the progress of the paper drafts, the quality of your oral presentation, and (especially) the quality of your final paper.

All students should have GMU e-mail accounts in order to do bibliographical research and communicate with the class.

(This seminar is one of two departmental “writing-intensive” courses mandated by the university, the other History 300.)

Note: While the Senior Seminar counts 3 academic credits like other classes, the work is quite intensive and demanding—more analogous to a graduate level seminar. Thus you should be prepared for an ongoing engagement with the materials read in class and begin the research and writing process soon after the start of the semester. If you do, you should succeed admirably in the course. Your paper will be a demonstration of your historical abilities (you will be, at least for this semester, a “practicing historian”). Your paper can be used for future job interviews, as an example of your best work in applying to graduate or law schools, etc. Thus it is important to take the course seriously.

Required Readings: (all are paperback and are stocked by the bookstore)

Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies*

Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of A Gamble: Kennedy, Khrushchev and Castro*
Fursenko+Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*
Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*
Sheldon Stern. *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory*
Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War*
Ronald Powaski, *March to Armageddon: The US and the Nuclear Arms Race*

Class attendance is mandatory.

The Honor Code (see the GMU Catalogue) is strictly followed.

80% paper

20% class participation and oral presentation of your paper.

Schedule of Classes

NOTE: THE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS BELOW ARE A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SEMESTER RATHER THAN A RIGID STRUCTURE. EXPECT SOME CHANGES AS THE SEMESTER PROCEEDS.

PART I. IN THE BEGINNING...

1. 9/2 **Subj: Introduction to the course and the Debate over Hiroshima**
Reading: Sherwin, *A World Destroyed* (complete)
Film:

NOTE: THE FIRST MAJOR CHALLENGE OF THIS COURSE IS SELECTING A RESEARCH TOPIC. YOU WANT TO FIND ONE THAT IS REALISTIC FOR THE ALOTED TIME, ONE THAT WILL HOLD YOUR INTEREST, AND YOU WANT TO FIND IT ASAP. TO FACILITATE THOSE GOALS I WANT YOU TO SKIM THROUGH ALL THE READINGS AND LIST 7 POSSIBLE TOPICS. EMAIL YOUR LIST WITH A SHORT SENTENCE ABOUT EACH TOPIC AS AN ATTACHMENT NO LATER THAN NOON ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8.

2. 9/9 **Subj: Hiroshima II**
Read: *A World Destroyed*, Appendices # B,C,D,E,I,J,L,O,S,U,V,W
Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, prefaces and chapters 1-2
Film:

SELECT 4 POSSIBLE RESEARCH TOPICS. WRITE A FEW SENTENCES EXPLAINING WHY THEY INTEREST YOU. IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A NUMBER ONE CHOICE WRITE A PARAGRAPH OR TWO ABOUT IT INSTEAD. EMAIL TO ME BY NOON ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15.

PART II. HOW THEY LEARNED TO WORRY AND STILL LOVE THE BOMB

3. 9/16 **Subj: Setting the Nuclear Agenda: From Truman to Eisenhower**
 Read: Powalski, *March to Armageddon*, chapters 1-6

SEND ME YOUR TOPIC PROPOSAL. INCLUDE (1) A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF YOUR TOPIC (2) A BRIEF RESEARCH PLAN (3) TWO OR THREE BOOKS AND/OR ARTICLES ABOUT YOUR SUBJECT (4) THE PRIMARY SOURCES YOU EXPECT TO REVIEW.

4. 9/23 **Subj: Khrushchev: Confronting Eisenhower's "New Look"**
 Read: Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, chapters 1-11
 Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, chapters 3, 4, 5 (to p. 143)

PART III. TERROR AT THE BRINK

5. 9/30 **Subj: The "Caribbean and October Crises," I**
 Read: Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, (complete)
6. 10/7 **Subj: The "Caribbean and October Crises", II**
 Read: Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, chaps 12-21
 Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, pp. 143-153
 Powalski, *March to Armageddon*, chapter 7
7. 10/14 **Subj: The Kennedy Cuban Missile Crisis Examined**
 Read: Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days (complete)*
 Sheldon Stern, *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory (complete)*

FROM THIS POINT ON WE WILL BE FOCUSING ON YOUR PAPERS

8. 10/21 **Subj: TBA**
 Read:
9. 10/28 **Subj: TBA**
10. 11/4 **Subj: TBA**
 Read:
11. 11/11 **Subj: Focus Topics - Individual meetings with Sherwin**
12. 11/18 **Subj: presentations - Group i**
13. 11/25 **THANKSGIVING week**

14. 12/2 presentations - Group 2

15. 12/9 **Final papers due**

Guidelines for Paper

You may choose any topic related to the nuclear arms race and the Cuban Missile Crisis that interests you. The key to a successful paper, however, is to select a theme specific enough so that your paper does not read like a general text book. At the same time, the topic should not be so narrow so that you have difficulty finding source materials. Professor Sherwin will review every student's topic and if necessary make suggestions for revision.

The paper's length should be about 20 pages (+ notes and bibliography) typed, double-spaced, with notes either as footnotes or endnotes. You must include several primary (original) sources together with secondary sources in your bibliography. There is no limit to the number of sources, but at a *minimum*, you should have 3-4 primary sources and 7-10 secondary sources (books and articles).

During the following weeks you will receive additional instructions regarding your papers.

Instructions for Oral Presentations

You will have approximately 8 minutes to present the findings of your research before the class. Your presentation must explain your major conclusions and the supporting evidence. If it is a debated topic explain the interpretations your research supports and contradicts. If you wish, you may bring in audio-visual materials, such as handouts, transparencies, slides, or power point. You must read your presentation, Figure roughly 2 minutes of double-spaced typed pages read at a moderate pace per page. Do not try to include too many details. Focus on the main ideas and evidence.

Items to remember in writing the seminar paper

An "A" paper will contain the following: at **least** 3-4 primary sources (contemporary newspapers, journal articles, memoirs, diplomatic documents, film, artworks, etc.) and at **least** 7-8 secondary sources (books and articles *about* the topic written later). More can be used, of course! The paper will cite sources correctly in either footnotes or endnotes. It will not be sufficient merely to list the sources, your paper will be judged on how well

you incorporate the information from the primary and secondary sources into your analysis. The bibliography will be separated into two sections: by primary and by