

# George Mason University

## Department of History & Art History

History 499 / Fall term 2018  
WEDNESDAY: 1:30—4:10  
Music Theater Bldg 1008

Professor Martin J. Sherwin  
Robinson B 335  
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### THE LONG CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS [CMC]: FROM HIROSHIMA TO HAVANA, 1945-1963

*A RESEARCH SEMINAR focusing on the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the policies of the U.S., Soviet and Cuban governments that led to the Crisis that transformed the Cold War.*

This seminar is the capstone experience of your history major. It is designed to help you develop your research skills with the goal of composing 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 4 integrated segments.. First, we will read and discuss a variety of texts and primary sources related to the seminar topic. Second, you will quickly choose a research topic . Third, as soon as everyone has a topic classes will be devoted to advancing the research and writing of your papers. Finally, near the end of the semester each student will present the highlights of his/her paper to the class. Details TK.

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

All students should have a GMU e-mail account.

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

#### THE SETTING:

Soon after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear weapons began to shape the military and diplomatic policies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Both superpowers rationalized their burgeoning nuclear arsenals as deterrent forces. Yet it was the amassing and deployment of these weapons that led directly to the

Cuban Missile Crisis, the seminal event in international politics that came close to precipitating a nuclear holocaust.

The readings, discussions and films associated with the course are provided as background and intellectual stimulation. ***Your research papers are the focus of the course and will be 80% of your grade, provided that your attendance\* and weekly work is satisfactory.***

**\*Class attendance is mandatory. If a personal emergency prevents you from attending class, you are obligated to email Professor Sherwin before class.**

**The honor code will be strictly applied.**

Class participation (including attendance) and oral presentation of your paper = 20% of your grade.

***Note: While the Senior Seminar counts 3 academic credits like other classes, the work is intensive and far more demanding than any of your other courses; more analogous to a graduate level seminar than an undergraduate course. Plan accordingly. You should be prepared for a weekly engagement with the assignments and your research paper. If you do, you will succeed.***

***Your paper will be a demonstration of your research and writing skills (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 schools, law schools, (or for a PhD in astrophysics. 😊)***

**The seminar’s goal is for each student to produce a near publishable research paper based on primary sources and the relevant secondary references.** Articles in *Diplomatic History* are your guide to the structure of a properly written scholarly article. Be sure to check out this journal.

\* We will begin immediately to discuss your paper topics.

**COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS: (NOTE: I reserve the right to alter the assignments if I think a change will benefit your research and writing.)**

1. Weekly discussions of the assigned readings and your progress on your research papers. Each week during the early part of the term a short essay on the week’s assignment is due as an email attachment to me **no later than 1 pm on Monday** prior to that assignment’s discussion.

2. **All your emails to me should be identified in the SUBJECT LINE beginning with: H499F18.**

**WHY?** This is the only way to assure that your submission is not overlooked in the sea of emails I receive daily. When I'm ready to read your submissions I enter **H499F18** in my email search box. Your correctly labeled emails appear and I read them. **REMEMBER: H499F18.** No variation please. If you send me an attachment it too should be identified as: **H499F18\_Your-last-name\_assignment ID.** For example: **H499F18\_Smith\_date.**

3. A **final research paper** of approximately 20-25 pages in length, the topic to be selected in consultation with me. SEE *Diplomatic History* for examples of articles you should emulate. I recommend that you begin IMMEDIATELY to make a list of possible topics. (Your paper need not focus on policy issues. You could write on cultural, social, or intellectual history, but I must approve the topic.)

3. **During one of our final class meetings (TK) each of you will present a formal 10 minute lecture to the class based on your research paper.** The format will simulate an **Organization of American Historians** panel on "The Cuban Missile Crisis in Perspective." Your presentation must be written (5 double spaced pages max.) and you must read it as a formal lecture. It should not be a summary of your paper, but rather a presentation of your most important findings and interpretation.

4. Early in the semester most of our classes will include a documentary film, a discussion of the reading assignment and conversations about your topics and your research progress.

**YOUR FINAL PAPER** (an electronic copy emailed to me) is **due on Monday, December 10 no later than 5pm.**

**Assigned books** (available in the Book Store). Additional readings will be provided electronically

Dobbs, Michael, *One Minute to Midnight* (Vintage)

Ellsberg, Daniel, *The Doomsday Machine* (Bloomsbury)

Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble* (Norton)

Sherwin, Martin J. *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and Its Legacies* (Stanford U. Press)

## ***SCHEDULE:***

### **1. 8/29 INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE**

#### **# The Cuban Missile Crisis As a Research Topic**

#### **Read BEFORE CLASS:**

Sherwin, "One Step From Nuclear War," *Prologue Magazine*, (Oct. 2012),  
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html>

**Film:** JFK: To The Brink (#6 The Untold History of the U.S.)

## **2. 9/5 HIROSHIMA AND THE ORIGINS OF THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE**

#Read: Sherwin, *A World Destroyed* (complete)

**Film:** “Hiroshima: Why the Bomb Was Dropped” (ABC, 1995)

**ASSIGNMENT # 1:** BASED ON A *WORLD DESTROYED* write an essay (@ 400 words) explaining the various ways the atomic bomb was “seen and valued” by the various principals (scientists, Roosevelt, Stimson, Byrnes, Truman etc.) before it was used. Check the appendices; several are relevant. (Footnote all references.) Email to me (H499F18 at start of subject line) by Monday, September 3.

**ASSIGNMENT # 2: NOTE:** The first major challenge of this course is to select a research topic that will hold your interest and can be completed in the time available. You want to find it asap. Skim through all the readings and list 5 possible topics.

\*Email your list with a short sentence about each topic no later than noon on Monday, September 3. We will discuss your choices in class.

**REMEMBER: H499F18**

## **3. 9/12 OVERVIEW OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS**

**NOTE: TODAY’S CLASS WILL MEET IN FENWICK LIBRARY’S MAIN READING ROOM** (We will be joined by about 30 Osher Life Long Learning Institute students.)

**Read:** Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, preface+ pp. 3-183  
(complete if you can.)

**Film:** “The Missiles of October: What the World Didn’t Know” (ABC, 1992, 90min)

**ASSIGNMENT #1:** Write a short essay of your choice based on Dobbs chapters 1-5. 300 words.

**ASSIGNMENT #2:** SELECT 2-3 RESEARCH TOPICS. Write several sentences explaining why they interest you. Email to me by noon on Monday, September 10.

#### 4. 9/19           **THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION and the CMC**

**Read:** Fursenko & Naftali, *One Hell of A Gamble* Introduction + chapters 1-5  
*The Doomsday Machine*, Prologue+Intro+chapters 1,6,7

**Film:** “The Bay of Pigs”

**ASSIGNMENT #1** You Are Fursenko (Russian) Or Naftali (American). From Your National Perspective Write An Oped (400W) For A Russian or USA newspaper on “The Historical Significance Of The Bay Of Pigs Invasion.”

Assignment #2 Submit Your Paper Topic. Write several paragraphs explaining why you chose it, why you think it’s important, and how you will begin to research it. Email both assignments by noon Monday, sept 17.

#### 5. 9/26           **INSIDE THE CMC: THE EXCOMM MEETINGS**

**Read:** Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine*, Prologue+Intro+145-222.

**Film:** JFK Speech + CBS News Reports Oct 24 and 26

**ASSIGNMENT:** Several months before the Soviet missiles in Cuba were discovered President Kennedy had a recording system secretly installed in the Oval Office and the Cabinet Room. All of the meeting that he had with his advisors (the Executive Committee of the National Security Council: ExComm) in those locations were recorded without the knowledge of the participants (with the likely exception of Robert Kennedy.) The meetings can be accessed at: <http://archive.millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings/kennedy/jfk-norton-volumes>

Each of you will assigned a day of ExComm meetings (October 16 thru October 27 — Khrushchev agreed to remove his missiles on October 28). Your assignment is to assess the advice the President received and how he evaluated the challenge he faced. (@ 600 words). Email to me by noon on Monday.

#### 6. 10/3           **THE CMC FROM THE ARCHIVES**

**Read:** Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of A Gamble*, chaps 6-14

**Film:** TK

**ASSIGNMENT #1:** Once again you are Fursenko Or Naftali, But if you were Fursenko last time you are now Naftali. From your national perspective write an oped (400w) for a Russian orUSA newspaper on the current relevance of the cuban missile crisis.

Assignment #2: Submit a preliminary bibliography (list of books, articles and primary sources) that you intend to research for your paper. Submit via email as usual.

**7. 10/10 TK Hopefully you will be into your papers and we will discuss them**

Read:

**Film: TK**

**ASSIGNMENT #1:** REFERENCING *One Minute to Midnight* (and *One Hell of a Gamble* if you wish to include it) write an essay on “Fidel Castro’s Role in the Cuban Missile Crisis.” (@ 500 w)

**ASSIGNMENT #2:** SUBMIT 8 PAGES OF DRAFT NARRATIVE WITH REFERENCE NOTES.

**8. 10/17 TK Individual meetings with Sherwin to review your drafts**

9. 10/24 ASSIGNMENT: SUBMIT 12 - 15 PAGES OF DRAFT NARRATIVE WITH REFERENCE NOTES by Monday Oct 22.

10. 10/31 REVIEW OF YOUR DRAFTS — ONE ON ONE meetings with Professor Sherwin

11. 11/7 **All Research Week** - no class - ????? DEPENDS ON YOUR PROGRESS

12. 11/14 **Last Draft and one on one discussions as necessary with Professor Sherwin.** Details TK.

13. 11/21 Research Week and Thanksgiving — Drive Carefully

14. 11/29 INDIVIDUAL FORMAL PRESENTATIONS OF YOUR ESSAYS

15. 12/5 INDIVIDUAL FORMAL PRESENTATIONS OF YOUR ESSAYS

**YOUR FINAL PAPER** (an electronic copy emailed to me) is **due on Monday, December 10 no later than 5pm.**

*NOTE: No extensions or Incomplete. Please Plan carefully.*

## Guidelines for Paper

You may choose any topic related to the nuclear arms race and the Cuban Missile Crisis. 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 that you have difficulty finding source materials.

I 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).

Read *Diplomatic History* for examples. (Many good articles on CMC).

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 is one that is on track to be considered for publication in a scholarly journal. It should be well organized and well written. It should have a clear thesis (interpretation) that is supported by adequate evidence. It should reference 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 secondary

sources.