

**HISTORY 39500-003
JUNIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR
POLITICS AND CULTURE IN COLD WAR AMERICA: THE 1950S**

FALL 2010

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This course is intended for undergraduate history majors and other students interested in the historian's craft. This seminar will examine the social, cultural, and political events of the 1950s. This was an especially transformative era in United States history, and the complex interplay between politics and culture could not be more significant for shaping modern American life and thought. Topics include: the growth of anticommunism foreign and domestic; development of consumer culture; the role of Hollywood and television in creating new cultural forms; the rise of a powerful youth culture; the emergence of rock and roll; the beat generation; and the emerging struggle for civil rights and equality in the South. The class is a mixture of lectures, class discussions based on the readings, interpretation and discussion of visual presentations (videos), exams, and a semester-long research paper based on primary sources.

Books available for purchase:

Stephen Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*

Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon*

Sloan Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Melba Pattillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry*

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research and Writing* (4th ed.)

The assigned readings are available for purchase at Follett's and University Bookstores. I would hope that there would be used copies available. They are also widely available with commercial booksellers and online sellers.

Additional Web Resource: <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/>

Course Outline

Week 1: *Introduction to the 1950s*

- August 23: Course Introduction and Overview
- August 25: Popular Images of the 1950s: Part I
- August 27: Popular Images of the 1950s: Part II

Week 2: *The Crucible: McCarthy and McCarthyism*

- August 30: **Library Tour/Orientation**
- September 1: McCarthyism: National
- September 3: McCarthyism: State and Local

READ: Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapters 1 ("Politicizing Culture") and 2 ("Seeing Red")

Week 3: *By Bomb's Early Light*

- **September 6: Labor Day—No Class**
- September 8: "Atomic Café"/**In class response 1**
- September 10: **Quiz (1) on and Discussion of *Alas, Babylon*/General Paper Topics Due**

Week 4: *Happy Days*

- September 13: The Politics of Conservatism: "I like Ike"

- September 15: Consumer Culture
- September 17: The Crabgrass Frontier: Suburbia

READ: Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapters 3 (“Assenting”) and 4 (“God Bless America”)

Week 5: *The Media—the Medium—is the Message*

- September 20: “Let’s Play House”: Television and Suburban Life
- September 22: HUAC and Tinsel Town Investigations
- September 24: “Hollywood in the 1950s”/**Bibliographies Due**

READ: Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapters 5 (“Informing”), 6 (“Reeling: The Politics of Film”), and 7 (“Boxed In: Television and the Press”)

Week 6: *The Hidden Persuaders, The Hidden Invaders*

- September 27: “Invasion of the Body Snatchers” Part 1
- September 29: “Invasion of the Body Snatchers” Part 2/ **In class response 2**
- October 1: **Quiz (2) on and Discussion of *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit***

Week 7: *Civilities and Civil Rights*

- October 4: *Brown v. Board* and the Rise of Peaceful Nonviolent Protest
- October 6: Eyes on the Prize Documentary: “Fighting Back”/**In Class Response 3**
- October 8: **No class: student library research day**

Week 8: *Race and American Politics and Culture in the 1950s*

- **October 11: Fall Break—No Class**
- October 13: The Politics of Popular Culture: Race and R&B
- October 15: **Quiz (3) on and Discussion of *Warriors Don’t Cry***

Week 9: *The Devil’s Music*

- October 18: Race, Rock, and Elvis/**Project Progress Report Due**
- October 20: Rock’s Evil Geniuses and the “Race” Question
- October 22: **AMERICA** Strikes Back: Public Reaction to an Repression of Rock

Week 10: *Loud, Fast, and Out of Control*

- October 25: “Blackboard Jungle” Part 1
- October 27: “Blackboard Jungle” Part 2/**in Class Response 4**
- October 29: **No class: student library research day/mandatory consultations (sign-up)**

Week 11: *One-on-One Consultations*

- November 1: **No class: student library research day/mandatory consultations (sign-up)**
- November 3: **No class: student library research day/mandatory consultations (sign-up)**
- November 5: **No class: student library research day**

Week 12: *Popular Anti-Pop Agitators*

- November 8: Beat Culture
- November 10: Documentary: “The Source”
- November 12: **No class: student library research day**

Week 13: *Being Jack Kerouac*

- November 15: Documentary: “Kerouac”
- November 17: **Quiz (4) on and Discussion of *On the Road***
- November 19: **No class: student library research day/consultation (voluntary)**

Thanksgiving Break: November 22-26

Week 14: *Peer Group Evaluations*

- November 29: **Four polished Drafts due in class for distribution to peer group members**
- December 1: **No class: Time for evaluating peer group paper drafts**
- December 3: Peer Evaluations

Week 15: *Wrap-Up: The Meaning of Life*

- December 6: Wrap Up and Final Sober Second Thoughts: The Meaning of Life
- December 8: **No class: Time for Paper Revisions**
- December 10: **No class: Time for Paper Revisions**

Exam Week:

- December 17: **Final Paper Versions Due to Professor Morrison by 5 p.m.**

Assignments A variety of writing assignments are due throughout the semester. The core of this class, however, is a 12-15 page term paper that will be based on primary sources. I am appending a list of possible topics (Appendix B), all of which bear generally on the material covered in the class and the readings. Each student will select a general topic from that list or of her or his own choosing (and with my approval). S/he will then compile an extensive bibliography of not less than twenty (20) entries—a combination of primary (documents, letters, newspapers, congressional debates, etc.), secondary sources (books and articles written by historians on the topic), and relevant internet resources (**no more than five web sites may be used in the bibliography and paper**). On Monday, October 18, students will also hand in a two-to-three page essay based on outside readings on that chosen topic which will serve both as a **progress report** and as the point of departure for our one-on-one consultations on October 29, November 1 and 3. The progress report will be graded and is worth a total of **10 points**. A first draft of the paper to be reviewed by me and two of your peers is due in class on Monday, November 29; and a revised, final version of the paper is to be handed in on the Friday of finals week (December 17). The process for writing the paper will be described in Appendix A.

Class Participation

At each discussion section (four in all) students will take a ten-minute quiz on the lectures and assigned readings; each will be worth **10 points**. The quiz will take the form of a short (one-to-two page), exploratory writing assignment such as a thought letter or a legal brief based on a particular issue that has been stressed in the readings and lectures. Following the quiz, there will be a discussion of the materials covered in class and in the assigned readings. Students will receive between **1-10 points**, depending on their level of participation in discussion. One point is awarded for attending class and staying awake (if you nod off, then you receive nothing—and the rest of the class will sneak out and leave you snoring away). Ten points will be awarded for enthusiastic participation.

In-Class Responses

There will be opportunities during the semester to respond spontaneously and *very* informally to class material (lectures, films, discussion, etc.). These generally ungraded in-class written response pieces will follow the four major movies/videos scheduled for the semester and will be worth a total of **twenty (20)** points.

Grading:

Quizzes—4 @ 0-10 points:	0-40 points
Discussions—4 @ 0-10 points:	0-40 points
Bibliography:	0-20 points
Progress Report:	0-10 points
In-Class Responses—4 @ 0-5 points:	0-20 points
Peer Evaluation:	0-10 points
Final Paper:	0-60 points

Final Grade Calculation:

A range: 200-180 points
B range: 179-160 points
C range: 159-140 points
D range: 139-120 points
F(ailing): 119 and (look out) below

APPENDIX A**PAPER-WRITING GUIDE FOR HISTORY 395**

- ◆ **Task:** The purpose of this course is twofold: first, to familiarize the student with the social, cultural, and political events of the 1950s; second, to introduce students to the historian's craft. That is, the course is meant to both discuss and think about a particular historical topic and to instruct students in the art of research and writing history. Since, however, only a small portion of the class—if any—will do postgraduate work in history (these would be the insane among you), this class has a larger purpose. I hope to give students skills—researching, note-taking, critical thinking, and essay writing—that they can deploy and employ in other classes and in their own professional and personal lives. To that end, each student will choose a theme on a personally selected topic and write a 12-15 page paper based largely on primary-source research. After reading, digesting, and analyzing the primary-source materials that relate to your topic, each student will write an essay that assesses carefully how this issue reflects the mood, culture, politics, or social experiences of individuals or groups in the 1950s.
- ◆ **Audience:** Since I already am (or allege to be) an expert on America in the 1950s, please assume that I know all of the answers to, and opinions on, your essay option. Therefore, students will assume for the time being that they are historians (“oh the humanity!”) and are using their research findings to inform their colleagues in this class about some aspect of the politics or culture of this formative period in United States history. Put in other terms, I want each student to situate her/his work in the context of the 1950s and to explain to the average undergraduate (if such a person exists) how this particular issue reveals one of the many aspects of this age of conformity and, without contradiction, revolt. **(Though your classmates are your audience, anyone using “like” as an all-purpose verb will automatically fail the course.)**
- ◆ **Format:** The paper should be no less than twelve pages and no more than fifteen pages, exclusive of endnotes. It must be typed, double-spaced, and properly footnoted (here see Brundage, *Going to the Sources*). The essay must begin with a thesis that addresses the proposed topic option, and is supported by evidence drawn primarily—though not exclusively—from the primary sources that you have examined. Please use spell check and grammar check before handing in the draft and final versions: it will save you embarrassment and me migraines.
- ◆ **Expectations:** Students should conceive of this writing assignment as a semester-long process (here do not insert “ordeal” for “process”). This will be a very different approach than the slap-dash, frenetically written, end-of-semester paper that has proven historically to be a disappointment to the author (you) and the reader (me). The first step will be to select a topic. This will be done by Friday, September 10, in third week of class.

On the Friday of the fifth week of class (September 24), students will hand in their bibliographies. On Friday, November 19, in the thirteenth week of class students will provide four copies of the first version (or draft) of the paper. One will be given to two peers (classmates) for review; I will critique the other. Although peer reviewers or (reviews) will be graded on the thoughtfulness of their contribution to this collaborative effort, **no grade** will be given to the first draft. On Friday, December 3 during the fourteenth week of class the peer groups will meet to exchange critiques and comment on the paper drafts in their “cell.” The final version of the paper will be due to me by 5 p.m. on the last day of exam week, December 17.

- ◆ **Criteria for Evaluation:** After the short essay on the topic (week nine) has been returned, students will receive a guide to the criteria by which the final paper is to be graded. It will weigh different features according to importance (e.g., thesis statement, evidence, argumentation, historicism (is this topic analyzed on its own terms?), grammar, etc.). Each student and two peers will evaluate her/his first draft on the basis of this analytical framework, as will I. The final product will be evaluated on the same basis. Though the particulars—and the rating form—will come later, the emphasis is, on the whole, on your ability to think about and analyze materials like a historian. This means being more concerned with cause and effect (“how” and “why” things happen) than a narrative of “what” happened. As one of my esteemed colleagues has put it, the goal of this paper assignment (and the class generally) is to understand that history is not a given (there is no book-o-history that contains “the truth”). Rather it is an ever evolving product of a dialogue between the past (as it emerges from your primary sources) and the present (your inquiring mind and analytical ability).

APPENDIX B

Possible List of Paper Topics

The following is a broad but by no means exhaustive list of subject areas from which you could carve a small, discrete manageable topic for a report and research paper.

- Economy
- Consumer Culture
- Mass Advertising
- Television
- Suburban Life
- Women
- Cold War
- Korean War
- McCarthyism
- Nuclear Weapons
- Civil Rights
- Rock and Roll
- Jazz
- Hollywood Films
- Horror Movies
- Science Fiction
- Comic Books
- Juvenile Delinquency
- The Beats

APPENDIX C
General Bibliography: The 1950s

- Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Fifties*. Columbia University Press, 1983.
- William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*. Oxford University Press, 6/e 2006.
- Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s*. University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941-1960*. W.W. Norton, 1988.
- Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade -- And After: America, 1945-1960*. Vintage, 1960.
- David Halberstam, *The Fifties*. Villard Books, 1993.
- Jeffrey Hart, *When the Going Was Good: American Life in the Fifties*. Crown, 1982.
- Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*. Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History*. Harper-Collins, 1973
- Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why*. Princeton, 2005.
- Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States, 1945-1960*. South End Press, 1982.
- William E. Leuchtenberg, *A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945*. Little, Brown, 1983.
- George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America: "A Rainbow at Midnight"*. Bergin and Garvey, 1982.
- William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972*. Little, Brown, 1973.
- Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak. *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were*. Doubleday, 1975.
- J. Ronald Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties*. Dembner Books, 1986.
- William L. O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1960*. Free Press, 1986.
- James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. Wesleyan University Press, 1989.
- Geoffrey Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness: The American People, 1945-1963*. Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1979.
- Robert J. Samuelson, *The Good Life and Its Discontents: The American Dream in the Age of Entitlement, 1945-1990*. Times Books, 1995.
- Frederick F. Siegel, *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan*. Hill and Wang, 1984.
- Carl Solberg, *Riding High: America in the Cold War*. Mason and Lipscomb, 1973.
- Howard Zinn, *Postwar America: 1945-1971*. Bobbs-Merrill, 1973.