Popular culture at times reflects and interprets the temper of society and politics; at other times it challenges social and political norms. This honors-only, undergraduate research seminar on U.S. politics broadly construed provides a topical introduction to the popular culture and domestic politics of the Cold War era, with an emphasis on viewing modern American history through mass media forms such as television, novels, music, and Hollywood films. The class will examine the impact of the nuclear era and the half-century global power struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union through a focus on the intersection of popular and political culture on the American home front. Themes include the dawn of the atomic age, the boundaries of political dissent, the problems of historical memory, the privatization of suburban family life, and the cultural responses to key episodes such as the onset of the international Cold War, McCarthyism, and Vietnam from the US involvement to its withdraw during President Nixon’s administration. The course will be a mixture of lectures, visual presentations, full-length movies, and discussion-based class meetings. Students will write a primary-source research paper or complete a multimedia presentation on a topic of their choice.

Books available for purchase:
Stephen Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*
Sloan Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
Pat Frank, *Alas, Babylon*
Tim O’Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Send Me Home*
Jean Stein, *Edie: American Girl*
Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*
Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*

The assigned books 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. The Whitfield text is on reserve at the Hicks Undergraduate Library. Other readings will be available on Blackboard or distributed in class.

Course Outline:
Monday, January 7:  Course Introduction and Overview: “Atomic Cafe”

**Part I: The Politics of Popular Culture: A Cold War Abroad and Conformity at Home: 1950s**

**Monday, January 14:**  Popular Images of the 1950s and the Politics of McCarthyism
READ:  Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapters 1 (“Politicizing Culture”), 2 (“Seeing Red”), and 7 (“Boxed In: Television and the Press”)
First in-class exploratory writing exercise

**Monday, January 28:**  The Home Front: Suburbia and Consumer Culture
READ:  Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapters 3 (“Assenting”) and 4 (“God Bless America”)
Second in-class exploratory writing exercise

**Monday, February 4:**  “Invasion of the Body Snatchers”/Discussion: *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
READ:  Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*
First response essay done in class

**Monday, February 11:**  Dissent in the 1950s: Teen Culture, Elvis, and Jack Kerouac
READ:  Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, Chapter 8 (“Dissenting: Pity the Land”) and 9 (“Thawing: A Substitute for Victory”)
Third in-class exploratory writing exercise
Transition: Nuclear Nightmares

Monday, February 18: “Dr. Strangelove”/Discussion: Alas, Babylon
READ: Frank, Alas, Babylon
Second response essay done in class

Part II: The Politics of Popular Culture: 1960s

Monday, February 25: A Turbulent Decade: Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam
READ: Note: students will divide this list of articles among themselves.
- “And That’s the Way it Was,” [1964-through Tet Offensive], Chester Pach, in Farber, ed. *The Sixties*.
Fourth in-class exploratory writing exercise

Monday, March 4: “Two Days in October”/Discussion If I Die in a Combat Zone
READ: O’Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone*
Third response essay done in class

Annotated Project Description due

Monday, March 18: The Counterculture and the Transformation of Jimi Hendrix
READ: Note: students will divide this list of articles among themselves.
- “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation,” Peter Braunstein, in Braunstein and Doyle, eds., *Imagine Nation*.
- “Sonic Anarchy: The Making of the MCS,” by Mathew Bartkowski (PDF)
- “Sexual Revolution(s),” Beth Bailey, in Farber, ed., *The Sixties*.
Fifth in-class exploratory writing exercise

READ: Stein, *Edie*
Fourth response essay done in class

Part III: Turning Inward: 1970s

Monday, April 1: The Nixon Presidency and the Crisis of Watergate
READ: Note: students will divide this list of articles among themselves.

Monday, April 8: “Network”/Discussion Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail
READ: Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*
Fifth response essay done in class
Monday, April 15:  No Class
Monday, April 22:  No Class
Friday, May 3:  Final papers and projects due

GRADING:

- **In-Class Exploratory Writing Exercises**
  At the end of five of the six class periods in which there is a presentation (January 14, January 28, February 11, February 25, and March 18 [I am omitting April 1]), you will take several minutes at the end of the class to sum up the day’s lecture or power point presentation and to prepare questions that I will respond to at the beginning of the next class period. I will ask you two questions: (1) What is the most significant thing you learned today? and 2) What question is uppermost in your mind at the conclusion of this class session? Each of these writing exercises will be worth 0-2 points and a maximum of 10 points for the semester and together they will be worth 10 percent of the course grade.

- **In-Class Responses**
  Over the course of the semester, you will write five informal in-class response essays reacting to questions based on the discussion of the readings, documentaries, and movies we will see during the course of the semester. The purpose of these short responses is not to improve your writing skills but to stimulate thinking about issues, questions, and problems raised by your study of popular culture and politics, and to serve as a summary of your reflections on class discussions and the movies and documentaries. So you will be judged not on things like spelling, organization, and grammar but instead on things like the process and quality of thought. I will be looking for evidence that you are thinking seriously about history and wrestling with concepts and issues raised in the readings, class presentations and discussions, and other class materials, such as videos. Each of these in-class essays will be worth 0-5 points and a maximum of 25 points for the semester and together they will be worth 25 percent of the course grade. They will be done at the end of each movie (or documentary) and book discussion class period.

- **Class Participation and Attendance**
  The success of an upper-division, enrollment-capped history honors course depends greatly on the willingness of everyone to participate actively in discussion. It also depends on everyone having read the assigned material. The quality as well as the frequency of your participation in discussion will be factored into your grade for the course. There are five scheduled discussion days. I will use the following system in grading class participation: failure to attend class will earn an F (or 0) for that day; attendance without any participation in the discussion will earn a C (or 3) for that day; and participation in discussion will earn a score ranging from B- (4) to A+ (5) for that day. The discussion component of the course will be worth a maximum of 25 points and will constitute 25 percent of your grade.

- **Final Project**
  All students will be required to complete a final project—a paper or a multimedia presentation that reflects one of the many themes of the course. An annotated, one-paragraph project description (topic and type of presentation) is due in class on Monday March 4. The paper or the multimedia presentation will be worth 40 points and it will constitute 40 percent of your final grade.

The following are options for a Final Project paper, which should be ten to twelve pages double-spaced:

A **research project** in primary sources (contemporary newspapers, magazines, etc.,) that examines public reaction to one of the events covered in this course. For example one might explore the critical response to the music of Elvis Presley. That is, you might see what the hue and cry was over Elvis’s various television appearances in 1956. What was the political and public reaction to the McCarty Army hearings and how does it comport with the theme of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*? How did the press uncover then cover Watergate and how did it affect the relationship between the Fourth Estate and politics and politicians?

A **paper that assesses the political content of contemporary novels** (minimum of 3) or **movies** (minimum of 3). So for example, you might want to build on *Alas, Babylon* and read other apocalyptic views of the nuclear nightmare such as *Fail Safe or On the Beach* and compare them with more modern post-apocalyptic novels such as *The Postman or War Day*. You might also take a look at a selection of beat writings from the 1950s and contrast them with counterculture autobiographies such as Peter Coyote’s *Sleeping Where I Fall*. Or if you are inclined to analyze
movies you might look at the various science fiction movies of the 1950s which are more about the Cold War than they are about “body snatchers” that emerge from giant pods. There is also a raft of movies from the 1950s decade regarding teen culture and juvenile delinquency: “Blackboard Jungle” or Marlon Brando in “The Wild One” come to mind. And the antiauthoritarian movies of the 1960s are far, far too numerous to mention.

Finally, a paper that is based on a careful reading of memoirs of significant and not-so-significant historical actors. These can be grouped in a particular time period (say the 1950s or the 1960s) or they can follow a topical thread—beats and counterculture figures, or musicians (Dylan, Pete Seeger, Hendrix, etc.) who made the music of protest—or protest music.

The following are options for a Final Project multimedia presentation:
This option may take many different shapes. In the past, students have approached it from very different angles. One semester a student did a Power Point presentation on the HUAC investigation of the “Hollywood Ten” that was of sufficient length and analytical quality to be used in a classroom lecture on the topic. In the last iteration of this honors course another student did a “film” in which he analyzed science fiction movies of the 1950s, relating each in its own way to the Cold War. The student interspersed clips from the movies with “talking head” shots of himself analyzing the contents of the film. That same semester another honors student created an audio/visual presentation in which she compared protest songs from the Vietnam era and more patriotic tunes from the Iraq War. The student spliced together a medley from each period and overlaid the audio with visuals from scenes of combat from both theaters of operation. Finally yet another honors student took various aspects of popular culture—sports, music, and film to illustrate the intersection of popular culture and politics. For sports in the 1940s she looked at the reaction to Jackie Robinson breaking the “color line” in baseball. For the 1950s it was the popular reaction against rock and roll in the payola scandals. And for film she looked at the antiestablishment theme of the 1960s in “Cool Hand Luke.” This list of projects is meant to be suggestive; you may have your own ideas about a multimedia presentation.

Final Projects will be due to me on the Friday of Exam Week, May 3

To summarize:

| In-class exploratory writing exercises: | 10 points |
| In-class responses: | 25 points |
| Discussion: | 25 points |
| Final Project | 40 points |

Final Grade Calculation:
A range: 100-90 points
B range: 89-80 points
C range: 79-70 points
D range: 69-60 points
F(ailing): 59 and (look out) below

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Purdue University and this professor prohibit “dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty.” (University Regulations, Part 5, Section III, B, 2, a). In this class it will lead to a failing grade (0) on the assignment. Depending on the severity of the incident it may lead to further consequences. And you should know that faculty members are required to report all cases of plagiarism to the Office of the Dean of Students. Honesty and mutual respect are the coins of the realm in my courses. Please do your own work. For a set of helpful guidelines, see: http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php

UNIVERSITY EMERGENCY POLICY

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: my email address: mmorrison@purdue.edu, and the History Department main office phone: 494-4132.