

History 492 — The Kennedy Assassination in Global Perspective

Spring 2026

Course Description

This course offers a **global and comparative examination** of one of the most significant and controversial events of the 20th century: the assassination of U.S. President **John F. Kennedy** on **November 22, 1963**.

Students will:

- Analyze the **forensics** of the crime.
 - Explore the assassination's impact on:
 - Partisan politics
 - The executive presidency
 - U.S. political culture
 - Evaluate the construction of the **Kennedy "myth"** and multiple **conspiracy theories**.
 - Situate the event within the **Cold War**, including:
 - Relations with the Soviet Union under Nikita Khrushchev
 - The struggle over Cuba and Fidel Castro
 - Examine global patterns of **political violence**, comparing JFK's assassination to other cases involving:
 - Presidents
 - Monarchs
 - Tsars
 - Commissars
 - Civil-rights leaders
 - Political candidates
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Course Policies

Course Expectations

Students are expected to:

- **Complete all assigned readings**
- **Listen actively** in class and take detailed notes
- **Participate** in discussions
- Give **one 5-minute in-class presentation** based on outside research
- Attend class regularly

Attendance

- Attendance is **required**.
 - Students who arrive late may be counted as **absent**.
 - Excessive **unexcused absences** may reduce the final grade.
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Grading

Your final grade is the **average of seven equal parts**:

1. **Participation**, including:
 - Class discussions
 - The 5-minute presentation
2. **Six handwritten, in-class essays**, each equally weighted

Grading Philosophy

This course does **not** use mechanical point systems

→ Instead, grading is based on:

- Quality of analysis
 - Depth of interpretation
 - Creative and interpretive synthesis of **lectures + readings**
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Required Readings

Books

- **Vincent Bugliosi**, *Parkland* (Norton, 2013)

- **Warren Commission**, *Report of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy*
 - Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/jfk/warren-commission-report/>

Articles and Chapters

- **Craig Warren**, "Presidential Wounds: The JFK Assassination and the White Male Body," *Men and Masculinities* 10/5 (2008): 557–582
- **Lawrence Freedman**, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (Oxford, 2002)
 - Available via Purdue Libraries Online

Note:

Additional readings may be provided on **Brightspace**.