

The Kennedy Assassination in Global Perspective. History 492. Spring 2026.

This course offers a global and comparative perspective on one of the most significant and controversial events of the twentieth century: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on 22 November 1963. Students will uncover the forensics of the crime. We will explore its implications for partisan politics, the executive presidency, and political culture. We will weigh the nature of the Kennedy “myth” and the variety of conspiracy theories arrayed against it. But we will open our analysis to an even wider field of vision. How was the assassination part of a global series of events, linked to the Cold War challenge with the USSR under Nikita S. Khrushchev and to one of the fiercest battles of that war, the struggle for Cuba under Fidel Castro? We will also study the comparative dimensions of the crime. How was the assassination part of a culture of political violence in the modern era that has counted the murders of presidents, monarchs, tsars, commissars, civil-rights leaders, and political candidates?

Policies

For the course content and assigned readings, please see the schedule below. As a community of learners, students will read the assigned texts; listen carefully in class and take detailed notes; participate in class discussions; and offer one presentation (5 minutes) in class, based on some outside research. Our course is focused on the classroom experience. Attendance is required. Students arriving late may be counted as absent. Excessive, unexcused absences may result in the loss of several points on the final grade.

Grading

The final grade is based on the average of seven (7) equal parts: Participation (discussions and the presentation); and each of the six (6) Essays (handwritten, in-class). I do not assign mechanical points. Rather, I grade for excellence, by the quality of your work and your creative, interpretive synthesis of the course lectures and readings.

Readings

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

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

Warren, Craig. “Presidential Wounds: The JFK Assassination and the White Male Body,” *Men and Masculinities* 10/5 (2008): 557–582.

Freedman, Lawrence. *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (Oxford 2002). Libraries Online.