

**26:510:531 Topics in American Diplomatic History:
*Culture and the Cold War***

Graduate class, Fall 2008

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Office hours: Monday 4-5pm; appointments by arrangement

Course description

We associate early cold war America with red scares, black lists, and atomic anxiety: a paranoid society in which children were taught to "duck and cover," while Dr. Strangelove learnt how to stop worrying and love the bomb. But how and why did these phenomena become the markers of a distinctive "cold war culture"? Was there, indeed, such a thing? And how did "ordinary Americans" understand the character of an ideological struggle at once global and local?

Focusing predominantly on the period from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, this course will explore the cultural contours of the cold war from multiple vantage points. Although we'll devote considerable time to pondering cold war culture within the United States, the syllabus is designed to "transnationalize" our understandings of this phenomenon. Readings will therefore examine how cultural assumptions of Otherness shaped notions of enmity and identity during the cold war, and how cultural exchange played a role in this global war of ideas and in processes of both national and transnational identity construction. Where possible, we'll examine how those on the far side of the iron curtain perceived the contest between communism and capitalism; how they responded to western cultural imports, and generated their own antidotes or adaptations. A key theme of the course is the duality between a culture of "containment" and practices of circulation, exchange, and mobility—however asymmetrical and constrained the latter may have been.

The readings are drawn from a range of different disciplines: history; American studies; cultural theory; film studies; and international relations. In addition to works of scholarship, however, we'll also be studying primary sources—principally fiction and film. Developing skills of cultural interpretation and analysis will be central to this class.

Readings

(Note: This book order was placed exclusively with NJ Books on the corner of Bleeker and University Avenue.)

Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (2nd ed., Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; ISBN 0-8018-5195-5 pbk)

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Plume Centennial edition, 2003; ISBN 0-452-28423-6 pbk)

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Da Capo Press; ISBN 0-306-80323-2 pbk)

Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy* (Princeton University Press, 2003; ISBN 10-0691114552, pbk)

Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate* (with new introduction by Louis Menand; Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003; ISBN 1-56858-270-6)

Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-61* (Palgrave/Macmillan, 1997; ISBN 10-0312176805, pbk)

Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (University of California Press, 2000; ISBN 0-520-21139-1, pbk)

Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2004; ISBN 10-067402260-2, pbk)

Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004; ISBN 0-8078-5548-0, pbk)

Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (University of California Press, 2003; ISBN 0-520-23230-5, pbk)

William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American* (WW Norton, 1999; ISBN 10-0393318672, pbk)

Van Gosse, *Where The Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of A New Left* (Verso, 1993; ISBN 0-86091-690-1, pbk)

Recommended background reading on the history of the cold war:

Robert McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2003)

Class format, assignments, and assessment

This class will be a discussion-based seminar. I propose to take a few minutes at the start of each meeting to elucidate why I chose that week's reading and what it contributes to the larger themes and issues explored by the class. However, the most significant element of each meeting will be a group discussion of the material we've all just read. So, for this to work effectively, it's imperative that every member of the group shares responsibility for making a dynamic conversation happen.

To prepare for class please read the assigned material closely and thoughtfully. Don't get bogged down in taking copious notes, but rather think hard about what the author's key thesis is, and how they've gone about the business of elaborating it. Do they succeed on their own terms? If not, why not? Are the terms themselves ones you find persuasive? And if not, how might they have been tweaked? Or should the whole enterprise have been jettisoned altogether?

As you read, think about both conceptual and methodological questions:

- ❑ How does the author understand the notion of "cold war," and how important is explaining the character and dynamics of the cold war to their interpretive project?
- ❑ Likewise, how does the author conceive "culture"?
- ❑ How has the author approached their topic? How tightly argued is the thesis?
- ❑ What kind and range of sources does s/he use? How skillfully does s/he handle these materials?

Before class you should note down:

- 1) Any points of argument or approach that you think could helpfully be elaborated in class discussion. Are there things that seem confusing, contradictory, or that don't add up?
- 2) At least two issues posed by the author that you'd like to talk about further in class. These should emerge *directly* from a close reading of the book rather than taking the reading as a loose point of departure for rumination. Again, try to hone in on the more provocative/problematic elements of the work to spark discussion rather than getting bogged down in points of detail.

Discussion points should be emailed to me by 7am on the morning of class. They will contribute 30% to your final grade for the class.

Paper assignment: the remaining 70% of your grade for this class will derive from a paper that you'll submit at the end of the semester. Your task is to identify a cultural artifact (a movie; novel; painting; piece of music; building/installation) and to offer a detailed analysis that reveals the way in which this source serves as a clarifying prism for salient dimensions of cold war culture. Your essay should draw on both primary and secondary sources: i.e. how contemporaries responded to this item and what historians/scholars have subsequently made of it, and the context within which it was produced and received. We will talk in more detail about the paper in class.

Schedule of classes

09/08 Introduction:
Thinking about culture, cold war, and the cultural cold war(s)

US cultures and ideologies of cold war

- 09/15 A culture of conformity?
Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*
- 09/22 The ascendancy of totalitarianism:
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
[Supplementary reading: Isaac Deutscher, "The Mysticism of Cruelty"
George Kennan, "Totalitarianism in the Modern World"
NSC-68 "US Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950
<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm>]
- 09/29 Cold war liberalism: the politics of hardness
Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center*
[Supplementary reading: K.A. Cuordileone, "Politics in An Age of Anxiety: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960,"
Journal of American History 87, ii (2000): 515-45
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/pdfplus/2568762.pdf>]
- 10/06 Behavioral scientists enlist
Ron Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy*
- 10/13 McCarthy, momism, and "menticide"
Richard Condon, *The Manchurian Candidate*
[Supplementary reading:
Rear Admiral D.V. Gallery, "We Can Baffle the Brainwashers!," *Saturday Evening Post*, Jan. 22, 1955
<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ehost/pdf?vid=6&hid=107&sid=9a075fd4-61eb-4067-8740-4968339e10bb%40sessionmgr102>

Deadline: hand in brief one page statement of intent with regard to the final paper. What source will you be analyzing? How did you come to choose it, and why?

Culture across the Blocs: competing internationalisms

10/20 Perforating the Curtain

Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*

[Supplementary reading: David Riesman, "The Nylon War"

Brien McMahon, "We Can Get Through the Iron Curtain," *New York Times*, June 24, 1951]

10/27 Consumption and circulation, Soviet-style

In-class screening: *East Side Story*

Reading:

Anne E. Gorsuch, "'There's No Place Like Home:' Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism," *Slavic Review* 62, iv (Winter 2003): 760-785

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/pdfplus/3185654.pdf>

Tina Mai Chen, "Internationalism and Cultural Experience: Soviet Films and Popular Chinese Understandings of the Future in the 1950s," *Cultural Critique* 58 (2004): 82-114

http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/journals/cultural_critique/v058/58.1chen02.pdf

Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Krushchev," *Slavic Review* 61, ii (Summer 2002): 211-52

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/pdfplus/2697116.pdf>

Deadline: hand in annotated bibliography for the paper and a reformulated statement of the argument you intend to pursue.

11/3 The Americanization of Germany

Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels*

11/10 "Jambassadors:" race, agency, and syncopation

Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*

11/17 Americans Abroad: getting and spending

Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays*

[Supplementary reading: "Beware! Tourists Reporting on Russia," report for the Congressional Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, February 1960]

11/24 Cold war cosmopolitanism: two blocs, one world?

Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*

Deadline: hand in outline of paper

12/01 Americans in Asia: Good, bad or ugly?
William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, *The Ugly American*

12/08 Alternative allegiances: how the 'fifties spawned the 'sixties
Van Gosse, *Where The Boys Are*

12/15 Deadline: submit final version paper by 5pm.

Schedule of Saturday Film Screenings

These screenings aren't, of course, compulsory—though they are compulsory viewing of a different sort. I've selected the films to complement the course readings. So, where we'll be discussing a book-of-the-film or a closely associated topic, I've timed the screening to occur on the Saturday immediately before class discussion.

By popular demand (if any demand exists under pressure of deadlines), we'll have a final end-of-semester screening in December—with the title to be chosen by a ballot of your suggested best/worst cold war movies.

Friends, partners, movie buffs, and fellow travelers welcome!

09/20 **Cold war noir**
Big Jim McLain (dir. Edward Ludwig, 1952)
Pickup on South Street (dir. Sam Fuller, 1953)

10/11 **McCarthy and double**
See it Now (McCarthy and Ed Murrow)
The Manchurian Candidate (dir. John Frankenheimer, 1962)

11/01 **Yanks in Germany: a Billy Wilder double-bill**
A Foreign Affair (dir. Billy Wilder, 1948)
One, Two, Three (dir. Billy Wilder, 1961)

11/22 **Americans in Asia: a Marlon Brando double-bill**
The Ugly American (dir. George Englund, 1963)
The Teahouse of the August Moon (dir. Daniel Mann, 1956)