The Cold War and American Political Culture
PLSC 486H
Tuesday and Thursday, 4:25-5:50, Classroom Wing 310

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00-10:30, and by appointment

Course Description and Purpose

This class will examine the impact of the Cold War on American politics and society. We will consider the reasons the rivalry with the Soviet Union took the form it did in the United States. We will then review its impact on many aspects of American politics, society, and culture. While the Cold War was certainly important, we will also consider the possibility that some claims about its effects are overstated. In addition to considering the impact of the Cold War while it was going on, we will consider how Americans have remembered it, and how those memories have affected American politics since.

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 12.5 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lecture/discussion meeting times as well as time spent completing assigned readings, preparing written assignments, and other course-related tasks.

This course helps fulfill the N (Social Science) and W (Writing) general education requirements. Within the political science major this course:

- Helps fulfill the requirement for 10 PLSC courses for political science majors.
- Fulfills the requirement of at least 1 course in international relations
- Helps fulfill the requirement for 6 upper-level courses (300- or 400-level)
- Helps fulfill the requirement for 2 senior seminars (400-level)

Learning Outcomes. At the end of this course, students will gain a critical understanding of the impact of the Cold War on American society. The course will also provide students with an opportunity to use and develop their writing and critical thinking skills.

Course Materials

We will both read most or all of two books as part of this course. The Binghamton University Book Store has ordered them, but you can obtain them from any source you like.

- Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schrecker, Ellen, and Phillip Deery. 2017. *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

In addition to the books, I have assigned a number of articles, book excerpts, podcasts, and other materials, each of which is listed in the course schedule below. You can obtain all of these materials through Brightspace.

We will also be watching roughly two movies each week as part of this course. These will act as a window onto how the Cold War filtered into popular culture. They are listed on the course schedule under the day when we will discuss them in class. You should watch them before the class meeting. All are available on a variety of streaming platforms but may not be free of charge. If you have trouble finding any of them, please contact me.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grading Scale. Your semester grade will be computed on a 100-point scale as follows: 94-100 = A; 91-93 = A-; 88-90 = B+; 84-87 = B; 81-83 = B-; 78-80 = C+; 74-77 = C; 71-73 = C-; 65-70 = D; 0-64 = F.

Course Requirements and Grading

Discussion Posts. Before each class meeting, I will post one or more discussion questions about the day's topic on Brightspace. You should post an answer to at least one of these questions no later than 9:00am on the day of the class meeting. In class, I may ask you to elaborate on this answer. No discussion questions will be posted for the last four meetings when class presentations are scheduled. You may miss two discussion posts without penalty during the semester. Your average grade over the remaining posts will be worth 30% of your final grade for the semester.

Class Attendance and Participation. Because this class is a seminar, your participation is vital to its success. You should come prepared to discuss the assigned material for the day, and to share your broader thoughts about the day's topic. You may miss two class meetings during the semester without penalty. If you miss fewer than two meetings, I will drop your two lowest daily participation grades. The average grade over the remaining class meetings will be worth 30% of your grade for the semester.

Class Presentation and Term Paper. Each student will give a presentation during the final two weeks of the semester and write a research paper on the same topic. The paper should be roughly 10-20 pages long. It is due on December 14th at 5:00pm. It will be worth 30% of your final grade for the semester.

The paper should answer a question about the impact of the Cold War on American society, politics, or policy. You should define your research question as clearly as possible before beginning your research. I urge each of you to meet with me some time before our October 24th class meeting to talk about your paper. I may be able to help you find a viable research question that suits your interests. It could address one of the topics we will cover in class, or even arise from a specific reading you found interesting (or annoying). It could also focus on an issue we did not cover. Here are a few examples of appropriate research questions:

> Did the Cold War help or hinder the Civil Rights movement?
>
> Was the Cold War--or the use of religion during the Cold War--responsible for the "religious restructuring" that Robert Wuthnow discusses?
>
> Was the nature of the communist threat during the early Cold War era defined by its real or imagined association with homosexuality for a significant group of Americans?

Does the legacy of the Cold War and the positions that liberals tended to take during those years shape the positions they take on related issues today?

Robert Dean argues that an "ideology of masculinity" fundamentally shaped how John F. Kennedy conducted foreign policy. Does he overstate his case?

Did the misogyny Louis Menand reviews in the literature of the early postwar era decline after the 1960s? If so, by how much?

How did the end of the military draft in 1973 affect the depiction of the military and those serving in it in movies and television?

Did the Cold War contribute to the decline of manufacturing industries in the Northeastern United States?

How did the Cold War affect U.S. relations with Latin America?

You may use one of these questions as the basis for your paper if you like, but no more than one student may write on each one. They are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

A prospectus for the paper and presentation is due no later than our October 26th class meeting. The prospectus will be worth 5% of your final grade for the course. It should do the following:

1. State your research question.

2. Explain why you think this question is interesting or important.

3. Suggest at least one possible answer to it.

4. Explain what sources of information you will use in order to find out whether this answer, or other possible answers, are correct. You should include at least four different sources.

The prospectus can be very brief, perhaps just a page or two, though it can be longer if you need the space. Its purpose is to let me provide you with some guidance and feedback before you do most of your research and writing. We will have no class meetings on November 7th or November 9th because I will be out of town attending a conference. I strongly urge you to use the extra time to get started on your paper.

Class presentations will be scheduled during our final 4 class meetings. Each presenter will have 20 minutes. You should use no more than 12 minutes to tell the rest of the class about your research. The remaining time will be reserved for questions and answers. The presentation will count for 5% of your final grade for the course. I will randomly assign time slots for the presentations before the week of Thanksgiving.

Course Policies

Office Hours. I will be available from 9:00-10:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays in my office, LNG-58. You do not need to make an appointment to see me during this time. If you need to meet at another time, either in person or via Zoom, contact me by e-mail and we will set it up.

Technology. We will use Brightspace, the university's learning management system, for some purposes, including the distribution of course materials and the submission discussion posts and other assignments. I may not be able to resolve the technical issues you encounter. I encourage

you to turn to the technical support the system provides:
https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport.

E-mail. I will use your university e-mail address for course announcements and other official purposes. Check this account at least once a day. I recommend setting your university e-mail account to forward messages to whatever e-mail address you use most often. I will respond to student messages in a timely manner but do not count on receiving an answer in less than 24 hours.

Grade Appeals. All grade appeals must be made in writing. If you believe a grade I assigned you is incorrect, you should write a brief memo explaining your concerns. I will review your concerns and respond to you in writing.

Cheating and Plagiarism. All writing submitted as part of this course, including comments posted on discussion boards, must be your own work, not something produced by other people or AI systems. You may introduce and use outside material that you think is relevant but you should credit the original authors when you do so. You need not do so through a formal citation system in a discussion board post, but you should say where you originally discovered the ideas you are using. For the term paper and prospectus, you should cite your sources. You may use any citation system you like for this purpose. Violations of this rule will result in a failing grade for the course and will be submitted to the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee for further disciplinary action.

Decorum. I encourage you to express your views on the course material both in class and on the discussion boards. You are free to disagree with me or with your fellow students, just as others are free to disagree with you. In doing so, however, please refrain from personal insults or inflammatory rhetoric. Be respectful of one another and always remember that there is a real person on the other end of your comments.

Tentative Schedule

The dates and reading assignments may change during the semester. If so, I will make an announcement by email.

August 22: Introduction and course overview

August 24: The United States in 1945

Patterson, James T. 1996. *Grand Expectations*. New York: Oxford University Press. Prologue, chapters 1 and 3.

May, Elaine Tyler. 1988. *Homeward Bound*. New York: Basic Books. Introduction and chapter 1.

Movie: "The Best Years of Our Lives" (1946)

August 29: The Cold War Begins

Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-3.

Whitfield, Stephen J. 1996. *The Culture of the Cold War*, second edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 1.
Movie: "Pickup on South Street" (1952)

August 31: The National Security State
Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3.
Hogan, Michael J. 1998. *A Cross of Iron*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
Fordham, Benjamin O. 2015. "The Legacy of Military Spending during the Truman Administration." In Mary Ann Heiss and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Origins of the National Security State and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2015), pp. 68-93.
Movie: "Strategic Air Command" (1954)

September 5: No class meeting -- Monday classes meeting instead

September 7: Military Service and the Peacetime Draft
Friedberg, Aaron L. 2000. *In the Shadow of the Garrison State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.
Appy, Christian G. 2001. "We'll Follow the Old Man": The Strains of Sentimental Militarism in Popular Films of the Fifties. In Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. 74-105.
Movie: "The Caine Mutiny" (1954)

September 12: Official Secrecy and Covert Operations
Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 4.
Ellsberg, Daniel. 2010. "Secrecy and National Security Whistleblowing." *Social Research* 77(3): 773-804.
Appy, Christian G. 2000. "Eisenhower's Guatemala Doodle, or How to Draw, Deny, and Take Credit for a Third World Coup." In Christian G. Appy, ed., *Cold War Constructions* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), pp. 183-213.
Movie: "Missing" (1982)

September 14: McCarthyism
Schrecker, Ellen, and Phillip Deery. 2017. *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's., pp. 1-90.
Glenn Frankel, "*High Noon*'s Secret Backstory," *Vanity Fair*, February 22, 2017.
Movie: "High Noon" (1952)

September 19: Spies and Spy-Catchers
Cuordileone, K.A. 2011. " The Torment of Secrecy: Reckoning with American Communism and Anticommunism after Venona." *Diplomatic History* 35(4): 615-42.
Schrecker, Ellen, and Phillip Deery. 2017. *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's., pp. 108-56.

September 21: The Hollywood Blacklist

One of the following two options to learn about Kazan's and Miller's experiences with the blacklist and its effect on their art:

--*You Must Remember This* Podcast, Episode 83, The Blacklist Part 13: On the Waterfront: Elia Kazan and Episode 84, The Blacklist Part 14: After the Fall: Arthur Miller

--"None Without Sin: Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan, and the Blacklist." PBS American Masters documentary. https://vimeo.com/150665401

Schrecker, Ellen, and Phillip Deery. 2017. *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's., pp. 194-230.

Movie: "On the Waterfront" (1954) and "The Crucible" (1996)

September 26: Moral Panic over Homosexuality during the Early Postwar Era

Johnson, David K. 2004. *The Lavender Scare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction, chapters 1 and 7.

Movie: "Advise and Consent" (1962)

September 28: McCarthyism in Retrospect

Weisberg, Jacob. 1999. "Cold War Without End." New York Times Magazine, November 28, 1999. https://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/28/magazine/cold-war-without-end.html

Schrecker, Ellen, and Maurice Isserman. 2000. "The Right's Cold War Revision." *The Nation* 274 (4): 22.

Response to Schrecker and Isserman by John Earl Haynes. https://www.johnearlhaynes.org/page47.html

Movie: "The Way We Were" (1973)

October 3: Liberal Reactions to the Cold War

Delton, Jennifer. 2010. "Rethinking Post World War II Anticommunism." *Journal of the Historical Society* 10(1): 1-41.

Brenes, Michael, and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins. 2021. "Legacies of Cold War Liberalism." Dissent 68(1): 116-24.

Movie: "The Manchurian Candidate" (1962)

October 5: Conservative Reactions to the Cold War

Mulloy, D. J. 2014. *The World of the John Birch Society*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press. Introduction and chapter 1.

Movie: "Big Jim McClain" (1952)

October 10: Fears of Nuclear War in the 1950s and 1960s

Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 5.

Ellsberg, Daniel. 2017. *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. New York: Bloomsbury USA. 41-144.

Movie: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964) and "Fail Safe" (1964)

October 12: Broader Social Issues and the Cold War: Religion

Herzog, Jonathan. 2010. "America's Spiritual-Industrial Complex and the Policy of Revival in the Early Cold War." *Journal of Policy History* 22(3): 337-65.

Wuthnow, Robert. 1989. *The Restructuring of American Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Gallup poll on trends in religiosity: https://news.gallup.com/poll/358364/religious-americans.aspx

October 17: Broader Social Issues and the Cold War: Gender

Menand, Louis. 2021. *The Free World*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. 542-59.

Dean, Robert D. 1998. "Masculinity as Ideology: John F. Kennedy and the Domestic Politics of Foreign Policy." *Diplomatic History* 22(1): 29-62.

Movie: "Thirteen Days" (2000)

October 19: No class meeting -- Fall break

October 24: Broader Social Issues and the Cold War: Race and Civil Rights

Korstad, Robert, and Nelson Lichtenstein. 1988. Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement. *Journal of American History* 75 (3): 786-811.

Skrentny, John David. 1998. The effect of the Cold War on African-American civil rights: America and the world audience, 1945-1968. *Theory and Society* 27: 237-285.

Movie: "South Pacific" (1958)

October 26: The Vietnam War

Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 6-7.

Movie: "M*A*S*H" (1970)

** The paper prospectus is due no later than this class meeting. **

October 31: The Vietnam War in Retrospect

Schulzinger, Robert D. 2006. *A Time for Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 4, 8.

Movie: "Rambo: First Blood, Part II" (1985)

November 2: Cold War Revival and Ending in the 1980s

Craig, Campbell, and Fredrik Logevall. 2009. *America's Cold War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 8-9.

Movie: "Rocky IV" (1985) or "Top Gun" (1986)

November 7 and 9: No class meeting -- get started on your paper!

November 14: Fears of Nuclear War in the 1980s

Hoffman, David E. 2009. *The Dead Hand.* New York: Anchor Books. Chapters 1-3.

Movie: "War Games" (1983)

November 16: The Cold War in Retrospect

Winokur, Justin. 2023. "The Cold War Trap." *Foreign Affairs*, July 13, 2023. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/cold-war-trap-america-foreign-policy

Find an editorial or other commentary that uses some aspect of the Cold War to comment on contemporary U.S. policy or politics. Be ready to summarize it and explain whether it is a good or bad use of history.

Movie: "Bridge of Spies" (2016)

November 21: No class meeting -- Friday classes meet instead

November 23: No class meeting -- Thanksgiving

November 28- December 7: Student presentations