

American Studies 445
The Cold War and American Culture
Craig McConnell, Spring 2005

Course Description

The Cold War was a tumultuous period of anxiety, prosperity, and fabulous paradoxes. Peace was pursued through the threat of nuclear annihilation; the American way of life was protected by censoring suspected communists. This course is a multi-perspective approach to understanding American culture in the Cold War period, 1947 – 1991. We will follow the development of the following themes:

- Perceptions of a Soviet Threat and the Concepts of Containment and Detente
- Perceptions of a Communist Threat at Home
- Fear of Nuclear War
- American Family Structure

To study these themes, we will examine several different cultural artifacts from the Cold War, including film, literature, periodical literature, and both popular and academic histories.

We will strive to gain an understanding of both the Cold War experience and of the way that Americans have tried to understand the Cold War experience. For the first two-thirds of the semester, “The Cold War Experienced,” we will examine artifacts from the Cold War period. In the final third of the semester, we will turn our attention to “The Cold War Remembered,” that is, the perspectives on Cold War culture that have emerged in the post-Cold War period.

Most class meetings will be taught seminar style – you will be expected to come to class with the reading for the week done, prepared to engage each other in discussion of its meaning.

Required Reading

May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1999).

Kuznick and Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (2001).

Spillane, *One Lonely Night* (1951).

DeLillo, *Underworld* (1997).

Barson and Heller, *Red Scared: The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture* (2001).

Martin McCauley, *Russia, America and the Cold War* (2d. ed., 2004).

All other reading assignments are either available electronically (consult the course web site) or are on reserve at the Pollak Library Reserve Desk.

Reading assignments in brackets [] are *optional* for undergraduates, *required* for graduate students.

Films are available on Reserve in the Pollak Library Media Center (4 North) or can be rented at local video stores. Assigned films should be viewed *before* the class period when they will be discussed.

Contact Information:

Office: EC-626

Office: 714 278 3935 (24 hour voice mail)

Home: 714 223 0404 (9 a.m. to 9 p.m. *only*)

Email: cmccConnell@fullerton.edu

Web: <http://faculty.fullerton.edu/cmccConnell/445/Resources.htm>

Office Hours: MW 10-11:30; W 7-8, and by appointment.

Introductions

- Week 1: Course Policies and Classroom Expectations
(2/1) The Cold War: An Overview
Untangling Experience and Memory
- Week 2: Windows into Culture: Making Sense of Cultural Artifacts
(2/8) **Read:** McCauley, Ch. 1-2
Red Scared, Ch. 1-3
Rethinking Cold War Culture, “Introduction”
Wasser, “Is Hollywood America?”

The Cold War Experienced

- Week 3: Containment
(2/15) The Korean War
Read: McCauley, Ch. 3
Red Scared, Ch. 4-5
Homeward Bound, Ch. 1 and Ch. 5
Goldman, “The Postwar Takes Shape,” in *The Crucial Decade*.
Goldman, “Containment, Foreign and Domestic,” in *The Crucial Decade*.
[Filreis, “Words with ‘All the Effects of Force’” (Essay Review)]
- Week 4: Cold War Literature
(2/22) **Read:** Spillane, *One Lonely Night*.
Savage, “The Bomb,” in *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954*.
Savage, “The Red Menace,” in *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954*.
Whalen-Bridge, “Some Versions of the Cold War” (Essay Review)
[Foreman, “Ideology, Culture, and Character” (Essay Review)]
- Week 5: Nuclear Fear and Its Fallout
(3/1) **Read:** McCauley, Ch. 4
Red Scared, Ch. 6
Homeward Bound, Ch. 3 and Ch. 4
Boyer, “Truman, The American People, and The Atomic Bomb” in *Fallout*
[Caputi, “Nuclear Visions” (Essay Review)]
- Week 6: Film Forum I: Films from the Deep Freeze (1947-1962)
(3/8) **Read:** Belton, “Hollywood and the Cold War”
View: *High Noon* (1952)
On The Beach (1959)
The Manchurian Candidate (1962)
Essay Number 1 Due.
- Week 7: Consumerism and American Family Life
(3/15) The Vietnam War
Read: McCauley, Ch. 5
Homeward Bound, Ch. 6, 7, 8.
Douglas, “Fractured Fairy Tales,” in *Where the Girls Are*
[Hunter, “Putting Sex in its Place,” (Essay Review)]

Week 8: Cold War Journalism and Cold War History
(3/22) **Read:** *Red Scared*, Ch. 7
Goldman, “Year of Shocks,” in *The Crucial Decade. Reports from Library Explorations (Undergraduates)*.

— Spring Recess —

Week 9: Film Forum II: Films from the Long Thaw (1962-1991)
(4/5) **Read:** Boyer, “*Dr. Strangelove: Stanley Kubrick Presents the Apocalypse*,” in *Fallout*
View: *Fail-Safe* (1964)
Dr. Strangelove (1964)
Reports from Library Explorations (Graduate Students).

Week 10: Looking Back from Within: Cold War Efforts to Understand the Cold War
(4/12) **Read:** McCauley, Ch. 6, 7
View: *Atomic Café* (1982)
Essay Number 2 Due.

The Cold War Remembered

Week 11: The Dissolution of the Soviet Union
(4/19) The Transition to a Post-Cold War America
Containment, Detente, and Beyond
Read: McCauley, Ch. 8
Red Scared, Ch. 8.
Rethinking Cold War Culture, Ch. 1, 2, 3.
Boyle, “The Cold War Revisited” (Essay Review)
[Schaub, “Without Fanfare or Foucault: The Cold War and the Loss of a Defining Narrative” (Essay Review)]

Week 12: Literary Reexaminations of The Cold War
(4/26) **Read:** *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, Ch. 8.
DeLillo, *Underworld*, 9-366.

Week 13: Literary Reexaminations of The Cold War
(5/3) **Read:** DeLillo, *Underworld*, 367-827.

Week 14: The Cold War in American Studies
(5/10) The Cold War in Cultural Studies
Read: *Rethinking Cold War Culture*, 5, 6, 7.
Mihaila, “Exporting/Importing America: The Post-Cold War Internationalization of American Studies”
[Bollobas, “Dangerous Liasons: Politics and Epistemology in Post-Cold War American Studies”]

Week 15: Film Forum III: Cold War Nostalgia and Cold War Accountability
(5/17) Closing Remarks, Course Evaluation
Read: Boyer and Idsvoog, "Nuclear Menace in the Mass Culture of the Late Cold War Era and Beyond" in *Fallout Rethinking Cold War Culture*, Ch. 4.
View: *Matinee* (1993)
October Sky (1999)
The Majestic (2001)

Week 16: [Final Exam Period]
(5/24) **Essay Number 3 Due.**

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be calculated based on two components of the course:

- Your support of an active learning community in our in-class discussion of shared readings. All students will be expected to come to each session prepared to discuss the week's assignments. Starting in the second week, you will be required to email a set of lead-off questions to me (at cmconnell@fullerton.edu) no later than 10pm the day before class. In addition, I strongly urge you to prepare reading notes for each of the major reading assignments (reminders of your reactions, insights, or quibbles that will allow you to take an active part in discussion.) Your participation grade will include occasional in-class writing assignments and one out-of-class library exercise. Participation will account for 25% of your final grade. Consistent attendance and active engagement of the course material are both necessary for a good grade in this component of the course.
- Your production of three 4-6 page essays, each of which will draw connections between ideas and themes that emerge from the reading and films that we will read and view. The essays are due in Weeks 6, 10, and 16. You will receive guiding questions one week before the essays are due. Each essay will account for 25% of your final grade.

There will be no extra credit options. Students will be assessed with +/- grades.

Graduate Student Requirements

Graduate students will be assessed on a more rigorous standard than undergraduates, and will be expected to explicitly address theory, method, and sources when preparing their essays. Graduate student essays will be 6-8 pages in length. Graduate student library exercises will require contact with and evaluation of primary sources. Reading assignments marked optional for undergraduates are required reading for graduate students.

Academic Integrity

It is your responsibility to review the CSUF policy on academic dishonesty, which is printed on page 514 of the 2003-2005 Catalog and available on the web at the following site:

<http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf>

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you are unsure of how to avoid plagiarism, come talk to me or refer to the following web site:

<http://www.fullerton.edu/deanofstudents/Judicial/Plagiarism.htm>