

Bowie State University
Department of History and Government

History 307—Course Outline Contemporary History Since World War II Fall 2010

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Office Hrs. Tues. & Thurs.
10-11 a.m. and 2-5 p.m.
Wed. by Appointment only

Textbooks: The Cold War by John Lewis Gaddis; 1968: the Year That Rocked the World by Kurlansky; OBAMA: From Promise to Power by David Mendell

Scope of the Course:

Thematically, this course will begin with the intense global political tension during the years following World War II beginning roughly with 1949 when the so-called Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb and 1950 when the Korean War began. These events had tremendous impact on the American psyche. The events ushered in a strong atomic bomb scare and a climate of anti-Communism in America, although the Communist Party was fewer than 100,000 in membership. The heat of this period was ratcheted up by one Wisconsin Senator, Joseph McCarthy who almost single handedly created a climate of unreasonable fear and suspicion that caused many to be investigated and to be fired from their jobs. The centerpiece of the times was the espionage case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a young Jewish couple, who were convicted and put to death for "selling" atomic bomb secrets to the Soviets.

Obviously, the Civil Rights movement, beginning with major markers of the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, United States Supreme Court Brown Decision of 1954 and the non-violent leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. all warrant significant attention in lecture and readings. The turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s propelled a number of personalities forward such as Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and was much fueled by the Viet Nam war which we will study in film, lecture and readings. Overall, the course requires a lot of critical thought and critical reading; it commands students to focus in on the events described here and onward hurricane Katrina and its impact on New Orleans poor to the so-called Obama revolution which is the most current theme of the course.

Modes of Assessment:

Students work in the course will be assessed through 3 exams and two short papers: one a book review and the other short paper will be a film review, all obviously related to the themes of the course. Thus, there are five (5) items of assessment in the course. The two short papers, a book review and the critical analysis of a film, are to be detailed and two pages and single-spaced in the format provided by the professor. The 3 exams and 2 short papers all count equally, that is 5 items, totaling 20% of the final grade. There may also be an opportunity to earn bonus points as outlined by the professor during the first weeks of the course. At the end of the course, there will be no opportunities for BONUS points, so opportunities should be seized when they are offered. Please take note early on of the list of books and films from which students may select for book and film reviews. A short oral presentation/progress report is to be made in advance of the two short papers.

Course Objectives: To introduce students to major themes in American History since WWII, including: the Cold War era and the rise of Joe McCarthy's; the Civil Rights era; the turbulent domestic scene during the Viet Nam era; riots; 1968; highlights of presidential administrations thru JFK and LBJ with emphasis on the recent rise OBAMA and the conservative backlash.

Selected Film List— (You Will Be Assigned a Film to Review and on exams will also be responsible for content and themes from clips of films shown in class)

From the Cold War Era:

"The Hunt for Red October" (an old film with Sean Connery)

"SALT" (a new, 2010, film with Angelina Jolie)

"Farewell" (a new, 2010, foreign film about the end of the Cold War)

"Countdown to Zero" a classic documentary about nuclear perils of the post Soviet era; rogue nukes

" Dr. Strangelove" (the Classic 1964 film by Stanley Kubrick—a black comedy)

From the Viet Nam era:

"The Deer Hunter"—an old film, a classic starring DeNiro and Christopher Walken

"My Lai"—a PBS documentary film about a nasty episode of American GIs slaughtering innocent people?

"American Gangster" starring Denzel Washington, based on a true story about a Harlem drug dealer during the Vietnam era

The Viet Nam War—CBS News documentary narrated by Walter Cronkite

"Heaven and Earth", Oliver Stone's classic with Tommy Lee Jones as an unraveling Marine

From the Civil Rights Era

Eyes on the Prize

Clips from Malcolm X's Speeches

From the George W. Bush's Era

"W"

"War Lords" with Nicholas Cage

Selected Reading List- (Choose One Early For Your Book Review and Report to the professor your choice OR you will be assigned a film during the second week of the course)

Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement by Robert Weisbrot

King: A Biography by David Levering Lewis

Sleepingwalking Through History: America in the Regan Years by Haynes Johnson

OBAMA: From Promise to Power by Robert Mendell

At the Abyss: An Insiders' History of the Cold War by Thomas C. Reed

1968: The Year That Rocked the World by Mark Kurlansky

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Selected Reading List Continued

Richard Nixon: The Shaping of His Character by Fawn M. Brodie

Parting The Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63 by Taylor Branch

The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream by Barack Obama

The Rosenberg File by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton

The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade by Alfred W. McCoy

Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry by P. W. Singer

A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy by David M. Oshinsky

Due Dates: for Two Major Assignments: Final, Written Book Reviews Due: Sept. 30th
Final, Written Film Reviews Due Nov. 18th; Exams: Oct. 7th/ Nov. 4th/ Dec. 9th or Last Class

Session Outline

Week One—(Thurs. Sept. 2)

Week Two (Thurs. Sept. 9)

Week Three

Week Four (Sept. 23)

Week Five (Sept. 30)

Week Six (Oct. 7)

Week Seven (Oct. 14)

Week 8 (Oct. 21)

Week 9 (Oct. 28)

Week 10 (Nov. 4th)

Week 11 (Nov. 11)

Week 12 (Nov. 18th)

Week 13 (Nov. 25th)

Week 14(Dec. 2)

Week 15 (Dec. 9)

Course Orientation—Summary of WWII

1949—Communist Victory in China

The Cold War—The Atomic Bomb Scare;

Klaus Fuchs Confesses/The Rosenbergs

Joseph McCarthy's rise

Book Review—Oral Reports—all

The Montgomery Bus Boycott 1955

The Supreme Court Brown Decision

Submit Written Book Reviews

The Presidential Administrations of

Eisenhower, Nixon, LBJ and JFK

Exam 1, covers Gaddis Book on the Cold War

VietNam/ The Great Society

Vietnam Continued/ Social Unrest/ Riots

Race Riots/ Civil Rights Continued/ Drugs

Short Lecture and Examination #2—covers

Lectures, films and selected readings from

1968

The Clinton Administration

G. W. Bush Administration/ Rise of

Blackwater/ Private Military Industry/ Katrina

Rise in American Gangs/ Drugs

Thanksgiving Break

OBAMA/ War / Conservative Backlash /Hate

Groups in America/ Tea Party Movement

Final Exam #3—Covers Mendell Book on

President Obama, Lectures and Films —Last Class

Last Day of all classes/ BSU, Dec. 10th; Winter Graduation Dec. 17th