
U.S. Cold War Culture

History 600

M 11 am – 1 pm
Humanities 5255

Spring Semester 2010

Professor: Cindy I-Fen Cheng
E-mail: CICHENG@wisc.edu
Office: Humanities 5106
Office Hours: Fridays 11 am – 1 pm and by appointment

Course Description

Life during mid-Twentieth century U.S. was filled with things: Ken and Barbie dolls, Disneyland, paint-by-number, hula hoops, TVs, TV dinners, tailfins, fall out shelters, color schemed refrigerators, electric vacuum cleaners, and Betty Crocker cake mixes. During this 15-week course, we will explore together the different ways in which scholars have come to understand and interpret the significance of all these consumer goods. At the end of the semester you will write a research paper and participate in an ongoing conversation about what was significant about U.S. cold war culture, what it tells us about life during the 1950s, and what its impact was on contemporary culture.

We will navigate through the many contradictions embedded within U.S. cold war culture. For instance, while many scholars consider the early cold war years to be one of the most repressive times in U.S. history given the anti-communist hysteria and the rise of suburban culture with its strict gender roles and segregated neighborhoods, other scholars note how the early cold war years was also the period when playboy was first issued, when the beat generation and James Dean rose in popularity, when civil rights movement took off, when the first gay rights group was formed, and when Betty Friedan began writing her feminist manifesto, *The Feminine Mystique*. Indeed, the U.S. during the 1950s is an incredibly fascinating period to examine the development of social mores and attempts to resist and to challenge them.

This course also marks for many of you as your ****senior capstone**** seminar. In light of this requirement, this course is designed to give you the rigor as well as the opportunity to produce a historical research paper. Our small and intimate class size aim to foster a more in-depth discussion of texts and greater attention to the progress of your research projects. I truly hope you find this a rewarding capstone seminar and that you will personally be “proud” of what you will gain from this course and what you will write for your final research project.

Course Requirements

Overview: The course consists of attendance and discussion of assigned readings, weekly 1-2 page write ups of assigned readings, two one-on-one meetings with the professor, preliminary proposal of research paper, peer review of research paper drafts, class presentation of research paper, and submission of final research paper.

Participation and Discussion: Because a critical component of this course involves the discussion of assigned readings and of research ideas, a fundamental requirement of this course is your respect of different viewpoints and our collective fostering of an open environment where *everyone* feels at ease to express their ideas. Your active engagement and participation in this course is crucial to ensuring an effective seminar. This includes your keeping up with assigned readings and your willingness to discuss your ideas about the readings, the process of coming up and working through a research idea, and the final presentation of your research project.

Weekly Write-ups: There will be a total of *seven* weekly write ups each worth 35 points for a total of 245 points plus a five point "freebie." All write-ups are due at the beginning of each class meeting. There will be no late work accepted. These write-ups aim to serve as an initial step to help your processing and making sense of an assigned text. Their purpose is also to help stimulate classroom discussion. For each prompt, the first sentence needs to re-state *in your own words* the thesis of the assigned text(s). Please DO NOT quote from the reading but summarize in your own words what the key argument(s) of the reading was or were. Following the restating of the main point(s) of the assigned reading(s), discuss two key examples that the text(s) used to support, complicate, and expand on the proposed argument.

Research Proposal: The write-up of your Research Proposal is DUE during the first ten minutes of seminar meeting during Week 9. Your Research Proposal will be a 3-5 page write-up that clearly states what your research topic is, the main argument(s) that you intend to make, and the examples that you intend to use to support and/or complicate that argument. You should also include a discussion of what previous scholars have said in relation to your topic. In addition to this 3-5 page write-up, you will be required to provide a list of 5-7 sources that should include at least three books and two journal articles already published which discusses the topic you are interested in researching. You will write two sentences on why each source is important to develop your thinking of your research project. While not required, you will be encourage to list some primary sources that you will look at for your research project.

Final Research Paper: During finals week, you will turn in a 15-20 page write-up of your research topic. We will go over in detail all the components that make-up an effective research paper. You will turn in before the final write-up an initial draft of this paper as well as present to your classmates the findings of your research paper.

Participation and discussion of assigned texts	200 points
Weekly 1-2 page write-ups of assigned texts	250 points
Research proposal and annotated bibliography	200 points
Final Research Paper	350 points
TOTAL	1000 points

Required Readings/Texts

- Please see the attached hand out entitled "Reading List" for a detailed listing of all assigned readings. Your readings are also listed in the Course Schedule section of this syllabus.

Films Viewings to be Scheduled:

- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*
- *Rebel Without a Cause*

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

M 1.25 Introduction
Write-up #1 DUE

Reading:

- Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (USA: BasicBooks, 1988).

WEEK 2

M 2.1 Write-up #2 DUE

Reading:

- Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor Press, 1987).

WEEK 3

M 2.8 Write-up #3 DUE

Readings:

- Lynn Spigel, *Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- George Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class, and Ethnicity in Early Network Television" in *Time Passages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 39-76. ®

WEEK 4

M 2.15 Write-up #4 DUE

Reading:

- Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

WEEK 5

M 2.22 Write-up #5 DUE
Discussion of Research Proposal

Reading:

- Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

WEEK 6

M 3.1 Write-up #6 DUE
Discussion of Writing Kit

Readings:

- David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: the Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- Mae M. Ngai, "The Cold War Chinese Immigration Crisis and the Confession Cases" in *Impossible Subjects* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 202-224. ®

WEEK 7

M 3.8 Write-up #7 DUE

Reading:

- Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

WEEK 8

M 3.15 NO CLASS MEETING; One-on-one meetings with Professor Cheng

WEEK 9

M 3.22 RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE AT THE BEGINNING SEMINAR;
Presentation of Research Proposals
Discussion of Final Write-up

WEEK 10

M 3.29 SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS MEETING

WEEK 11

M 4.5 NO CLASS MEETING

WEEK 12

M 4.12 NO CLASS MEETING

WEEK 13

M 4.19 Check-in Seminar

Saturday, April 24, 2010 at *NOON*
Electronic Submission of First Draft of Research Project Write-up

WEEK 14

M 4.26 Peer Review of Research Project Write-up;
One-on-one meetings with Professor Cheng

WEEK 15

M 5.3 Class Presentation of Research Project

Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at *NOON*
Electronic Submission of FINAL Research Project Write-up