

TAU American Studies

Spring 2017

At the Gates of Eden: A Postwar History of the American Dream (1945-1980)Instructor: Dr. Yoav Fromer (yoavfromer@post.tau.ac.il)

Office Hours: Tues at 16:00-17:00 (or alternatively through appointment)

Course Description:

This course sets out to explore the postwar American experience (1945-1980) and to investigate the fate of the ‘American Dream’ that this period ultimately came to define. The central goal will be to trace the immense potential for achieving transformative political, racial, socioeconomic and cultural change that was so prevalent in the wake of the Second World War, and evaluate the manner in which it did – or did not – end up transforming America. The course utilizes an interdisciplinary set of tools in order to broaden the scope of inquiry and provide a multidimensional and complex understanding of the postwar experience in its entirety. We will proceed chronologically and thematically to review critical chapters in the postwar American story with the hope of understanding how such watershed moments of promise and opportunity (for social justice, economic and racial equality and gender empowerment) ended up impacting American politics, culture and society. The readings couple key primary sources and secondary historical and social scientific studies, with salient literary, musical, cinematic and artistic expressions, in an effort to penetrate deeper and portray a panoramic picture of postwar American life across all its layers. Among the central questions that we will be asking: What is the legacy of the New Deal and Great Society? What were the causes – and consequences – of the Civil Rights, Counterculture and Feminist movements? How did the Cold War and Vietnam impact these movements? What happened to American liberalism as result of the transformative events of the Sixties and what sparked the rise of conservatism? How did American capitalism evolve over the years? And finally, what is it about this tumultuous period that can help us better understand contemporary American society?

Assignments and Grading

- **Take Home Midterm** (19%)
The Exam will be sent out on Tues after class (9/5). It is due in hard copy in my mailbox in the department by 16:00 on Thurs (11/5).
- **Final Paper** (50%)
The date for has been prescheduled and appears on the course website.
- **Informed Participation in-class or via email** (31%). You must participate either in class or in writing. I am fine with both – but it is a mandatory part of the grade (written participation comprises of a well thought-out email response about the weekly readings).

Attendance

- Showing up to class is MANDATORY. Attendance will be taken every week. More than **three unexcused** absences (that are not due to sickness with a doctor’s note, family emergency or “Miluim”) will lead to automatic penalization of your final grade.