

The Transnational Cold War in America

MA Seminar

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## **Course Description**

Traditionally, the Cold War has been understood as a period defined in geostrategic terms by the onset of the nuclear age and the associated, ongoing confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States -- standard bearers respectively of communism and capitalism. While that definition stands, it has at the same time come unwound in the decentering of international conflict and the recognition that the Cold War was, in fact, a period of heated military conflict in much of the world. This course concerns a more ranging unspooling of the binary Cold War that has emerged more gradually, and has focused on attendant cultural shifts, national and international, on a range of problems that include the atomic menace, the cultural turn, racial conflict, urban change, gendered social change, and a range of other problems.

## **Course Format**

Seminar

## **Course Goals**

Students will leave the course with

- a) Tangibly superior reading, writing, and analytical skills.
- b) An effective mastery of course themes.
- c) The ability to apply skills and knowledge learned to a range of courses in History, and beyond.

## **Marks Breakdown**

Essay – 60%

Participation – 40%

**The Essay** will be 15–17 pages not including notes. It will be on any topic of relevance to the course. You will draw on at least 15 strong, current sources.

## Weekly Schedule

### Week I

8 May – Parameters/Essay Writing

10 May – Cold War Overview

Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

### Week II

15 May – – Atomic Work

Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013)

17 May -- The Cultural Turn

James W. Cook, Lawrence B. Glickman, and Michael O'Malley, eds., *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)

### Week III

22 May – Deviance

Scott Herring, *The Hoarders: Material Deviance in Modern American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)

24 May – The City I

Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton University Press, 1996)

### Week IV

29 May – Class and the 70s

Jefferson R. Cowie, *Stayin Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2012)

31 May – The Religion of Business

Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010)

#### Week V

5 June – The City II

Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006)

7 June – OJ's America

Brenda Stevenson, *The Contested Murder of Latasha Harlins: Justice, Gender, and the Origins of the LA Riots* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)