HIST 451: THE COLD WAR

Course Objectives

The Cold War profoundly shaped both the domestic and foreign policy of the United States for over forty years and its legacy continues to hold sway over how Americans see both themselves and the world. For much of the twentieth century, the world divided into two irreconcilable camps, each with the intention and means to annihilate the other. The collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent global dominance of the United States makes it difficult for contemporary scholars to comprehend the attitudes and decisions made by both leaders and the populous at large. Scholarly works on the Cold War can convey the important information about this complex period, but the arts, both literature and film, can transmit the “felt” reality of a conflict that threatened to end modern civilization, and perhaps even the human race.

In this course we will be examining the Cold War through a variety of sources. This will provide both content and context for a complicated, worldwide conflict and deepen your understanding of this transformative era. Using both primary and secondary sources, we will trace the trajectory of the United States through the Cold War and evaluate the decisions, assumptions, and emotions of those who lived during this unprecedented struggle for global power.

Course Expectations

- Readings must be completed before class meets on the day that they are listed.
- Bring said readings to class, and be prepared to discuss the assigned material.
- Attendance to all class meetings is mandatory.
- Written assignments are to be submitted to VeriCite on Canvas. No late work accepted.
- I have ZERO TOLERANCE for academic dishonesty. Plagiarism and cheating will cause you to automatically fail the course and you will be reported.

Course Material

Required Readings

- Leffler, Melvyn P. For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War.
- Westad, Odd Arne. The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of the Cold War.
- Additional Course material will be posted on Canvas.
Featured Media

I highly recommend obtaining access to Amazon Instant video and/or Netflix if you wish to view these titles and others. I will also post a list of suggested films that may be of interest on Canvas. I will select, possibly with class consultation, one of the films from this list to watch in our final week.

- Fail Safe (1964)
- Dr. Strangelove (1964)
- Apocalypse Now (1979)
- The Twilight Zone (1959-1964)

Assignments

Two film reviews -------------------10% each for 20%
Missile Crisis essay------------------------20%
Country Profile essay------------------------25%
Final Exam-----------------------------------25%
Participation-------------------------------10%

Film Reviews: Select two of films shown in class and write a brief (between 250-500 words) review of each film and what it conveys about the Cold War. Keep in mind this is a review, not a synopsis. We have all seen the film together so do not summarize the plot. The reviews are due by the end of the week (Friday) during which the film was shown.

Cuban Missile Crisis Essay: answer one of the prompts (forthcoming) dealing with “One Hell of a Gamble” and the Cuban Missile Crisis Game. (750-1000 words)

Country Profile Essay: write an essay that explores the Cold War experience of a so-called “third-world” country. Compare how this country navigated the Cold War by comparing and contrasting with other examples we have covered in the course. The country you select should NOT have received extensive coverage in lecture or in Westad’s “The Global Cold War”, although these sources should be consulted for finding other countries you can compare and contrast. You MUST submit your country of choice to me for approval. (1,000-1,500 words)

Final Exam: the final exam will consist of an ID section and Essay section that tests general knowledge of the Cold War
Participation/Canvas: Attendance to every class meeting is mandatory. You will receive a penalty to your grade for every unexcused absence. Regular discussion in the classroom is also necessary to thinking through these films. Additionally, there may be occasional, small, Canvas assignments if discussions are flagging or if I get the impression that the readings are being neglected. You will be provided some questions for each film to answer as you watch it. These responses will help structure your reviews and will be turned in for participation credit.

Course Schedule

Week 1: A Red Dawn: The Beginning of the Cold War
Readings: Leffler-Intro, Chpt 1 and 2; Westad-Intro, Chpt 1 and 2; Begin Reading “One Hell of a Gamble”; Article X, NSC-68 on Canvas
M- Origins, WWI, WWII
T- The Bomb, Division of Germany, Fall of China
W- Film: Fail-Safe
R- European Crises, Korea

Week 2: The Horror, The Horror: Vietnam, Cuba, and global escalation
Readings: Leffler-Chpt 3; Westad-Chpt 3,4,5; Finish Reading “One Hell of Gamble”
M- Latin America and the Cuban Revolution
T- Film: Dr. Strangelove
W- Cuban Missile Crisis Simulation
R- Origins of the Vietnam War

**********CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS ESSAY DUE MONDAY***************

Week 3: How I learned to stop caring and Love the bomb: Détente, Nixon, and Technology.
Readings: Leffler Chpt 4; Westad-Chpt 6,7.
M- Domestic Disturbances—Prague Spring, Anti-War movement
T- Film: Apocalypse Now
W- The Great Game—Nixon, China, Detente
R- This is the End—Vietnam, Watergate, Carter

Week 4: War of Stars: Reagan and the collapse of the Soviet Union
THIS SYLLABUS IS A DRAFT AND IS SUBJECT TO (MINOR) CHANGES IN ASSIGNMENTS AND LECTURE TOPICS. ALL REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL WILL STAY THE SAME

Readings: Leffler-Chpt 5 and Conclusion; Westad-Chpt 8,9,10,Conclusion

M- New Cold Warriors–Reagan, Latin America, and Afghanistan.
T- Film: TBD
W- The Kennan Prophecy–Decline and fall of the Soviet Union.
R- Final Exam

**********COUNTRY PROFILE ESSAY DUE FRIDAY***************