

History 753

The Cold War as World Histories

Tuesdays, 1:20pm – 3:20pm
Spring 2008
University of Wisconsin
7117 Helen C. White
course web site: <https://learnuw.wisc.edu/>

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5119 Humanities Building
Office hours: Thursdays, 11:AM-Noon,
1:15-2:15pm, or by appointment

Course Aims

This is a graduate reading course designed to encourage and facilitate historical research across regions and methodological approaches. In this course we will treat the Cold War as both a *multicultural* and a *multidimensional* historical subject. This involves attention to the many diverse interactions among peoples, institutions, and cultures that pervaded the period. We will analyze the conjunctions and disjunctions between different historical voices: center and periphery, rich and poor, political and social.

The phrase “Cold War as World Histories” indicates that this course seeks to contribute to an emerging and creative scholarly conversation about internationalizing the study and teaching of history. We will define this endeavor broadly to include the following topics, among others: the international state system, world economic systems, decolonization, nationalist revolutions, domestic dissent, détente, human rights activism, and religious revivalism. In examining each of these topics we will rely on many analytical perspectives including, among others: great power diplomacy, imperialist expansion, social mobilization, the politics of memory, race, culture, and gender. “The Cold War as World Histories” situates all of these concerns in a global context that transcends the geographic boundaries of any particular nation-state or the details of any particular set of events. In approaching the Cold War, we will analyze the complex webs of causality that connect thoughts and actions in distant lands.

This course self-consciously crosses many traditional scholarly boundaries. The instructor has intentionally chosen a diverse group of students with different disciplinary, methodological, geographical, and personal points of view. Through intensive discussions and written assignments our collective community will encourage the exploration, analysis, and synthesis of divergent perspectives on the history of our contemporary world.

Assigned Readings

Books for Purchase at the University Bookstore

- Connelly, Matthew. *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Paperback.
- Cumings, Bruce. *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American-East Asian Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Paperback.
- Gaddis, John Lewis. *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Paperback.
- Jacobs, Seth. *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006). Paperback.
- Leffler, Melvyn P. *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).
- McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Paperback.
- McCormick, Thomas J. *America's Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*, Second Edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Paperback.
- McPherson, Alan L. *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006). Paperback.
- Rotter, Andrew J. *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). Paperback.
- Suri, Jeremi. *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- Westad, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Paperback.
- Zubok, Vladislav M. *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

Reading Assignments

This course includes a heavy load of weekly reading – generally a full book per week. Students are expected to read all of the assigned materials carefully and critically *before each seminar meeting*. Focus on each author’s key arguments and how they relate to larger historical concerns and debates – how is the author trying to change the way we think about Cold War history? Interrogate narrative strategies – how does the author assemble his or her story for the purpose of convincing the reader? Pay close attention to sources – how does the author “prove” his or her point? Most important, as the semester progresses think about how the assigned readings relate to one another – how is each author responding to other scholars?

Weekly Response Essays

Each week by 5:PM on the Monday before class, all students should post a short response essay on the course website. This response essay should include 3 basic paragraphs. The first paragraph should summarize the key arguments in the readings and their significance. The second paragraph should analyze how the week’s readings relate to other course and outside texts. The third paragraph should offer the student’s critical assessment of the week’s readings: What was most persuasive? What was least persuasive? Which are the issues and questions that need more attention? What kind of new research do the readings inspire?

Final Historiography Essay (due 5/12)

At the end of the semester, students should revise their weekly response papers to formulate a coherent 20 page analysis of the historiography on the Cold War as World Histories. What are the key debates in the literature? What are the points of consensus and the points of controversy? What sources do historians use for this period? How do historians of this period compose their narratives? Which issues and perspectives are neglected?

The final essay should NOT simply compile the student's weekly response papers. Instead, it should draw on the weekly papers and our seminar discussions to build a detailed survey and critique of the books we have read. The final essay should focus on big themes and it should integrate the books, rather than treat them as stand-alone entities. Most important, the final essay should evaluate the field – its strengths and weakness, its accomplishments and potential.

The historiography essay should reflect clear thought, detailed analysis, and polished writing. It should be scholarly and creative. Make sure you proofread and revise your essay before submission!

1/22 Introduction: What does it mean to study the Cold War as World Histories?

Part I: Bipolar Approaches to the Cold War

1/29 Gaddis, *We Now Know*.

2/5 McCormick, *America's Half-Century*.

2/12 Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*.

2/19 Zubok, *A Failed Empire*.

Part II: "Third World" Approaches

2/26 Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

2/28 Special Seminar with Professor Robert McMahon

3/4 Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*.

3/11 McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles*.

3/18 SPRING BREAK – No class

3/25 Cumings, *Parallax Visions*.

Part III: Culture, Ideas, and the Global

4/1 Rotter, *Comrades at Odds*.

4/8 McAlister, *Epic Encounters*.

4/15 Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*.

4/22 Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin*.

4/29 General Reflections on the Historiography of the Cold War

5/6 Discussion of Historiography Essays

5/12 Historiography Essays Due