

# ***U.S. Society and Politics Since 1945***

*University of Virginia, Fall 2011*

***Professor Jennifer Burns***

This course will survey United States history following World War II, a period of time critical to the emergence of the modern nation. While the course is loosely organized around major political events, our interests will be far broader than elections and political parties. We begin by examining the position of the United States in 1945, when it emerged confident and strengthened from the chaos of World War II. Next we will follow different ways the Cold War played out at home, influencing domestic politics and intellectual life through McCarthyism and the emergence of conservatism. We will examine the Civil Rights movement as a political, social, and religious phenomenon. Looking at “the sixties,” lectures and readings will pay special attention to the origin and growth of social movements like the New Left, feminism, black power, and the rise of the New Right, while also tracing our expanding military involvement in Vietnam. Coming into more recent history, the course will examine transformations in the U.S. economy, the culture wars of the 1980s, and the growing geopolitical importance of the Middle East.

## **LECTURE SCHEDULE AND MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Week One: Introduction**

August 24: Introductory Lecture

### **Week Two: The Postwar Order Emerges**

**Aug 29** – Origins of the Cold War

**Aug 31** – *End of American Isolationism* \* lecture not recorded

- Ernest May, *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68*, pp.1-82.
- X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947 (Website)

### **Week Three: Anti-Communism at Home and Abroad**

**Sept. 5** – Cold War: The Domestic Front

**Sept. 7** – The Korean War

- John D’Emilio, “The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America” (Website)
- “How You Can Fight Communism,” and “To Quarantine Communism,” in Ellen Shrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism*, 109-120 (Website)

### **Week Four: Suburbanization and Security**

**Sept. 12** – In the Shadow of the Bomb: Postwar Culture

**Sept.14** – *Birds and the Bees* \* lecture not recorded

- Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, Chs. 1, 4-6

### **Week Five: Civil Rights Movement**

**Sept 19** – Civil Rights 1: Building a Movement

**Sept 21** – Civil Rights 2: Reconstruction Redux

- Howell Raines, *My Soul is Rested*, 1-74.

- Film: “Eyes on the Prize,” Episodes 1 & 2

### **Week Six: Origins of Conservatism**

**Sept 26** – The Cuban Missile Crisis

**Sept 28** – Barry Goldwater and the Rise of the Right

September 26 -- FIRST PAPER DUE, at start of lecture

- Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, Chs. 2-4
- Young Americans for Freedom, “The Sharon Statement,” in Bloom and Breines, 290-294.
- Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing,” audio recording (Website)

### **Week Seven: “The Sixties”**

**Oct 3** – The 60s: Reform to Revolution

**Oct 5** – *Religion in the 1960s* \* lecture not recorded

- Students for a Democratic Society, “The Port Huron Statement,” in Bloom and Breines, 50-61.
- Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, “The Basis of Black Power,” and Black Panther Party, “Platform: What We Want, What We Believe,” in Bloom and Brienens, 116-121; 125-128.
- Camille Paglia, “Cults and Cosmic Consciousness: Religious Vision in the American 1960s,” *Arion* 10.3 (Winter 2003), (website)
- Film: “Berkeley in the ‘60s”

### **Week Eight: Reading Week**

No Class October 10

**Oct 12** – *The Vietnam War* \* lecture not recorded

- Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
- James Fallows, “What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?” (website)

### **Week Nine: “The Sixties, con’t”**

**Oct 17** – Sex, Drugs, Rock n Roll

**Oct 19** – LBJ’s Great Society

- Jeremy Lerner, “The McCarthy Campaign” and “The Chicago Democratic Convention,” in Bloom and Brienens 353-357, 366-369.
- Presidential Commission on Urban Disorders, “The Kerner Report,” Bloom and Brienens, 364-365.

### **Week Ten: Midterm Week**

Midterm in class October 24

### **Week Eleven: Feminism and Anti-Feminism**

**Oct 31** – The Feminist Movement

**Nov 2** – Antifeminism and the Religious Right

- Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo,” in Bloom and Brienens, 38-43
- Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name,” in Bloom and Brienens, 387-415.
- Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 1-10, 126-215.

**Week Twelve: Watergate, Malaise, and Disco**

**Nov 7** – Rise and Fall of Richard Nixon

**Nov 9** – *The Kissinger Years* \* lecture not recorded

- McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 240-261
- Tom Wolfe, “The Me Decade” (Website)
- Bruce Shulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*, Chs. 2, 5 (website)

**Week Thirteen: The Reagan Revolution**

**Nov 14** – The Reagan Revolution

**Nov 16** – Reagan in the World

**\*\*Second paper due November 14 in lecture\*\***

- Troy, *Morning in America*, Chs. 4-6 (Website)
- Film: “The Big Chill”

**Week Fourteen: The End of the Cold War**

**Nov 21** – The End of the Cold War

**Nov 23** – No Class, Thanksgiving Break

- David Brooks, “The Organization Kid” (Website)

**Week Fifteen: Conclusions**

**Nov 28** – Bush and Clinton Part I

**Nov 30** – Concluding Lecture

- Project for a New American Century, “Statement of Principles,” and “Open Letter to President Clinton” (Website)
- Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations” (Website)

**Week Sixteen**

Dec 6 – final exam review

FINAL EXAM: 2-5pm, Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup>