

**The Cold War in European Culture**  
History 223: Explorations in European History  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
MWF, 3:30pm-4:20pm  
Van Vleck B231  
Spring 2020

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**Course description:** Political commenters have begun asking: is the Cold War really over? Between renewed threats of an American-Russian arms race and the deterioration of Russia's relations with Western powers, this question's pertinence grows daily. Any answer requires a comprehensive understanding of the Cold War itself. This course is a history of the Cold War in Europe from 1945-1992, starting with the Cold War's origins in World War II and concluding with a discussion about the Cold War's legacy today. As an ideological battle between capitalist and non-capitalist powers, the Cold War rivalry seeped into economic, political, military, and cultural developments all over the world, with consequences that continue to shape international relations in modern Europe. With an emphasis on cultural and social phenomena, students will explore the Cold War in Europe through consumer culture, gender norms, the family, film, fashion, and music – themes that demonstrate how competing ideologies permeated everyday life. We will decenter the Cold War from the typical narrative based on Soviet-American competition, analyzing how the Cold War shaped politics and culture differently in Western and Eastern Europe. Students will investigate questions like: when and how did the Cold War begin? Did James Bond films, American jazz, and French fashion change the course of the Cold War? How did gender norms, commodities, and social practices distinguish "East" from "West," and was the iron curtain – as a geographic boundary and cultural construct – truly as "ironclad" as its name implies?

**Course objectives:**

- Develop an in-depth understanding of the political, cultural, economic, and social events of the Cold War in Eastern and Western Europe, from World War II to the dissolution of the Soviet Union
- Engage in focused and respectful conversations about the readings
- Formulate a clear and persuasive written argument about the past
- Use and hone critical thinking skills to interpret Cold War history
- Think transnationally about Cold War culture, examining how national identities and ideologies on each side of the iron curtain were shaped in conversation with other parts of the world
- Learn to interpret and discuss current events that are rooted in the Cold War's legacy

**Office hours and contact information:** Office hours are your chance to come meet with me about anything related to the course. If you have questions about the readings, lectures, or assignments, don't hesitate to drop by. I'm always happy to help! If the hours listed above don't work with your schedule, email me to schedule an alternative meeting time. Email is the best way to contact me ([kschoon@wisc.edu](mailto:kschoon@wisc.edu)). I will usually respond within the day, but please allow me 36 hours to respond to your emails before sending a follow-up.

### Requirements:

- **Readings:** The assigned reading for this course is mandatory and will help you succeed on the papers and final exam. Please come prepared to discuss the reading every **Friday** (the discussion portion of the class). I advise that you take notes as you read so that you can easily refresh your memory in class. As you read, identify the main themes of the piece and consider connections between the assigned readings and the lecture, as well as the approach and perspective of the author. Some weeks have heavy reading loads, so look carefully at the page numbers and plan ahead.
- **Weekly discussion posts:** Every **Thursday night**, all students should post **twice** on the Canvas discussion board: 1. a brief (1 paragraph) response to the readings on Canvas (**by 8pm**) *and* 2. a short response to another student's post (**any time before Friday's class begins**). The posts should not just summarize the readings; you should delve deeper by drawing parallels, making critiques, identifying questions, etc. This exercise will help you think more critically about the reading every week and give you a place to share your initial impressions with your fellow classmates.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required in this class. I understand that life, other courses, and the challenges of being a student sometimes get in the way of perfect attendance, so you can miss **three class meetings** during the semester, no questions asked. *Any absences beyond the first three must be excused and cleared by me* (religious holidays, serious illness, emergencies, etc.) or else your attendance and participation grade will suffer. Additional absences that require planning in advance – e.g., taking a flight out of town or having a work shift scheduled – will not be considered excused, so plan carefully!
- **Participation:** Your participation grade is based primarily on your contributions to our Friday discussion classes. Please come to class having done the reading and prepared to discuss your ideas. You are not expected to have all the "right" answers or to formulate each thought perfectly. Even if you are unsure or have questions rather than answers, I want to hear what you think. I understand that some of you may be shy. If you fall into this category, I encourage you to come out of your shell at least once per class to engage with a question or problem that has come up during the discussion. The discussion portion of the class will be more fun for everyone if you all come prepared and ready to discuss.

- **Papers:** There are three papers assigned for this class, each weighted more heavily than the last to allow you time to receive feedback and improve. The first two papers will be based on assigned prompts and will not require outside research. The final paper will require you to select two or three sources (in addition, if you so desire, to those assigned for the course.) I will give you more details as the semester progresses.

**Grade breakdown:**

- 15% – Attendance and participation
- 15% – Weekly discussion posts
- 10% – Short paper #1 (4-5 pages)
- 15% – Short paper #2 (4-5 pages)
- 20% – final paper (8-10 pages)
- 25% – final exam

**Electronic devices:** Please **put away all electronic devices** during lecture classes (Monday and Wednesday). Evidence shows that students learn more when they write notes by hand, even if you feel that you're able to write down less. Also, laptops are distracting to you and to others around you. Who can resist watching their neighbor shop for shoes or take a quiz on which *Star Wars* character best matches their personality? ☺ Our classes are only 50 minutes long, so let's focus on the material and keep distractions to a minimum. On Fridays, you *may* bring a laptop if necessary for referencing the readings – but know that if you are distracted and not engaged in discussion, this will negatively impact your participation grade.

**The History Lab:** Whether you're sketching out ideas for your paper or working on the final touches, the wonderful people in the History Lab are there for you! They can help you choose a topic, navigate the research process, craft a thesis statement, outline your argument, and revise. The lab will not only strengthen your writing for this class but will also help you become a more successful writer in the long term. I highly recommend paying them a visit. Drop by Humanities 4255 or schedule a one-on-one consultation at <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>.

**Workload:** This 3-credit course meets as a group for 3 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each 50-minute class counts as one hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 6 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

**Plagiarism:** By virtue of enrollment, you agree to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. Common examples of academic misconduct include: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be turned in, contrary to stated rules of the

assignment; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.

To learn more about quoting and paraphrasing check the Writing Center's tips at <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>  
Further information on the University's policies on plagiarism can be found at <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

**Accommodations:** Please contact me early in the semester if you need special accommodations so that I can ensure that you have everything necessary to do your best in this course.

**University Statement on Diversity:** "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world."  
<https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

**Required books:**

*Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague, 1941-1968*, by Heda Margolius Kovály (Holmes & Meier, 1997)

*The Lover*, by Marguerite Duras (Harper Perennial, 2006)

*Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, by Kate Brown (Oxford University Press, 2015)

*The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, by John Le Carré (Penguin Books, 2013)

*The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe*, by Marci Shore (Broadway Books, 2014)

**Suggested** reading for an overview of Cold War history:

*The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, by Robert J. McMahon (Oxford UP, 2003)

*The Cold War: A World History*, by Odd Westad (Basic Books, 2019)

All of the above books can also be found on reserve at Helen C. White Library.

**All other readings** on this syllabus are available as PDFs in the **"Files" folder** on the course Canvas page.

\*Note that the syllabus is subject to change if necessary.\*

## **PART I: ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR**

### Week 1

**Wednesday, January 22:** Introductions and syllabus review

**Friday, January 24:** World War II

- No reading this week!

### Week 2

**Monday, January 27:** Competing Narratives of World War II and Origins of the Cold War

**Wednesday, January 29:** Human Rights, International Trials, and the Postwar Order

**Friday, January 31:**

Reading for discussion:

- *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, by Hannah Arendt, pp. 21-55; 83-150; 234-252
- *The Nuremberg Epilogue*, by A. Poltorak, pp. 15-31

### Week 3

**Monday, February 3:** Postwar Conferences and the Conflict over Berlin

**Wednesday, February 5:** Refugees and European Welfare Programs

**Friday, February 7:**

Reading for discussion:

- "The Battle of the Refugees: Displaced Persons and the Making of the Cold-War West" by Gerard Daniel Cohen, from *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, pp 13-34
- "Children as Spoils of War in France" and "From Divided Families to a Divided Europe" by Tara Zahra, in *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II*, pp 146-172; 222-245

### Week 4

**Monday, February 10:** Restoring Normalcy: Domesticity and the Baby Boom

**Wednesday, February 12:** Postwar Economic Rebuilding: Americanization and the Marshall Plan

**Friday, February 14:**

Reading for discussion:

- "For Better and For Worse: Marriage and Family in the Consumer Society," by Rebecca Pulju, in *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France*, pp 95-142
- *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, pp 721-751

### Week 5:

**Monday, February 17:** Building the Eastern Bloc

**Wednesday, February 19:** The Fate of Communism in Europe after World War II

- FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS

**Friday, February 21:**

Reading for discussion:

- “Yankee Go Home: The Left, Coca-Cola, and the Cold War,” by Richard Kuisel, in *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization*, pp 37-69
- **Watch:** *Cold War*, by Pavel Pawlikowski (88 minutes)
  - Check it out from the Learning Support Services Media Collection on campus for free (<https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9912847255902121>) or rent it online. It is free to watch on Amazon.com if you have Prime.

**PART II: THE DEATH OF STALIN AND NEW EAST-WEST ENCOUNTERS**

Week 6:

**Monday, February 24:** Zhdanovschina and the Postwar Soviet Union

**Wednesday, February 26:** Adolescence and Youth Culture

**Friday, February 28:**

Reading for discussion:

- *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague, 1941-1968*, by Heda Margolius Kovály

Week 7:

**Monday, March 2:** The Death of Stalin and De-Stalinization

**Wednesday, March 4:** Cold War Consumer Culture after Stalin

**Friday, March 6:**

Reading for discussion:

- “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev,” by Susan Reid, *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 211-252
- “Cars, Cars, and More Cars”, by Lewis Siegelbaum, in *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile*, pp 212-251

Week 8:

**Monday, March 9:** Decolonization and Cold War proxy wars – Indochina and the Algerian War

**Wednesday, March 11:** The Warsaw Pact and The Hungarian Revolution

**Friday, March 13:**

Reading for discussion:

- Reading: *The Lover*, by Marguerite Duras

☺ **SPRING BREAK, March 16th-20<sup>th</sup>** ☺

Week 9:

**Monday, March 23:** The Space Race, the Atomic Bomb, and the Cuban Missile Crisis

- SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS

**Wednesday, March 25:** Constructing the Berlin Wall

**Friday, March 27:**

Reading for discussion:

- *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, by Kate Brown, pp 3-71; 97-123; 133-161; 247-338

Week 10:

**Monday, March 30:** Class session at **Special Collections** in Memorial Library!

**Wednesday, April 1:** The Thaw

**Friday, April 3:**

Reading for discussion:

- *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, John Le Carré

Week 11:

**Monday, April 6:** From Khrushchev to Brezhnev

**Wednesday, April 8:** Cold War Film and Tourist Industries

**Friday, April 10:**

Reading for discussion:

- "The Rude French: Modernity and Hospitality in de Gaulle's France," by Christopher Endy, in *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*, pp 150-181
- "Time Travelers: Soviet Tourists to Eastern Europe", by Anne Gorsuch, in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*, pp 205-226

### **PART III: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE SOVIET COLLAPSE**

Week 12:

**Monday, April 13:** May 1968: The Discontents of Capitalism and the Left in Europe

**Wednesday, April 15:** Fashion and Music in Cold War Europe

**Friday, April 17:**

Reading for discussion:

- "The Muses Are Heard" by Truman Capote, from *Portraits and Observations: The Essays of Truman Capote*, pp 74-178
- "Presley, Yes – Ulbricht, No?: Rock 'n' Roll and Female Sexuality in the German Cold War", by Uta Poiger, in *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, pp 168-205

Week 13:

**Monday, April 20:** Protest in the Eastern Bloc, 1968-1980

- FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS

**Wednesday, April 22:** Neoliberalism, Perestroika and Beginning of the Soviet Collapse

**Friday, April 24:**

Reading for discussion:

- *The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe*, Marci Shore, pages 1-200

Week 14:

**Monday, April 27:** Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow

- *Optional:* Check out the documentary *Cold War on Ice: Summit Series '72* (on YouTube)

**Wednesday, April 29:** 1989-1992: The Fall of the "Iron Curtain"

\*No discussion post this week\*

**Friday, May 1:** Global legacies of the Cold War

Reading for discussion:

- *The Taste of Ashes: The Afterlife of Totalitarianism in Eastern Europe*, Marci Shore, pages 201-358

~Final exam on Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 7:25pm-9:25pm~