

## The Fifties

01: 506:401:04  
Professor Rachel Devlin  
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### Course Description

This course examines the intersection between the cold war, international diplomacy, domestic politics and cultural change in America during the postwar period. Topics will include McCarthyism, conformity and rebellion, youth culture, the civil rights movement, the rise of television and the transformation of the American family.

This course is a capstone history course, the goal of which is to produce a research paper, based on original sources, 18-20 pages in length at the end of the semester. Students will meet with the professor and offer advice and support to one another over the course of the semester as students develop individual projects. Class discussion and your research papers will be the basis for your final grade. Each week you will be expected to turn in a “reflection” paper based on some aspect of the reading. It can be short (1-2 pages) and is not meant to be a formal paper, but rather your thoughts and questions on some aspect of that week’s reading.

Class discussion: 30%  
Research proposal: 15%  
Weekly “reflections”: 15%  
Presentation: 10%  
Final Draft: 30%

The following books are available at the Rutgers Barnes and Noble bookstore:

Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*  
Elain Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*  
Melba Patillo-Beals, *Warriors Don’t Cry*  
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*  
Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic*  
Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride*

Readings preceded by an asterisk (\*) will be available on Sakai. You are required to print these out and bring them to class.

## Cold War I: Moral Dilemmas in the Age of the Atom

Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, p. 1-54, 211-229, 266-274

\*William Graebner, *The Culture of Contingency* (chapter 2)

Website: [www.conelrad.com](http://www.conelrad.com)

Film: *The Atomic Café* (clips, in class)

## Cold War II: McCarthyism: The Trouble With Interpreting a "Nightmare"

\*Albert Fried, *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare*, p.1-9, 15-27, 31-57, 64-66, 78-80, 102-124, 129-130, 135-139, 148-152, 154-156, 160-164, 175-193

\*Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (selections)

\* FBI report: Kesselman

\*Gerda Lerner, *Fireweed: A Political Autobiography* (chapter 17)

## Happy Days? Nostalgia and Television in the nineteen fifties

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, introduction, ch. 1, 2, 4-6

\*Lynn Spiegel, "Television in the Family Circle" from *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*

\*Barbara Ehrenreich, Introduction, "Breadwinners and Losers," and "Playboy Joins the Battle of the Sexes"

Episode: "Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" (in class)

## PAPER PROPOSALS DUE

## Library Session

Presentation by Tom Glynn; Research Assistance in library

## Mass Consumption, Mass Conformity and the Character of Affluence

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic* (selected chapters)  
\*William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (selections)

Film: *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* (in class, clips)

### Imagining Real Life: Women and Popular Culture

\*Philip Wylie, selection from *A Generation of Vipers*  
\*Joanne Meyerowitz, "A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958"  
\*Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, "*Imitation(s) of Life: The Black Woman's Double Determination as Troubling 'Other'*"

Film: *Imitation of Life*

### Rebellion: The Deployment of Culture: Art, Politics, and Rebellion

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* Part I, ch. 1-7 (Penguin edition p. 1-45); Part II, ch. 1-11 (p. 107-178).

\*Robert Frank, *The Americans*, introduction by Jack Kerouac  
\*James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (selected chapters)  
\*Betty Friedan, "Teenage Girl in Trouble," *Coronet Magazine* (1958)

Film: *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) (clips, in class)

Robert Frank: *The Americans* (photographs, in class)

### Crisis and Redemption in the South: Little Rock

Melba Patillo-Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High*

\*Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown vs. Board of Education* (prologue and ch. 1)  
\*Hanna Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock" (1957)

Discussion: paper proposals, due in class

sign up for individual conferences

Rough drafts due; read and critique two assigned rough drafts

Presentations

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