



## American Culture of the 1950s 512:376

Welcome to winter session. We will immerse ourselves in the 1950s, a Golden Age for people called in the United States conservatives, and a televised Dark Age for People called in the United States liberals. For three weeks we will read and view our way through a period of history whose myths and stereotypes still flow around us in high and low politics and daily life

These Books Are to be Bought (they are available in the Rutgers Bookstore)

Halberstam, The 1950s(optional)  
 Schrecker, Many are the Crimes  
 May, Homeward Bound

### Course Goals

To develop our skills of critical analysis by immersing ourselves in a short but very crucial period of modern American history, a period that serves as a gateway to the second half of the twentieth century. We will seek to integrate and synthesize class readings and films/videos to answer questions and about the 1950s as an historical period (chronologically the period from 1947 to 1963) and its legacy for the United States and the world today. Students will do a short review of the first three chapters in May. Homeward Bound, which will be graded pass/fail and will be due January 4, when we return from break.

Students will then write a review essay of Schrecker's Many Are the Crimes, which will analyze the book terms of what they are learning through the course. Students will then do and an in class final in which the questions will be given out two days before the final. Along with the formal reading of Schrecker and May, the series based on David Halberstam's work, the 1950s, is included directly in the course outline and should be seen before class as a basis for class discussion

All written work must be done for students to pass the course. The Schrecker review essay will count roughly 25% of the final grade and the final examination will count 50 % respectively. Attendance and participation are very important, since each class is about the equivalent of a little more than a week of a regular semester class. Absences must be excused

and work made up. Attendance and participation will count for roughly 25% of the grade. It is imperative for students to have good attendance since each class is the equivalent of a week in the regular semester. Exams and all other materials will be posted on Sakai.

## Course Work

December 26—Introduction: The Old Deal, The New Deal and WWII in terms of Economics, Politics, and Culture-- —

Lecture Discussion dealing the U.S. society as it emerged from World War II. Questions addressed. What had the New Deal accomplished by the end of the Depression? What was the Century of the Common Man and the New Deal Coalition What was the “American Century and the Conservative Coalition? How did both influence U.S. involvement in the war and how did the resolution of the war influence both? Reading May, Homeward Bound, chap 1- 2, try to have this done by class

Videos—excerpts from FDR, and Rosie the Riveter

December 27

Lecture Discussion: The international cold war, its U.S. and global ramifications.

Readings May, Homeward Bound, chap 3, Schrecker, Crimes chap 1

Link to Halberstam, <https://youtu.be/oFl4cQ3hBNM>

Review of first three chapters of May, Homeward Bound, to be graded pass/fail, due Video, excerpts Truman, documentary Atomic Café—

What conditions led most Americans to support the Truman administration’s cold war policies? What alternatives and what opposition to those policies among supporters of both the New Deal and conservative coalitions? What role did the atomic bomb play in shaping U.S. cold war policies and what role did those policies play in the decisions concerning the use and development of atomic weapons? What role did the Korean War play in cementing the International Cold War?

December 28-- The Domestic Cold War “Every Liberal is a Socialist: Every Socialist is a Communist: Every Communist is Moscow’s Spy” : The Catch-22 of McCarthy and “McCarthyism” from the formation of NATO through the Korean War excerpts from video Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and Dr Strangelove Readings, Schrecker, Crimes, chaps 2-7 Link to Halberstam <https://youtu.be/zzNiiN4qFig> <https://youtu.be/14B0hyG4VTo>

Discussion questions: what were the origins of the domestic cold war in the interwar period and the struggles of the great depression? What groups led the campaign against the Communist party and its allies in the United States? What were these groups their aims? In what ways did

they influence the international cold war's course and in what ways did the international cold war influence them

Jan 2 Lecture-Discussion The Downfall of McCarthy and the Consolidation of McCarthyism from the Army-McCarthy Hearings to the Nixon-Khrushchev Moscow Kitchen Debate-Readings, conclusion of Cracker, Many Are the Crimes  
[https://youtu.be/6U0pH\\_PYIFU?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI\\_r2f3](https://youtu.be/6U0pH_PYIFU?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI_r2f3)

-Video, Legacy of the Hollywood Blacklist?

Distinguish between McCarthy and McCarthyism in regard to what you have learned about the domestic cold war, in class lectures, [https://youtu.be/6U0pH\\_PYIFU?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI\\_r2f3](https://youtu.be/6U0pH_PYIFU?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI_r2f3) discussions,

Jan3 -Lecture-Discussion The international and domestic cold war and the transformation of American culture  
Readings, May, Homeward Bound, chaps 6-7—videos, excerpts from Rebel Without a Cause, and Rutgers documentary, Generation Without a Cause 1/8/13 Without a Cause. How was crackpot realism acted out in the CIA adventures abroad? In the life of American families? In The Installment Plan society and its effects on society You Can't Get There From Here Readings. Why would Betty Friedan later contend that for women, Life in the 1950s was a comfortable concentration camp?

January 4—Lecture-Discussion—Sexual “Brinkmanship”

Reading's article n: [Is sex a requirement in order to lead a happy life?](https://youtu.be/dB61C_iTPnI) [https://youtu.be/dB61C\\_iTPnI](https://youtu.be/dB61C_iTPnI) [https://youtu.be/x\\_OkKiV92I8](https://youtu.be/x_OkKiV92I8)

Excerpts from video, Video, Pillow Talk –discussion questions. In what ways did the cold war and the mass consumer culture encourages both sexual repression and sexual liberation among girls and boys, women and men?  
Review Essay of Schrecker, Crimes, due

January 5--Lecture –Discussion--The Consumerist consensus, its strengths and weakness, evaluated

Link to Halberstam <https://youtu.be/85uQFdg4u-U>

Who were the new entrepreneurs? What was their relationship to government? What was the power of advertising? How did this effect youth culture specifically?

Excerpts from videos, Patterns, Rebel Without A Cause and Blackboard Jungle

January 8 Lecture-Discussion-- The Meanings of Beat: The Beat Generation; origins and outlook,

.Link to Halberstam <https://youtu.be/Q5drTm6ibzQ>

Lecture Discussion; Who were the Beats? Where did they differ from the labor and political radicals of the previous generation? What were they searching for? Where did they differ from the dominant cold war consumer culture of the 1950s

Video, the Beat Generation

January 9--Lecture-Discussion --"Negro Liberation" its domestic and global context

Link to Halberstam <https://youtu.be/Df1hJroSfck>

Link to Civil Rights [https://youtu.be/OW-GgFinUhc?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI\\_r2f3](https://youtu.be/OW-GgFinUhc?list=PLV2GnmObn3E6AMA56Mi25NPtPjDI_r2f3)

Excerpts Video Awakenings. What was the status of blacks in America in the 1950s? What developments in domestic and international affairs began to change that status? Sample questions for final exam

January 10- Lecture-Discussion The End of the 1950s: Sputnik, Castro, and Kennedy and the Crisis of the International Cold War Civil Rights Peace, and the coming of a new age.

Link to Halberstam, <https://youtu.be/5edfSTlpgQ>

Link to Cuban Missile Crisis review <https://youtu.be/57EL3eaVEKY?list=PL3E13E7A3FA3ABE26>

Video: No Easy Walk

In what ways did the Cuban revolution and the space race challenge the conventional wisdom of 1950s political culture? In what ways did the developing civil rights movement overcome the conventional wisdom of the 1950s? sample final questions handed out

January 11—The 1950s in Retrospect-- The 1950s in Retrospect--

January 12—Final Exam, in class