

25 AUGUST 2007

COREY COLLEGE SYLLABUS FALL SEMESTER 2007
FRPG 187D

**COLDEST COLD WAR FLICKS:
AMERICAN HISTORY, AMERICAN MOVIES, 1945-1963**

CLASS: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1010-1140 Hepburn 21

JOCKEL SEMINAR: Thursdays 1420-1550 Memorial 102
SCHWARTZ SEMINAR: Thursdays 1420-1550 Whitman 166

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine a sampling of American movies made during the earliest and coldest days of the Cold War, a period extending from the end of World War II in 1945 to the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963. Movies are often more than just mindless escapism: the stories and texts continually recast by our culture not only entertain but also can provide a window into who we are, and were. Because films, like literature can reflect the time in which they are produced, we can study history and film together to gain insights into values, issues, beliefs, hopes, fears, and historical experiences. In this course specifically we will be looking at how some of the motion pictures of the day reflected the major preoccupations of the early Cold War era: chief among them dealing with nuclear weapons, responding to the Soviet communist threat, and undertaking America's new responsibilities abroad, as well as enjoying prosperity and mobility at home in the new suburbs while spawning a generation which eventually would be called the "boomers." Special attention will be paid to the noir films of the 1940s and 1950s, family melodramas such as *Mildred Pierce* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, horror films of the 1950s such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and nuclear war films such as *On the Beach* and *Dr. Strangelove*.

MOVIE LIST:

The Best Years of Our Lives (1946)
The Third Man (1947)
Double Indemnity (1944)
Mildred Pierce (1946)
Rebel Without a Cause (1955)
On the Waterfront (1954)
High Noon (1952)
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)
Pickup on South Street (1953)
The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (1956)
On the Beach (1959)
Dr. Strangelove (1963)
The Manchurian Candidate (1962)
North by Northwest (1959)

READINGS, AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSTORE:

David Halberstam. *The Fifties* (1993)
Kenneth D. Rose. *One Nation Underground: The Fallout Shelter in American Culture* (2001)
Diana Hacker. *A Pocket Style Manual* (2004)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade in this course will be determined by five elements: the writing portfolio, oral presentations, reading quizzes, participation and attendance, and a final exam.

Writing portfolio (30% of grade). Tuesdays over the course of the semester each student will submit a paper, based on the film of the week. This will alternate weekly between an *essay* written in response to a question posed by the instructors, and a *reaction paper* in which the student may determine the focus of the paper, based on class discussions and assigned reading. Another essay will require library research. These essays are due each Tuesday at the 1010 plenary.

At the end of the semester, students will submit revised versions of two of their papers of their own choosing. Papers will be graded with check mark system; only the entire writing portfolio will be given a grade at the end of the semester. Students will need to remember to keep all their papers (originals and revisions) so that they can be re-submitted in the portfolio. In addition, the portfolio should include all written work from the semester, including in-class writing, quizzes, oral presentation notes, etc. Failure to turn in a portfolio will result in a failure for the course.

Except in extraordinary circumstances outside of a student's control, late papers will not be accepted. If you anticipate such an extraordinary circumstance, speak to your seminar instructor well in advance of the due date and time.

Oral projects (15% of grade) There will be two oral projects. First, each student will make a five-minute presentation to the entire class on the advice he or she would give to either a character in one of the films or a historical figure in the Halberstam book. Second, each seminar will write, rehearse, produce, and present a twenty to thirty-minute play on a theme of the course. There must be speaking parts for all students. This will be presented to the entire class.

Reading quizzes. (20% of grade) There will be short quizzes on Thursdays to test whether students have done the reading. To take the quiz you must show up on time at the start of class..

Participation and attendance (15% of grade with the further potential for a lowered grade). Students will be graded on the quality and quantity of their participation in the Tuesday and Thursday classes and in seminar. If you are not on time on either Tuesday or Thursday, you may be told at the door to wait outside.

Attendance is required in this course. Students may miss two classes without explanation or absence penalty, although if they miss a quiz under such circumstance it will, after the first missed quiz, be graded "0". Thereafter, each unexcused absence will result in a lowering of the final grade by 3%. Excused absences normally result from happenings beyond a student's control. They result in no penalty whatsoever. Speak to your instructor.

Final exam (20% of grade). The final exam will be in two parts. The first will focus on the last two films of the semester and the second will cover all the coursework.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: each week, movies will be made available on the campus network the weekend and the evening before they will be discussed in class.

The Best Years of Our Lives

T, 4 Sep. Essay. Question: "Is *The Best Years of Our Lives*" really a good title for this movie? Why or why not? Provide evidence to support your point of view and (as in all papers to be written for this course) underline your thesis.

Th, 6 Sep. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 1-5.

The Third Man

T, 11 Sep. Reaction paper.

Th, 13 Sep. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 6-10.

Double Indemnity **Note: this is an unusual week, affecting assignments.**

T, 18 Sep. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 11-15 (Quiz).

Th 20 Sep During regular class time there will be a special FYP program.

Th, 20 Sep. During regular seminar time, film discussion. Hepburn 112, (Paper due.)
Essay, question to be announced.

Mildred Pierce

T, 25 Sep. Reaction paper.

Th, 27 Sep. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 16-20.

Rebel Without a Cause

T, 2 Oct.. Essay, Question to be announced.

Th, 4 Oct.. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 21-25.

Seminars this week will meet in the library.

On the Waterfront

T, 9 Oct. Reaction paper.

Th, 11 Oct. No class. Break.

High Noon

T, 16 Oct. Research essay due. Details to be announced.

Th, 18 Oct. Halberstam, chapters 26-30.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

T, 23 Oct. Reaction paper.

Th, 25 Oct. Reading: Halberstam: chapters 31-35.

Pickup on South Street

T, 30 Oct. Essay. Question to be announced.

Th, 1 Nov. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 36-40.

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit

T, 6 Nov. Reaction paper

Th, 8 Nov. Reading: Halberstam, chapters 41-44.

On the Beach

T, 13 Nov. Essay. Question to be announced.

Th, 15 Nov. Reading: Rose, chapters 1 & 2.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dr. Strangelove

T, 27 Nov. Reaction Paper.

Th, 29 Nov. Reading: Rose, chapter 3.

The Manchurian Candidate

T, 4 Dec. No paper.

There will be a question about *The Manchurian Candidate* on the final exam.

Th, 6 Dec. Reading: Rose, chapter 6 and Halberstam, chapters 45-46.

North by Northwest

T, 11 Dec. Turn in required revisions of earlier papers.

There will be a question about *North by Northwest* on the final exam.

Th, 13 Dec. Plays to be presented.