

Prof. Julie Hessler
hessler@uoregon.edu
Office hours (Zoom): by appointment

HIST 608 Colloquium: The Cold War and Culture
Fridays, 12:00 – 3:00

Overview: The leading adversaries in the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union, based their claims to world leadership not just on raw power but on core ideological values. These values permeated the sphere of culture as well as economics and politics. In the case of the US, the values of market capitalism and individual freedom shaped intellectual life, promoted experimentation in the arts, and undergirded the vibrant, commercially driven popular culture of the postwar era. In the USSR, socialist values became attached to artistic realism, with something of a firewall against both commercial influences and abstract or experimental forms, and intellectual life was colored and constrained by socialist egalitarianism, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and the communist historical teleology. Both countries tried to project cultural superiority through international sporting and creative arts competitions, and both used a variety of means to propagandize their ideological values and cultural practices throughout the world. Artists, writers, and other cultural producers in third countries frequently became drawn into the so-called cultural Cold War, whether because of American or Soviet hegemony in a given country or because of individuals' ideological choices and material opportunities. This course will explore the interplay of the Cold War and culture in a number of different national settings and cultural spheres.

Learning objectives: Like most courses, this course has both methodological and substantive goals.

- Historical knowledge: Course readings will familiarize you with key events, institutions, ideological positions, and cultural artifacts connected to the “cultural Cold War.”
- Historiographical awareness: Readings and discussions will familiarize you with historical interpretations and debates about the Cold War and culture, the sources that support these arguments, and some contrasting techniques of historical presentation.
- Critical historical skills: Course discussions and assignments will give you practice identifying arguments from both analytical and narrative modes of scholarship; conducting research; making an engaging video presentation; and writing a substantial paper.

Grades: Grades will be based on a holistic evaluation of your class preparedness and performance on two major assignments, a video presentation and a final paper. Since graduate students tend to be very good students, the grading scale is foreshortened. I use A- to indicate solid performance, clearly satisfactory for the graduate level (I expect this to be my standard grade, but I may be wrong and end up giving more As). An A means especially impressive work that exceeds my expectations at the graduate level. Grades in the B to B+ range tend to mean that your performance fell somewhat short of my expectations in terms of intellectual sophistication or thoroughness. Grades below a B are rare at the graduate level and should be

taken as a real warning. You will get feedback on your overall performance when I grade your presentation so that you have a sense of how you are doing in the course.

Presentation (due Wed., Oct. 28, at noon): This assignment asks you to prepare a video presentation about a specific episode with some relationship to the Cold War and culture. As in this course more generally, “culture” is understood quite broadly. By “episode,” I could envision anything from discussion surrounding a book or film or theatrical performance or concert tour in one or another country to the Cold War implications of a sporting event to a specific propaganda or media campaign to the cultural resonance of some moment in the space race or proxy war or flareup of international tension or defection from the socialist bloc This list could go on. If you have a topic in mind but are not sure whether it would be appropriate, check in with me. The presentation should consist of a PowerPoint with voiceover, produced with the Panopto tool on Canvas. It is up to you whether you also include a video of you talking. The presentation should be between ten and fifteen minutes long and should include eight content slides plus one slide with your sources. Think of this assignment as a form of public history, which is to say that you want to combine analysis with engaging narrative and visuals to draw people in. You will obviously have to do some research for this project, but my expectation is that the research will be more synthetic than original. Of course, you could surprise me and draw on primary sources as well. Wikipedia is an acceptable source for this project, if used in conjunction with other sources.

Final paper (due 4:00 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 10): This paper is pretty open-ended, depending on your specific interests and needs. The default option is a 15-page research paper, incorporating primary and secondary sources, on some topic related to the Cold War and culture. It may concern any national or multinational setting, and it may relate to the episode you used for your presentation or focus on something totally different. If this seems less useful to you than a 15-page historiographical paper on some topic, you may make the case to me and I will probably approve it. Either way, please get in touch and run your ideas by me. You may want to consult with your primary advisor as well.

Class preparation and discussion: You are expected to do the assigned reading and to have thought about it in preparation for discussion. Come to class prepared with a clear understanding of the major arguments of each assigned text, some factual information that struck you, and points that the authors made that seem especially illuminating. This goes for all the assigned readings. At least twice during the term, you will be designated to lead the discussion of a specific historical work. Come prepared with a series of questions based on that book or article to guide the discussion (though hopefully your classmates will jump in with their own as well).

Readings: Nearly all of the assigned readings are available as eBooks through the library website. Exceptions are marked and are available on the course Canvas site.

Class schedule

Friday, Oct. 2

Introducing culture and the Cold War; two exhibitions

Introductions

Nicholas Cull, "Reading, Viewing, and Tuning in to the Cold War," in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 2 (2010)

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy in the Cold War* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 1-32 (on Canvas).

Two exhibitions

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, "The Gladiatorial Exhibition," 33-52 (Canvas)

Susan E. Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom: The American National Exhibition in Moscow," *Kritika* 9,4 (Fall, 2008):

João Felipe Gonçalves, "Sputnik Premiers in Havana" (from Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker, eds., *The Socialist Sixties*, 2013) (eBook chapter).

Friday, Oct. 9

Latin American artists and the institutions of Cold War cultural competition

Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015) (entire book).

Friday, Oct. 16

Telling the story through narrative

Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War* (orig. 1999)

Interview with Frances Stonor Saunders, in Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960* (2003), pp. 15-40.

David Caute's forward to the same book

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, "Broadway Dead, Says Soviet Critic," (pp. 55-87) (Canvas).

Friday, Oct. 23

Telling the story through new media

Choose three episodes from the podcast *Sport in the Cold War* (on YouTube; part of the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center), watch them, and come prepared to talk about what does or doesn't make this form of historical presentation effective. In addition, read the introduction plus three chapters of your choice from *East Plays West: Sport in the Cold War* (2007) for a wider discussion of sports in the Cold War. (Note: we will be discussing chapter 11, Damion Thomas's chapter on "playing the 'race card'" in sports diplomacy, in week 6, so choose different chapters this time).

Friday, Oct. 30

Telling the story the academic way

Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad*

Due by noon Wednesday, Oct. 28 (post to Canvas): Panopto presentation on an episode involving culture and the Cold War. Due by the class period: watch all of your fellow students' presentations. Everyone will be assigned to lead class discussion of one of the presentations.

Friday, Nov. 6

Race, part 1: Black Americans in cultural diplomacy.

Penny von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World* (2006)

Damion Thomas, "Playing the 'race card': US foreign policy and the integration of sports," in *East Plays West*, chapter 11.

Friday, Nov. 13

Race, part 2: Communist anti-racism and its limits

Quinn Slobodian, ed., *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World* (2015).

Julie Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics, and the Cold War" (2006) (Canvas)

Maxim Matusevich, "Soviet Anti-Racism and its Discontents," in *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (2020)

Friday, Nov 20

Anti-imperialism and the postcolonial left in literature and film (note: we may have a guest on this day, Roy Chan from EALL).

Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and Third Worlds* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

Friday, Nov. 27 No class – Thanksgiving break. Try to get some work done on your papers this week and get a head start on the reading and viewing assignment for next week.

Friday, Dec. 4

The cultural Cold War and capitalist triumphalism.

Read Gerd Horten, *Don't Need no Thought Control* (2020)

Jessica Gienow-Hecht, "Culture and the Cold War in Europe," *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 1

Watch the Estonian documentary film – *Disco and Atomic War* (On the library homepage, go to Databases, then to Docuseek2. From there, you can pull up the film).

Thursday, Dec. 10 – final paper due by 4:00 pm.