History 333
THE COLD WAR: COLLOQUIUM
Clayton Koppes
Professor of History
Oberlin College

1 30 to 2 20 pm MW, 3 Credit Hours, Spring 2010,
Office Hours 9 30 to 11 MWF and 12 to 1 and 2 30 to 3 15 MW
(except when department meetings are scheduled)
and by appointment
Rice 305

For half a century, the world was in thrall to the Cold War. Although the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union didn’t lead to a shooting war between the principals, this global rivalry pushed the world to the nuclear brink. Both countries invested massive amounts of human and material capital in pursuit of international supremacy, and proxy wars exacted fearful tolls. Why the Cold War occurred and the course it followed have excited historians and other analysts for decades and stimulated a rich body of literature. Despite some historians’ belief that a postrevisionist synthesis has emerged, aided by the partial opening of Soviet archives in recent years, these questions remain hotly contested. In this colloquium, we will examine the perennial questions about the origins of the Cold War and the course it took, informed by the most recent scholarship. Because the early years of the Cold War are so complex and studied so intensively, we focus on that period.

Understanding of the Cold War has also assumed new dimensions in recent years and we’ll address some of those trends, particularly the Cold War as a cultural contest and the complex relationship between the Cold War and race.

The Cold War inevitably raises questions of personal political commitment, not only for the Cold War period but generally about questions of the nature of various political systems and the stances of great powers in international affairs. The legitimacy of American and Russian goals and strategies is one of the fundamental underlying questions. We will have occasion to examine those issues.

Writing Assignments, Discussion, and Grading

There are three writing assignments. The first two are interpretive essays of seven to eight pages each. I’ll give you topics. They can be written by relying on the assigned
readings, although you may bring in outside readings, if you wish. The final project is negotiable. It could be a longer synthetic essay or it could be a special project, more research-based, focused on a particular subject. We’ll work out the final project on an individual basis. Each writing assignment counts one-fourth of the course grade. Writing assignments are governed by the Oberlin honor code.

Since this is a colloquium, it’s essential that all students participate avidly and respectfully in discussion. You are expected to prepare for discussion by carefully reading the assigned materials and reflecting on them before class. Discussion counts for one-fourth of the course grade. I’ll give each student a progress report on discussion midway through the course.

Since the class is overenrolled, I’d like to split the class into sections from time to time. We’ll work out the logic of the first class. The easiest plan would probably be to have half meet on Wednesdays, the other half on Fridays at 1:30.

Readings

I’ve tried to keep the purchased texts to a minimum. We’ll rely heavily on ERES articles and chapters. All readings other than the required texts are on ERES. In some weeks where the reading is heavy, I’ll divide the class into sections with each section giving a report on its portion of the readings. A few more reserve readings may be added. I’d suggest you read the assignments in the order listed, if possible. The required texts are:


1. Feb. 8, 10 The Origins of the Cold War: Traditional, Revisionist, and Post-Revisionist Interpretations

L&P, introduction
Vladislav M. Zubok, A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev (2007), chap. 1.

2. Feb. 15, 17 World War II: From the Grand Alliance to Confrontation

Anders Stephanson, “Liberty or Death: The Cold War as U.S. Ideology
Leffler and Roberts essays in L&P
Zubok, A Failed Empire, chap. 2
Mr. X [George Kennan], “The Sources of Soviet Conduct”
Frank Costigliola, “Unceasing Pressure for Penetration: Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan’s Formation of the Cold War”

Sherwin and Holloway essays in L&P
Tsyuoshi Hasagawa, Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, TBA

4. March 1 Responsibility and Guilt: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Cold War
Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History [1952], 1-16, 166-74
Special visit by David Kamitsuka, associate professor of religion

March 3 Living in Berlin: From War to Cold War
Anonymous, A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City, all

5. March 8, 10 Living in Berlin, cont’d
Finish reading A Woman in Berlin
Naimark essay in L&P
Special visit by Eric Estes, associate dean of students, who wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on women in Germany after World War II

5. March 15, 17 The Cold War in Europe: High Policy
Tony Judt, Postwar, chap. 4
Zubok, A Failed Empire, chap. 3
Kent, Reynolds, Maier, Dimitrov, and Pons essays in L&P

7. March 22, 24 Three Crises: Iran, Turkey, and Greece
Raine, Mark, and Spikas essays in L&P

March 26 First Essay Due at NOON

March 29, 31 No Class – Spring Break

8. April 5 The Korean War
Weathersby essay in L&P  
Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2, TBA

(No class April 7. I’ll be attending the Organization of American Historians convention.)

9. **April 12**  
   **The Korean War (cont’d)**  
   Review Weathersby and Cumings

10. **April 14**  
    **Cold War Modern: Culture as International Competition**  
    Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: American Culture in a Divided Germany*, Chaps. 1 and 2 (half the class will read one chapter, half the other)

10. **April 19, 21**  
    **Cold War Modern, cont’d**  
    Special visits by Tim Scholl, professor of Russian, on art and ballet during the Cold War  
    Skim David Crowley, *Posters of the Cold War*  
    Read two of the following essays (your choice) in David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, eds., *Cold War Modern Design, 1945-1970*:  
    - Crowley, “Europe Reconstructed, Europe Divided”  
    - Pavitt, “Design and the Democratic Ideal”  
    - Crowley, “Thaw Design: Design in Eastern Europe after 1956”  
    - Susan E. Reid, “‘Our Kitchen Is Just as Good’: Soviet Responses to the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959”

11. **April 26, 28**  
    **The Cold War and the Color Line**  
    Alain Locke, “The Unfinished Business of Democracy” [1942] (handout)  
    Borstelman essay in L&P  
    Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*  
    (the class will divide into sections with each group reading a chapter – one on Truman, one on Eisenhower and Little Rock, and one on Kennedy)

*April 30 – Second Essay Due at NOON*

12. **May 3, 5**  
    **The Cold War and the Third World**  
    Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, TBA  
    Wood, Hunt and Levin, Jian and Bethell, and Roxborough essays in L&P
(During the last two weeks of the semester, you should view THE LIVES OF OTHERS, the gripping recent film about life and surveillance in the German Democratic Republic. We'll incorporate interpretations of that film into our overall assessment of the Cold War. The film is on reserve. After you've seen the film, please read a review, Timothy Garton Ash, “The Stasi on Our Minds,” New York Review of Books, May 31, 2007, which is also on reserve.)

13. May 10, 12       The Cold War: Conclusions

Niebuhr, The Irony of American History (review)
Leffler & Painter, conclusion

Exam Period -- Final Essay or Project Due on Date to Be Announced

2.4.2010