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, it threatened too. 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.

Writing Assignments, Discussion, and Grading

There are three writing assignments. The first two are interpretive essays of seven to eight pages each, based on the material covered up to that point. 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.
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.

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 two texts listed below are required.


1. Feb. 2, 4 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. 9, 11 World War II: From the Grand Alliance to Confrontation

   Zubok, A Failed Empire, chap. 2
   Leffler and Roberts essays in L&P
   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”
   Anders Stephanson, “Liberty or Death: The Cold War as U.S. Ideology”

3. Feb. 16, 18 The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War

   Sherwin and Holloway essays in L&P
   Tsyuoshi Hasagawa, Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, TBA
4. Feb. 23, 25  Living in Berlin: From War to Cold War

5. March 2, 4

Anonymous, A Woman in Berlin: Eight Weeks in the Conquered City, all 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

March 2 – First Essay Due at Class Time

5. March 9, 11  The Cold War in Europe: High Policy

Tony Judt, Postwar, TBA
Zubok, A Failed Empire, chap. 3
Kent, Reynolds, Maier, Dimitrov, and Pons essays in L&P

[On March 13/14, the History Department will sponsor a conference on Wilsonianism with presentations by leading scholars. Try to attend some of the sessions.]

7. March 16, 18  Three Crises: Iran, Turkey, and Greece

Raine, Mark, and Spikas essays in L&P

March 23, 25 No Class – Spring Break

8. March 30, April 1  The Korean War

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

April 8 – Second Essay Due at Class Time

9. April 6, 8  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)

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”

Special visits by Tim Scholl, professor of Russian, on art and ballet during the Cold War

10. April 13, 15  Cold War Modern, continued

Special visit by Sandra Zagarell, Danforth professor of English, who lived in (West) Berlin in the early 1970s

11. April 20, 22  The Cold War and the Color Line

Alain Locke, “The Unfinished Business of Democracy” [1942] (handout)
Borstelmann 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 a chapter – one on Truman, one on Eisenhower and Little Rock, and one on Kennedy)

12. April 27, 29  The Cold War and the Third World

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 4, 6  The Cold War: Conclusions

Leffler & Painter, conclusion

May 6 -- Final Essay or Project Due

1.29.2009