READINGS IN RECENT AMERICAN HISTORY
University of Maryland at College Park

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This graduate readings course examines key subjects, themes, and historiographic debates in the history of the United States from 1941 to the present.

Reading and class participation: All readings are required except those marked with an asterisk, which are strongly recommended. Please bring to each class meeting a one-page discussion guide that contains key points and questions that you intend to discuss.

Book review: Each student will select and review one of the recommended books. He or she will write a 4-5 page critical analysis of the book and distribute it via the course reflector no later than the Friday preceding class. In addition, the reviewer will lead a discussion of the recommended book during class.

Historiographic essay: Each student will write a 15-20 page historiographic essay about one of the weekly topics or a different topic selected in consultation with the instructor. The essay will summarize and evaluate important writings, issues, and debates in the historical literature during the past decade or so. Twelve copies are due in class May 11.

Final exam: There will be a three-hour in-class written exam May 18, 3:30-6:30 p.m., followed by a discussion of Findlay’s book with refreshments. The instructor also will offer optional ungraded one-hour oral exams, to be scheduled individually. Both will emulate the department’s special field graduate examinations.

Electronic reflector account: You may use the class reflector account (address in left header) not only to share book reviews, but also to discuss course material. Please use my personal e-mail address (in right header) for private correspondence.

Grade composition:
class participation -- 35 percent  book review -- 15 percent
historiographical essay -- 30 percent  final exam -- 20 percent
Schedule of Topic and Readings

Feb. 2: Introduction and Overview


Also read at minimum Boyer; Patterson; Diggins and Blum; or Chafe.

Paul Boyer, Promises to Keep: The United States since World War II (Boston, 1995).


Feb. 9: World War II and Race


John Morton Blum, V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II (New York, 1976).


Feb. 16: Popular Culture and Television


*Lynn Spigel, Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America (Chicago, 1992).
*William Boddy, Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics (Urbana, IL, 1990.)

**Feb. 23: Women, Families, and Cold War Culture**


**March 2: Civil Rights**


**March 9: Presidents and Parties**


March 16: The American Enterprise System


March 30: Technology and Experts: Controlling the Atom


April 6: The Cold War: Origins and Lessons


**April 13: Vietnam**


**April 20: New Left and Counterculture**


**April 27: Environmentalism**


**May 4: Nixon and Watergate**


*Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York, 1994).


**May 11: Conservatism and Neoconservatism**


**May 18: Regionalism and New Urban Forms**