A421/H511 America in the 1950s  
Section 26228/26229, 3 Credit Hours  
Fall 2006

Location: Cavanaugh Hall, Room 235  
Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:45 p.m.  
Instructor: Richard Gantz  
Office Hours: Mondays 5:50 to 7:00 p.m. and other times by appointment.  
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Course: This course has two major objectives. It will provide an in-depth examination of America in the 1950s. This is a period that is frequently seen as a time of economic prosperity and self satisfaction in America when the status quo reigned supreme. The course will look at popular culture, society, politics, and technology to determine the validity of this interpretation and how much life, ideas, and attitudes changed in the decade. The class will explore how popular culture reflected and affected attitudes toward technology, race relations, gender roles, and international politics. A second goal of the course is to look at how historians use information, evidence, and objects to interpret the past.

This course will seek to incorporate many of the educational goals as outlined in the “IUPUI Principles of Undergraduate Learning.” These principles include basic skills in communication, critical thinking, and analysis to understand society and culture. Just as America did not develop in a vacuum, history is part of a larger stream of human experience that includes art, literature, culture, science, different societies, religion, and technology. Students are encouraged to apply knowledge from other disciplines to the study of historical movements and events. A copy of the “Principles of Undergraduate Learning” is posted on the Department of History’s Home Page at www.iupui.edu/~history.


Follow the reading assignments as listed in the syllabus; the instructor will note any exceptions to the published schedule. Check Oncourse for changes and assignments.

Semester Schedule:

August 23 – Introduction.
August 28 – Postwar America. Read Patterson, Chapters 1, 3.
August 30 – Tensions over Communism. Read Patterson, Chapters 4, 5; Halberstam, Chapters 1, 3.
September 4 – Labor Day, No class.
September 6 – Housing & the Suburbs. Read Halberstam, Chapter 9.
September 11 – Korea. Read Patterson, Chapter 8; Halberstam, Chapters 4, 5.
September 13 – Truman & MacArthur. Read Halberstam, Chapter 7. **Graduate topic proposals due.**
September 18 – Food. Read Halberstam, Chapter 11.
September 20 – McCarthyism. Read Patterson, Chapter 7; Halberstam, Chapter 24. **First written assignment due.**
September 27 – Sports & Recreation. Read Patterson, Chapter 11; Halberstam, Chapter 12.
October 2 – Transportation. **Graduate topic outlines due.**
October 4 – **No class.**
October 9 – Selling America. Read Patterson, Chapter 12, Halberstam, Chapters 10, 33.
October 11 – Fashion. **Second written assignment due.**
October 16 – Auto Design. Read Halberstam, Chapters 8, 32, 42.
October 18 – **Midterm Examination.**
October 23 – Eisenhower. Read Patterson, Chapter 9; Halberstam, Chapter 18.
October 25 – World Affairs. Read Patterson, Chapter 10; Halberstam, Chapters 25, 26, 27.
October 30 – Movies I.
November 1 – Movies II.
November 6 – Television Programming I. Read Halberstam, Chapters 15, 34.
November 8 – Television Programming II. **Third written assignment due.**
November 13 – Religion/Sex/Morals. Read Halberstam, Chapters 20, 21, 37, 38, 40.
November 15 – Women/Teenagers/Children. Read Halberstam, Chapter 39.
November 20 – Counter Culture. Read Halberstam, Chapters 19, 22.
November 22 – Thanksgiving recess. **No class.**
November 27 – Music. Read Halberstam, Chapter 31.
November 29 – Race Relations. Read Patterson, Chapter 13; Halberstam, Chapters 28, 29, 30, 36, 44.
December 4 – Space/Covert Operations. Read Patterson, Chapter 14; Halberstam, Chapters 41, 45.
December 6 – Television Quiz Shows. Read Halberstam, Chapter 43. **Fourth written assignment due.**
December 11 – Nixon & Kennedy. Read Halberstam, Chapters 23, 46. **Graduate term papers due.**
December 18 – Monday, 3:30-5:30 p.m. **Final Examination.**

**Grading:** The grading scale is as follows:

- A+ 99-100
- A  93-98
- A- 90-92
- B+ 87-89
- B  83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C  73-76
- C- 70-72
- D+ 67-69
- D  63-66
- D- 60-62
For Undergraduates: The semester grade will be based on:

- Attendance and class participation: 13%
- Four written assignments: 32%
- Midterm examination: 25%
- Final examination: 30%

Written Assignments: You will receive detailed instructions for each written assignment. These instructions will specify the readings and additional materials that you are to use to complete each assignment. The instructions will also indicate how to access or find the additional materials at the IUPUI Library. Unless directed otherwise, students should use complete sentences and an essay format in the written assignments. Back up your statements and conclusions with explanations and examples cited from the readings and materials that you used. Written assignments are due on the days noted in the semester schedule (Sept. 20, Oct. 11, Nov. 8, and Dec. 6). If you are ill on a day that an assignment is due, you may either e-mail the assignment to me or put it in my mailbox in the History office (Cavanaugh Hall, Room 504M). Make sure you keep a copy of your paper. Grades on late papers will be reduced by a grade step (B to B- for example) for each day that it is late. If you e-mail your paper, I will always e-mail you that I have received and printed out your paper.

One written assignment will ask you to compare differing accounts of the same events. Another assignment will ask you to draw conclusions from newspapers and magazines from the 1950s. A third assignment will require you to evaluate 1950s television shows. The final assignment will involve interviewing someone who lived in the 1950s.

Examinations: The examinations will cover the readings in the texts, class lectures, and other materials presented in class in handouts and audio-visual presentations. Students will be expected to know significant facts, causes, and results and connections between different elements of life in the 1950s. It is more important to know the sequence of events, since this relates to cause and effect, rather than simply memorizing dates. Students should also be able to use critical thinking to interpret and compare ideas, episodes, and movements from the different aspects of life in the 1950s from politics to car design and from rock ‘n roll to race relations.

Plagiarism: Cheating, plagiarism, or fabrication of research or work will result in a zero for the paper, test, or project involved. This includes use of another student’s work or use of published and/or Internet materials without citations. Students will be expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct as adopted by IUPUI.

Attendance: Attendance and participation in class discussions are important. The entire class will benefit from your ideas, questions, and reactions. Students will be docked for each unexcused absence; those who miss half or more of class time will receive a zero for the attendance/participation portion of the semester grade.
**Makeup Policy:** There will not be makeup examinations. If a student has an excused absence due to illness or a provable emergency on the day of an examination, the other test score will be increased in weight to compensate for the excused work.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones and pagers are disruptive to everyone in the class. All cell phones and pagers must be turned off and put away during class.

**For Graduates:** The semester grade will be based on:

- Attendance and class participation 10%
- Four written assignments 24%
- Term paper or class presentation 21%
- Midterm examination 20%
- Final examination 25%

The above policies for attendance, make-ups, written assignments, plagiarism, and cell phones also apply to graduate students.

In addition to the undergraduate requirements, graduate students must either complete a term paper or make a presentation to the class on a subject related to the course. The study must not only relate what happened in the subject area but should include an analysis of what the events or the change meant for Americans. Students must submit a topic proposal with a brief explanation of the parameters of the study and a list of likely sources by September 13. A general outline of the subject must be submitted for approval by October 2. Both secondary and primary sources must be used. Term papers must be 12 to 15 pages in length, typed double space with end notes or footnotes, and a bibliography of sources used. Term papers will be due on December 11. Students who select a class report project should prepare a 25 minute presentation. An annotated bibliography of sources used must be submitted the day of the presentation. The presentation will be evaluated on how well the student covers the topic, clarity of the presentation, evidence of use of a variety of sources, and use of appropriate illustrations and examples.