

History
Aftermaths: World War, Postwar, Cold War
Spring, 2017
Mondays, 4-6

“Math”: the old-English term for harvest. When the cutting is done and the field is barren, there arises a new growth, stunted, near deformed, but alive and reaching upwards for the light. This is the aftermath.

We shall together explore and investigate the violent transformations wrought by the Second World War and the attempts of Americans and Europeans to make sense of their recent pasts and begin the difficult, but necessary work of social reconstruction, economic reconversion, and political reintegration.

The common-sense view of the war, popularized in film and book, was that once the fighting stopped, peace, security, normalcy was soon to follow. But the postwar period was neither peaceful nor secure, as we shall see, and there was certainly no return to prewar “normalcy.” Hitler had torn Europe apart, shifted populations, murdered millions. When the war was over, millions were left homeless, stateless, dispossessed, dislocated, displaced. There followed yet more population shifts and the largest peacetime “ethnic cleansing” operations the world had yet seen.

World War then slid almost unnoticed into cold war, which brought in its wake a new set of dislocations, disturbances, fears, anxieties, on both sides of the Atlantic.

We shall follow the course of history, from world war to postwar to cold war, by looking at primary source materials: films, newsreels, magazines, newspapers, radio broadcasts, memoirs, novels; and at the best secondary work on the period. Depending on the interests and backgrounds of students, the reading will include materials on the American and European home fronts.

Writing: There may be a few brief writing assignments during the semester. My initial thought for final papers is to ask students to prepare and write a lecture in which they introduce advanced undergraduates to the issues, themes, and dilemmas associated with the study of the immediate postwar period. Students may also chose a specific topic or issue on which to write. These topics must be approved by fourth week of class.

Reading: There will be common readings assigned each week. Each student will also, in the course of the semester, be asked to read and briefly report on at least two works of fiction, one memoir, and two films.

Tentative Weekly assignments, subject to change:

“Getting to Know You:”

January 30:

No reading assignment, though students are advised to read one of the first two books listed for the next class.

The War Ends, but Not the Suffering:

February 6: Choose at least one of these:

Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (Picador, 2012)

Ian Buruma, *Year Zero: A History of 1945* (Penguin, 2013)

February 15: Please read both of the following:

Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (Penguin 2005), 1-237

John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

Coming Home:

February 27:

Choose at least one:

Thomas Childers, *Soldier From the War Returning*. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)

Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home after the Second World War*. (Yale, 2009)

FILM: *The Best Years of Our Lives*

MEMOIR: Henriette Roosenburg, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*

MEMOIR: Primo Levi, *The Reawakening*

MEMOIR: Göran Rosenberg, *A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz*

Disruptions of War

March 6:

Alan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Wlmen in World War II* (UNC Press, 1990)

FILM: *Brief Encounter*

FICTION: Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*

March 13:

Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel, *Gender and the Long War Postwar* (JHUP, 2014), 1-185, 227-273

Working Class Dreams? Nightmares?

March 20:

George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Illinois, 1994), 1-203

Joshua B. Freeman, *Working Class New York* (New Press, 2000), 3-95

Consumer Cultures

March 27:

Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (Harvard, 2003), 62-191

Harry Truman, Address on Foreign Economic policy, Baylor University, March 6, 1947: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12842>.

FICTION: Laura Hobson, *Gentlemen's Agreement*

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April 3:

Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists & Progressive Politics During World War II* (Basic, 2013)

Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (Norton, 2005), 80-141.

FICTION: Chester Himes, *If He Hollers, Let Him Go*

FICTION: Ann Petry, *The Street*

April 20:

Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Harvard, 2006), 1-207.

President's Committee on Civil Rights, *To Secure These Rights* (1947). Available in print and at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/civilrights/srights1.htm>.

The Cold War Cometh

April 24:

Choose at least one:

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (Houghton Mifflin, 1949)

Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford, 1995)

May 1:

Arnold Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford, 2002).

FILM: *The Third Man*

May 8:

Susan Carruthers, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing*
(California, 2009)

FICTION: George Orwell, *1984*

FICTION: Albert Camus, *The Plague*

FILM: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

May 15:

Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the
Postwar Order*. (Oxford, 2012)

FILM: *The Bicycle Thief*