“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 and see the film.**
*The Bicycle Thieves* (1948)

February 15: Please read both of the following:
John Hersey, *Hiroshima*

Coming Home:

February 27: **Choose at least one and see the film:**
Thomas Childers, *Soldier From the War Returning* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)
Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home after the Second World War* (Yale, 2009)
*The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946)
**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:  
**FICTION:** Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair*

March 13: **Read book and see the film:**
Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel, *Gender and the Long War Postwar* (JHUP, 2014), 1-185, 227-273
*Brief Encounter* (1945)
Working Class Dreams? Nightmares?

March 20:
  Colleen Doody, *Detroit’s Cold War* (U. of Illinois, 2013)

Consumer Cultures

March 27:
  Harry Truman, Address on Foreign Economic policy, Baylor University, March 6, 1947: [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12842](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12842).
  FICTION: Laura Hobson, *Gentlemen’s Agreement*

DOUBLE V

April 3: *Read Both*
  Chester Himes, *If He Hollers, Let Him Go* (1945)

April 20:

The Cold War Cometh

April 24:
  Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (Houghton Mifflin, 1949)

May 1:
  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: