

History 40 / American History In Film
Prof. Dave Smith

Office and Office Hours: GCB, 380R (3rd floor)
10-11 MW, 10-11 TTh, 6-7 Th PM

Phone:

Home (310) 809-9374

Office (310) 287-4224

E-mail: dyingearthbooks@socal.rr.com

Email at work: SmithDc@wlaac.edu

Required Texts

Halberstam, David, *The Fifties*, paper or hardback version

Course Requirements

- **70% - 700 pts - Exams:** there will be two exams, a midterm and a final, the latter non-cumulative, and each will focus on approximately one half of the course content. These will consist of multiple choice/true-false, and short answer-type questions, and there will also be a take-home essay portion. Study guides will be distributed in class.
- **18% - 180 points - Reading Questions:** there will be questions to be answered for the assigned readings from the Halberstam book. This assignments are to help you think about how to analyze the intersection of history and film and also to prepare for the papers and exams. There are six assigned groups of reading questions, and each batch of questions will be worth 40 points.
 - The work must be handed in the first class of the week in which it is due, NOT the second class. Late questions will be accepted, with half credit lost per late day. You may turn in your questions late, by midnight by way of email, on the day they are due for no loss of points.
 - You **MUST** then bring in a hard copy to class with **EMAILED** written across the front. Until you bring in the hard copy you will receive no points.
 - Also, **PLEASE** bear in mind - work by email is for those emergencies in the semester when something has derailed your ability to have it in class when due - once or twice, do not abuse this privilege, as I do not need my inbox flooded with your assignments.
 - **LASTLY** - you **MUST** do **YOUR OWN WORK**. This work may not be done with a friend/sibling/cousin/or whatever in class. Do not think you can copy one another's work, change the first line or resort to some other stratagem you perceive as clever - this is not group work, it is solo work, and if I find anything to the contrary you will receive an 'F' in the class.
- **12% - 120 points - Class Participation:** these points will be awarded according to the degree and quality of your written insights and spoken commentary on the films - there will be both writings and discussions to follow each screening, please show

me your are paying attention to the films! If you are shy, make your writings that much stronger!

Student Expectations

- Complete the assigned readings before coming to class
- Complete the chapter questions as you do the readings
- Take PLENTY of notes each and every class
- Please bring a sense of curiosity to the class and a desire to pass!

One last thing to bear in mind: studies have suggested that to do well in a class, for every hour of class-time, twice that much time must be spent on homework and studying; thus, for a regular 54-hour, 16-week semester, a student would be spending something like 150 hours outside of class devoting time and energy to passing that class. This may seem like too much, and different students need varying amounts of study time. I am only trying to make one point: in this class you will be compacting 16 weeks into less than one-third that time - please be prepared to exert a lot of effort over the next five weeks to pass the class.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at each class. Poor attendance will affect your grade, as described above. But -- if you are in any way ill, please do not attend class. Telephone and let me know why you are missing class, and your absence will be excused. Do not fear that you will fall behind, as I will make certain that you get the notes, etc., that you may have missed. AND: do not assume you are going to be/have been dropped for whatever reason, and simply stop coming to class; PLEASE contact me to see what may be done.

Three unexcused absences, or a loss of six class hours will result in a drop from the course.

If you come to class late, please take a seat near the back door so as not to disturb others. Be certain not to compromise the stage of history! Excessive tardies will affect your grade. If for whatever reason you cannot make it to class at the assigned time, then you may want to consider taking another class entirely.

Getting up in the middle of class and leaving is disruptive to the other students, but sometimes unavoidable. If you have to leave class early, please let me know in advance, and take a seat near the door. Otherwise you will be counted absent for the day. This is not an idle threat; if these transgressions multiply, it could result in your being dropped from the class. Wouldn't it be silly to be dropped several weeks before semester's end for such a preventable lapse of reason?

Late Work

No late assignments will be accepted, except in rare cases. This is to ensure equal accountability for all students in the class. If anything is accepted late, points will be deducted from the total possible points as a penalty.

Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disabled Students Programs and Services, HLRC room 119, or call (310) 287 4550 as soon as possible to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Grading

The coursework is equal to 1000 points, with each assignment worth a specific number of points directly equal to that percentage of the grade. (See Course Requirements.) Content and form are not separate in terms of grading. There is no excuse for poor writing at the college level. If you have trouble with your writing, please see me for recommendations to the Learning Resource Center (LRC), located in the library.

The grade you receive will be directly related to your mastery of the course material, as shown in your work and classroom participation. I will not "give" an 'A' to one and an 'F' to another; rather, each student earns the grade they receive. As the instructor, I am a guide on the path to learning, and a fair judge of your progress -- but it is your responsibility to learn the material. What you leave the course with is what you have put into it.

Please keep all of your assignments and keep track of your point total. If you ever wish to get a sense of where you are in the course, simply add the points you have received and divide them into the number of points possible to that point in the semester; this will give you your % on a 100% scale, and as the course is worth 1000 points, you need then only multiply your score by 10 to get a good sense of your grade.

Academic Integrity

Additionally, all students are expected to do their own work. Any sort of cheating and/or plagiarism are punishable in ways too grim to mention, but they would begin with being dropped from the course, and referred to both the Dean of Academic Affairs and the Vice-President of Student Services. **PLEASE:** if you think that a course of action **MAY** be wrong, then please consult with the instructor before taking it.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this class is to make the student conversant in the main features of early American history, from the pre-Columbian era through the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction. By the end of the semester the student will be able to list and define major cultural, economic, social, and political patterns of American historical development; identify important events, trends, thought and ideas in the history of the early United States Americas by writing and discussing them critically; be able to locate and relate the course of events on the North American continent; give the student insight into such defining themes of this period as race/ethnicity, class, gender, et al; and have a solid understanding of the clash and ultimate co-existence of cultures as they contributed to the socio-economic and political development of the United States; and further the development of skills of objective analysis by writing papers, reports, and examinations on salient topics and issues.

In addition to the above, the course will address many of the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes codified by West Los Angeles College, among them:

- **Critical Thinking:** Analyze problems by differentiating fact from opinions, using evidence, and using sound reasoning to specify multiple solutions and their consequences. In this class the student will be required to use historical facts to support written arguments.
- **Cultural Diversity:** Respectfully engage with other cultures in an effort to understand them. In this class the student will be required to analyze the contributions of various ethnic groups to the historical development of the society(ies) under discussion, and examine the positive and negative interactions of said groups.

Please take the time to review this syllabus carefully. Do not rely upon the instructor to remind you when assignments are due. This is a learning institution, and one that you are paying for, and attending, by choice. You are responsible for your grade. Please help make the classroom experience for you and everyone else a positive one. If you do not feel you can live up to the course requirements, in terms of both assignments and conduct, please arrange to take this course at another time, or choose another course entirely.

Course Schedule

Week 1, 8/26-30	Course Introduction Lecture: Early Evolution of the Film Industry And the Coming of Television READ: Halberstam, Ch. 1-3
Week 2, 9/2-6	Lecture: The Cold War <i>The Front</i> , Martin Ritt, 1976, 94 min. READ: Halberstam, Ch. 1-3 NO CLASS THIS WEEK ON MONDAY - LABOR DAY LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT A 'W' OR A FEE: 9/6
Week 3, 9/9-13	<i>The Front</i> (cont'd) Lecture: Kazan, Miller, Schulberg and the Morality of Naming Names READING ASSIGNMENT #1 Questions due
Week 4, 9/16-20	<i>On the Waterfront</i> , Elia Kazan, 1954, 108 min.
Week 5, 9/23-27	<i>On the Waterfront</i> (cont'd) Lecture: The Atomic Age and "Sci-Fi" in Literature and at the Movies READ: Halberstam, Chs. 24, 41, 45, 46, 4-7 LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS WITHOUT A 'W': 9/23
Week 6, 9/30-10/4	<i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i> , Robert Wise, 1951, 92 min. READING ASSIGNMENT #2 Questions due
Week 7, 10/7-11	Lecture: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement Lecture: The Importance of Being Sidney Poitier <i>The Defiant Ones</i> , Stanley Kramer, 1958, 97 min.

	<p>READ: Halberstam, Chs. 28-30</p>
<p>Week 8, 10/14-18</p>	<p><i>The Defiant Ones</i> (cont'd) <i>Mississippi Burning</i>, Alan Parker, 1988, 128 min. READ: Halberstam, Chs. 36, 44 READING ASSIGNMENT #3 Questions due</p>
<p>Week 9 10/21-25</p>	<p><i>Mississippi Burning</i> (cont'd) EXAM #1</p>
<p>Week 10, 10/28-11/1</p>	<p>Lecture: Barry Levinson and the American Dream <i>Avalon</i>, Barry Levinson, 1990, 126 min. READ: Halberstam, Chs. 8-12 32, 42</p>
<p>Week 11, 11/4-8</p>	<p><i>Avalon</i> (cont'd) Lecture: The Power of Television READING ASSIGNMENT #4 Questions due</p>
<p>Week 12, 11/11-15</p>	<p><i>Quiz Show</i>, Robert Redford, 1994, 133 min. READ: Halberstam, Chs. 13-15, 33, 34, 43 READING ASSIGNMENT #5 Questions due NO CLASS MONDAY - VETERAN'S DAY LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS WITH A 'W': 11/15</p>
<p>Week 13, 11/18-22</p>	<p>Lecture: Teenaged America</p>
<p>Week 14, 11/25-29</p>	<p><i>Rebel Without a Cause</i>, Nicholas Ray, 1955, 111 min. READ: Halberstam, Ch. 19-21, 37-40, 31 NO CLASS THURSDAY - THANKSGIVING</p>
<p>Week 15, 12/2-6</p>	<p><i>Pleasantville</i>, Gary Ross, 1998, 124 min. READING ASSIGNMENT #6 Questions due</p>
<p>Week 16, 12/9-13</p>	<p>EXAM #2 / FINAL 12/12, 11:30-1:30</p>

HIST 40 - American History in Film
Chapter Questions
Dave Smith

PLEASE STAPLE ALL QUESTIONS FOR A READING ASSIGNMENT TOGETHER INTO ONE BIG BUNDLE OF PAPERS - DO NOT MAKE EACH CHAPTER A SEPARATE STAPLED ITEM

READING ASSIGNMENT #1

Chapter 1

1. How was Truman able to fight off Dewey's challenge for the presidency in the summer of 1948?
2. Why was republican postwar political rhetoric "about getting even"?
3. Briefly sum up the Whittaker Chambers-Alger Hiss drama?

Chapter 2

1. Briefly sum up the differences between Robert Oppenheimer and Edward teller as regards their outlook on atomic weapons?

Chapter 3

1. How and why did Senator Joseph McCarthy start his campaign against communism?
2. How did this changing political climate in the 50s alter the Mike Hammer detective novels?

READING ASSIGNMENT #2

Chapter 24

1. How did Lewis Strauss change the way the AEC functioned?
2. What was it about Robert Oppenheimer that earned him the enmity of J. Edgar Hoover?
3. How did the paths of Robert Oppenheimer and Edward Teller intersect, and how did this ultimately affect Teller?
4. How did Curtis LeMay transform the SAC?

Chapter 41

1. How was Werner Von Braun important to American ambitions during the Cold War?
2. What was the value of the U2 spy plane?
3. What was the American concern over *Sputnik*?

Chapter 45

1. The U2 helped stabilize the relationship between the US and USSR, but also created problems for the US - how so?
2. What did President Eisenhower believe the great lasting legacy of his presidency should be?
3. What happened to Francis Gary Powers and how did this give Americans even more pause for fear and concern during the Cold War?

Chapter 46

1. What was the US relationship with Fulgencio Batista?
2. How was Fidel Castro able to foment a successful popular revolution in Cuba?
3. What were the factors which led to the break between the US and Castro?
4. What were the problems that assailed Richard Nixon in his televised debate with John F. Kennedy in 1960?

Chapter 4

1. What general was in charge of the American military presence in South Korea?
2. What problems did the U.S. military face in Korea?
3. Who were the In Min Gun?

Chapter 5

1. Briefly assess the character of General Douglas MacArthur
2. What was the importance of Inchon?
3. Why was it that MacArthur so badly underestimated the Chinese army?

Chapter 6

1. What was UNIVAC?

Chapter 7

1. Briefly assess the factors that made the Chinese Fourth Field Army so powerful a force?
2. What happened as a result of MacArthur's "arrogance, foolishness, and vainglory"?
3. What was MacArthur's great misstep in relation to the Yalu River?
4. Describe the importance of Matthew Ridgeway?

READING ASSIGNMENT #3

Chapter 28

1. Briefly discuss how by 1950 the Supreme Court had begun "to tilt away from segregation"?
2. What personal characteristics made Earl Warren the ideal choice as Chief Justice at the time when the Court was dealing with segregation and other civil rights issues?
3. Briefly discuss the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*?
4. How was Earl Warren important to the eventual unanimous decision on this case?
5. What did Frederic Murrow have to do with all of this?

Chapter 29

1. Briefly sum up the events surrounding the murder of Emmet Till.
2. What was John Popham's importance to the trial of the men who killed Emmet Till?

3. Briefly describe the character of Sheriff Clarence Strider.

Chapter 30

1. In just a few paragraphs, sum up the main points of this chapter.

Chapter 36

1. Who was Rosa Parks?
2. What was Ed Nixon's problem with the black ministers?
3. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr. prior to becoming a national spokesman for the civil rights movement?
4. How did the city government of Montgomery attempt to end the bus boycott?
5. How did people from the rest of the United States assist the boycotters?

Chapter 44

1. Who was Orval Faubus, and what is his role in this chapter?
2. What was the problem with Little Rock Central High School being selected as the first school to be integrated?
3. Who was John Chancellor?
4. What does Halberstam suggest really made President Eisenhower send troops into Little Rock? (pg. 687)
5. What was the importance of Bill Russell, and why did he play so hard? (pg. 697)

READING ASSIGNMENT #4

Chapter 8

1. What factors contributed to GM doing so well in the 1950s?
2. What did Harley Earl have to do with the above?
3. What was the importance of Charles Kettering to the American automotive industry at this time?

Chapter 9

1. What was the revolutionary aspect of Bill Levitt's approach to the construction of housing?
2. What did Levitt do to make sure he could offer the best prices on his houses?
3. Who were the first big group that wanted to buy houses in Levittown?
4. How did Bill Levitt deal with the race issue in Levittown? Do you agree with his approach?
5. What were the criticisms of Levittown and suburban developments like it?

Chapter 10

1. In several brief paragraphs, assess the importance of Eugene Ferkauf and Korvettes.

Chapter 11

1. How did the McDonald brothers revolutionize the restaurant industry?
2. How did Ray Kroc do them one better? (Debatable, I know.)

Chapter 12

1. In several brief paragraphs, assess the importance of Kemmons Wilson and Holiday Inn.

Chapter 32

1. Which GM automobile seemed the most quintessentially American, and why?
2. What is the importance of Ed Cole?

Chapter 42

1. Briefly assess the importance of Kensinger Jones and Gerry Schnitzer.
2. What is the success of their early Chevy commercials based on?
3. What was the first big challenge to the dominance of GM?
4. How did GM respond to this challenge, and how did this help launch the career of Ralph Nader?

READING ASSIGNMENT #5

Chapter 13

1. Describe the rise and fall of Milton Berle - what went wrong? How did the coaxial cable figure into this?

Chapter 14

1. What does the tale of Estes Kefauver tell us about television's power? (Recognize him as the basis for the crime commission prosecutor in the *On the Waterfront* courtroom scene?)

Chapter 15

1. What was it that accounted for the huge success of I Love Lucy?
2. How did Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz change television, and what sort of issues could be addressed on a TV program?

Chapter 33

1. What was the significance of Betty Furness?
2. How did television change advertising?

3. How did the fortunes of Philip Morris and the American cowboy intersect?

Chapter 34

1. How is that television begins to tell Americans how their families should function in the 1950s?
2. What is the irony of the "example" set by *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*?

Chapter 43

1. To be answered after seeing the film in class: Based on Halberstam's reportage of the real events surrounding Herbert Stemple, Charles Van Doren, and *Twenty One*, how well does the film capture these events, the people, the era, and the way that the quiz shows acted upon the consciousness of the American people?

READING ASSIGNMENT #6

Chapter 19

1. What was so challenging about *A Streetcar Named Desire*?
2. How does Halberstam suggest that it took the talents of Williams, Kazan, and Brando to make *Streetcar* what it became?

Chapter 20

1. What was so discomfiting about the Kinsey report to the average American?
2. What were the surprising aspects of his findings? (By 1950s standards.)

Chapter 21

1. What was the significance of the work and efforts of Margaret Sanger and Goody Pincus for Americans in the 50s?

Chapter 37

1. What set Marilyn Monroe apart from the other "dumb" blondes of the era?
2. What was it in Hugh Hefner's upbringing that set him on the path to *Playboy*?
3. What was the real point of *Playboy*? How did it change America?

Chapter 38

1. What was the popularity of *Peyton Place* based on, and how does this correspond with the fascination Americans had for the Kinsey report?

Chapter 39

1. Consider: how did Betty Friedan's writings connect to the history discussed in chapters 15, 20, 21, 34, 37, 38 and 40?

Chapter 40

1. What is the irony of Margaret Sanger's problems with the U.S. government and her fear of a Catholic president, relative to the years shortly before she died?

Chapter 31

1. How did Sam Phillips "integrate the airwaves"?
2. Discuss what Halberstam means when he says that "A new young generation of Americans was breaking away from the habits of its parents and defining itself by its music"?
3. How can it be argued that between them, Elvis Presley and James Dean "invented" the American teenager? What was happening in America at this time that made their arrival so timely?

**HIST 40 - American History in Film
Video Store Hand-Out
Prof Smith**

Always remember that your local library may have what you are looking for, and for free, and if you are quick, even if it is not at that branch, they will get it from another branch. As far as these video stores, if you call ahead they will usually hold videos for you. Also, Netflix is great, but you will want to jump in on that ahead of time. Do not wait til the last minute, or you will find the videos are gone, folks.

Cinefile Video

(310) 312-8836
11280 Santa Monica Blvd.
Santa Monica

Movies and More

(310) 391-6206
4036 S. Centinela
Mar Vista

Vidiots

(310) 392-8508
302 Pico Blvd.
Santa Monica

Rocket Video

(323) 965-1100
726 N. La Brea Ave.
Hollywood