

David Blake
Bliss Hall, 226
OH: M Th 2:00-3:20 *and by appointment*
blake@tcnj.edu, 771-3048
Spring 2015

Recovering the 1950s

Required Books:

David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (Ballantine: 9780449909331)
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (Penguin: Great Books Edition 9780140283297)
Christopher Metress, editor, *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative*
(UVA Press 978-0813921228)
Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (Da Capo Press: 978-1568582467)

Course Introduction and Learning Goals:

Recovering the 1950s is an interdisciplinary course that is cross-listed with the English Department as LIT 370, the Honors program as HNR 301, and the United States Studies program as USA 301 (Seminar in Global America.) The course is designed to draw on the interests and expertise of students from a wide variety of majors in investigating the transformative decade of the 1950s. Using a combination of scholarly, cultural, and archival sources, we will examine the ways in which culture *happened* during this crucial period. In examining the 1950s, we will immerse ourselves in a time when the Cold War was pervasive, television was in its infancy, the economy was booming, automobiles were changing the national landscape, and the issue of Civil Rights was pushing itself into national consciousness.

The 1950s are an especially interesting period for us to study, as the field of American Studies traces its origins to the height of the decade when academics and government officials alike sought to define what made American society exceptional and unique. The discipline has developed considerably since those pioneering efforts, as scholars have seen the field less as an opportunity for national valorization and more a chance to examine the intricate way in which power and discourse is reflected in the United States and its relation to the world at-large. (TCNJ's program, we should note, is called United States Studies – not American Studies – to reflect this new perspective.) Finally, throughout this seminar, we will pay special attention to the discovery and use of archival sources, contemplating the value of a wide range of print and material artifacts.

*See pg. 7 for a fuller explanation of learning goals and outcomes.

Schedule of Assignments:

26 January: Introduction: American Studies, US Studies, and
Conceptualizing the Fifties

Cold War Fears

29 January: The Cold War and the Bomb
View film: *The Atomic Café*
Halberstam, chs. 2, 6

2 February: Korea
Halberstam, ch. 4-5, 7

5 February: Joseph McCarthy and the House UnAmerican Activities Committee
Halberstam, ch. 3
Rand, "Screen Guide for Americans" (Canvas)
English, "What Makes a Hollywood Communist?" (Canvas)
Bogart, "I'm No Communist" (Canvas)
Ginsberg, "America" (Canvas)

9 February: Naming Names: Elia Kazan, Arthur Miller, Marilyn Monroe
Halberstam, ch. 31
Navasky, "Elia Kazan and the Case for Silence" (Canvas)
View Kazan, *On the Waterfront*
Option: see also Zinneman, *High Noon* and Hawks, *Rio Bravo*

The Politics of Economic Boom

12 February: The Age of Eisenhower
Halberstam, chs. 13-14, 16-18, 23
View advertisements for 1952 and 1956 elections on The Living Room
Candidate: <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>

16 February: The Power Elite
C. Wright Mills, selection from *The Power Elite* (Canvas)
David Riesman, selection from *The Lonely Crowd* (Canvas)

19 February: Consumers and the Postwar Economy
Cohen, "Reconversion: The Emergence of the Consumers' Republic," 112-
65; "Culture: Segmenting the Mass," 292-344 (Canvas)
Bird, "Showmanship Triumphant," 182- 205 (Canvas)

23 February: Mad Men
Halberstam, ch. 33

Packard, selection from *The Hidden Persuaders* (Canvas)
Review of Advertising Videos (Canvas)

26 February: Artifact Day #1

The Family in the Suburbs

2 March: Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 23-41(Canvas)
Halberstam, ch. 9
Reagan GE commercials, “In the Kitchen” and “Lighting the Modern Home” (Canvas)
Nixon and Krushchev, “The Kitchen Debate -- July 22, 1959” (Canvas)

5 March: Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, chs. 1-20
Whyte, selection from *The Organization Man* (Canvas)

9 March: Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, chs. 21-41

12 March: Artifact Day #2

**** Spring Break ****

Momism and Women’s Rights

23 March: Friedan, ch. 1, *The Feminine Mystique* (Canvas)
Halberstam, ch. 39
I Love Lucy – “Job Switching” (Canvas)

26 March: Margaret Sanger and Birth Control
Halberstam, ch. 40

30 March: Birth Control and Abortion
McCarthy, “Dotty Makes an Honest Woman of Herself” (Canvas)
I Love Lucy – “Lucy Goes to the Hospital” (Canvas)
Option: See also, McCarey, *My Son John*

2 April: Artifact Day #3

The Cold War of Civil Rights

6 April: Brown v Board of Education, Topeka, KS
Halberstam, ch. 28
Dudziak, “*Brown* as a Cold War Case” (Canvas)

9 April: Baldwin, “The Harlem Ghetto,” “Notes from a Native Son” (Canvas)

- 13 April: The Lynching of Emmett Till I
Halberstam, ch. 29
Metress, pp. 1-43
- 16 April: The Lynching of Emmett Till II
Metress, 44-152, 200-208
Feldstein, "I Wanted the Whole World to See: Race, Gender, and
Constructions of Motherhood in the Death of Emmett Till" (Canvas)
- 20 April: Artifact Day #4
- Race and the Beats***
- 23 April: Kerouac, *On the Road*, parts 1 and 2
- 27 April: Kerouac, *On the Road*, parts 3, 4, and 5
Mailer, "The White Negro" (Canvas)
Listening to Bebop (Canvas)
- 30 April: Kerouac, *On the Road*
Mailer, "The White Negro" (Canvas)
Bertrand, selection from *Race, Rock, and Elvis* (Canvas)
- 4 May: Work on Research
- Looking Back***
- 6 May: Celebration of Student Achievement
- 7 May: Frankenheimer, *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962)
Eisenhower, Farewell Address (Canvas)

Course Policies

- 1) The success of this course depends on your keeping-up with the reading and participating in class. On some days I will take a firm hand in guiding you through the texts; on others, I will leave the discussions open to the class. Your attendance and participation are mandatory. After two absences (regardless of the reason), your participation grade will suffer. If circumstances arise which mandate a prolonged absence, please contact the Office of Student Life (771-2201) and provide me with appropriate documentation.
- 2) Written assignments: You will write four short papers in this course (approximately 750 words) and one medium-length research paper (3000-3600 words; 4200-4600 words for Honors students) on an historical and/ or cultural topic. We will discuss the various steps involved in the research paper (including the due dates and requirements for a proposal, bibliography, etc) in class.

- 3) All essays must be printed legibly on 8.5 x 11 white paper. They must be turned in during class on the date that they are due and also submitted to Canvas. I will reduce the grade by 10% for each 24 hour period a paper is late. Papers over 72 hours late risk failure, unless you've made prior arrangements with me.
- 4) Artifact Days: Four times during the semester our class will give way to a discussion of original artifacts from the 1950s that you have discovered independently. These artifacts should relate to the theme we have been discussing for the previous several weeks. Students will submit a short paper that describes their artifact and examines its relationship to the theme and period. Two times during the semester you will present your research to the class in a formal 5-7 minute presentation. We will talk more about the expectations for these assignments in the semester's first weeks.
- 5) Celebration of Student Achievement: All Honors students will present the materials associated with their final research paper in a poster session during the Celebration of Student Achievement. This experience can be valuable in preparing a final paper, so although it is not required, students enrolled as US Studies or English students are welcome to participate as well.
- 6) The College of New Jersey prohibits students from using the same paper for two different courses *unless the student receives written permission from both instructors*. All work for this course must be done by you. Please avoid plagiarism! If you ever have questions about plagiarism or proper citation methods, please consult me. All cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Integrity Officer of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. They will also result in a zero grade for the paper and/ or a failure in the course.

Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral. TCNJ's academic integrity policy is available on the web: <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/integrity.html>.

- 7) The Academic Enhancement Center in Forcina Hall, room 145, is an excellent place to get help on your papers. Call The Writer's Place at 771-2895 or 771-3325 or see the hours at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~tutoring/humanities/writing.html>.
- 8) Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodations should notify the professor of this course and contact the Office of Differing Abilities Services (609-771-2571). Accommodations are individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. TCNJ's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy is available on the web: <http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu/>.

9) The breakdown in grading percentages is:

5%	Artifact paper #1
30%	Artifact papers #2-#4
7.5%	Presentation #1
7.5%	Presentation #2
35%	Final Paper (including proposal and annotated bibliography)
<u>15%</u>	<u>Class Involvement</u>
100%	Total

10) The grading scale in this course incorporates the principle of “rounding up,” so further adjustments will not be made:

100 - 93.5 % = A	79.4 - 76.5 % = C+
93.4 - 89.5 % = A-	76.4 - 73.5 % = C
89.4 - 86.5 % = B+	73.4 - 69.5 % = C-
86.4 - 83.5 % = B	69.4 - 64.5 % = D
83.4 - 79.5 % = B-	64.4-0 % = F

11) A syllabus is a plan not a contract. While we will make every effort to follow this schedule, I reserve the right to alter the due dates of assignments, to clarify and modify the nature and length of assignments, and to include unannounced assessments in order to meet the educational goals of this course.

12) Whether literature, art, music, or film, cultural expressions gains some of its power from its ability to explore the extremes of human relationships. The writers and thinkers in this course address a wide range of experiences that range from the reflective to the traumatic and from the socially acceptable to the morally grotesque. If you are anxious about your personal response to these works, you should consider whether this course is appropriate for you. My expectation is that every student will complete every one of the assigned readings and be prepared to listen to discussions about them in class.

13) Please feel free to come by my office if you have questions you’d like to ask about the class. The best way to contact me is by e-mail – blake@tcnj.edu. I check my mail regularly and expect you to do the same.

HNR 310/ LIT 370/ USA 310: Recovering the 1950s, Spring 2014
Department, School, and College Goals and Policies

1) As an elective course in the English major, LIT 370 is a topics-based course designed to expand the curriculum to meet student and faculty interest. The English Department has identified two Learning Outcomes/ Program Goals for all sections of LIT 370.

- (12) Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with a range of critical, generic, and literary traditions (including recent theoretical approaches) that shape – and are shaped by – literary discourses and texts of particular periods or movements.
- (15) Students will be able to read a literary work and characterize its main aesthetic, structural, and rhetorical strategies in an argumentative, thesis-driven essay or in a writing workshop

Although the course does fulfill a requirement for literary history, the historical focus of this particular section of LIT 370 meets another Learning Outcome associated with the English major:

- (14) Students will be able to identify historically specific elements relevant to a particular text.

2) As part of the curriculum of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, this section of LIT 370 meets the following Learning Goals devised by Dean Benjamin Rifkin and presented to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education:

- (1) Written Communication
- (2) Oral Communication
- (5) Critical Analysis and Reasoning: Ability to critique the arguments of others in the discipline and the construction of one's own arguments in the discipline, using data/evidence as a focus of instruction and/or the ability to analyze linguistic and cultural patterns
- (6) Information Literacy: Evaluating the validity and/or reliability of sources
- (7) Interpretation of Language and Symbol

3) As part of the TCNJ Honors program, this course emphasizes three pillars of academic excellence:

- it has an interdisciplinary focus
- it provides students with opportunities to lead in the classroom
- it sets high standards for academic rigor

4) This course meets 160 minutes a week but carries 1 full unit of credit toward the completion of an undergraduate degree. Students enrolled in this course are expected to take substantial responsibility outside the classroom for their own learning experience and to complete assignments at a level of excellence that significantly exceeds what is required at many other colleges and universities, including at the College itself prior to 2006.

5) Because the students in this course are assigned additional learning tasks that make the semester's learning experience more deeply engaged and rigorous, no additional classroom time or space is needed.

Grading Rubric

Grading papers is not a precise business. I do not give or take off a fixed number of points for particular strengths or weaknesses. Sometimes an overwhelmingly good or bad performance in one area outweighs other factors. The following table, therefore, should be read as a guideline only. It breaks down the course's grading criteria into four categories: argument, evidence, style, and mechanics. These are not, however, entirely discrete categories, and in fact, your performance in one area will often shape your performance in another. For example, readers will not be able to appreciate your argument if they have to struggle to understand the sentences that convey it.

CRITERIA GRADE	ARGUMENT	EVIDENCE	STYLE	MECHANICS/ GRAMMAR
A	Argument is focused, clearly stated at the beginning, and developed logically throughout the paper to a conclusion. Paragraphs organized around concepts with strong topic sentences. Argument is bold, fresh, and compelling	Extensive and varied factual evidence supports argument. No significant omissions, irrelevancies, or errors of fact. Quoted and paraphrased material is introduced fluidly, with varying and helpful framing.	Excellent prose style: clear, elegant, persuasive. Language and phrasing are precise and, in some cases, memorable. Writer has an identifiable and coherent voice.	Minimal errors in grammar, spelling, etc.
B	Argument relatively clear and focused but may fail to develop to a precise, ambitious conclusion. Topic sentences advance different stages of the argument. Papers in the B-/C+ range generally have a routine, pedestrian argument or one that rehashes class discussion rather than breaking new ground.	Generally good evidence, but some lack of variety of sources, errors of omission, and/ or irrelevant data. Quoted and paraphrased material is framed properly, though at times mechanically.	Clear, serviceable prose that does not obscure understanding. Writer has used varying sentence patterns, although the sentences lack the rhythm and precision of an A paper. Writer's voice is emerging.	A few errors ranging from typos and spelling mistakes to the inappropriate use of the passive voice.
C	Argument is vague, general and implied rather than explicitly stated; it does not lead to a well-developed conclusion. When organized, paragraphs and topic sentences emphasize sequence (time, scenes, etc) rather than concepts. Frequent and unnecessary plot summary. These papers often "recognize" an image or thematic pattern and "display" that pattern, but do not advance an argument.	Some evidence, but excessive dependence on a single scene or source, substantial omissions or irrelevancies, and/or minor errors of fact. Quoted and paraphrased materials are simply dropped into the text without attribution or framing.	Understandable writing, but sometimes vague, wooden, or choppy. Sentences are haphazardly constructed, giving the impression that the writer has little control.	Substantial errors which detract from overall effect of paper or suggest a wavering commitment to the assignment.*

D	Argument is barely discernable and/or very poorly developed.	Very little, or largely irrelevant evidence, and/or substantial errors of fact. Problems in quoted and paraphrased material ranging from misquotations to passages that arouse suspicions of plagiarism.	Writing is confusing, vague, and/or hard to understand.	Frequent and serious errors which make paper hard to understand or suggest a profound lack of commitment to the assignment.*
F	No discernable argument or paper totally digresses from argument.	Virtually no relevant evidence and/or very serious errors of fact. Problems in quoted and paraphrased material that indicate a case of either intentional or unintentional plagiarism	Writing is nearly unintelligible.	Massive errors which render paper nearly unintelligible.*

*Note: my response to your paper will not be aimed at correcting your grammar or mechanics, but any paper in which these mistakes are plentiful will not receive a high grade, regardless of the quality of the argument and evidence. Students who clearly do not understand a grammatical or stylistic principle (passive voice, comma-splice, etc) will not be markedly penalized. However, once I have explained the principle (in class, in office hours, or in the paper's annotations), the repetition of these errors in future assignments will dramatically reduce your grade.