

Professor Robert Edelman

H&SS 6056

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Hours: Tuesday 11-12, Wednesdays 1-2

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INTL 190 – The Cultural Cold War

In his magisterial account of Cold War cultural diplomacy, David Caute noted, “The Cold War was simultaneously a traditional political-military confrontation and a cultural contest of a new kind.” As the field of Cold War studies was emerging after 1991, the historical profession was experiencing its “cultural turn.” Topics that had once been seen as marginal now took on great importance. In the effort to win the favor of their own people and that of the rest of the world, the great superpowers (the USA and the USSR) mobilized writers, dancers, musicians, film-makers, athletes, artists and playwrights. Influenced by Joseph Nye’s concept of “soft power”, a wave of authors sought to take the study of the Cold War beyond the purview of traditional diplomacy and establish a broad context which looked at the mass reception and political meaning of cultural production.

We now have a significant body of excellent scholarship on many aspects Cold War culture. These works include, Tony Shaw and Denise Youngblood’s *Cinematic Cold War* which finds the political in US entertainment films and the entertaining in politicized Soviet films. Greg Castillo’s *Cold War on the Home Front* demonstrates the two very different approaches to home design and looks at the successes and failures of international exhibitions of consumer goods. Penny von Eschen’s *Satchmo Blows up the World* is a study of US government organized jazz tours of African-American musicians throughout the world. Their purpose was to convince the citizens of postcolonial states that America was not really as racist as it seemed to be, but the musicians did not always cooperate and conveyed very different, much more critical messages.

Another strand of scholarship has examined the often secret role of government interference in the production and dissemination of cultural products. Frances Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, Nicholas Cull’s *The Cold War and the US Information Agency* and Walter Hixson’s *Parting the Curtain* take on different aspects of this phenomenon as it pertains to the USA. The American government sought to convey the impression that pro-capitalist and pro-American arts and letters were the result of independent thought, but, as these works show, the CIA was heavily involved in financing their efforts. Yael Richmond’s *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* makes bold claims about the penetration of Western abstract art exhibitions into the Soviet space, arguing that they had a subversive effect in Communist states plagued by Socialist Realism. Victoria deGrazia’s *Irresistible Empire* examines in great detail the impact of US consumer culture and business methods in postwar Europe, showing the difficulty traditional methods of commerce faced in competing with global giants..

The best of these works connect the cultural to the political. If the studies of diplomacy and politics covered the circumscribed interactions of competing elites, the cultural Cold War literature looks to expand the terrain to include the societies that did or did not support those elites. Old clichés about the autonomy of the arts are powerfully undermined by this historiography. Instead we see the classic battle for the hearts, minds and souls of the world’s citizens.

Requirements:

1. Students are responsible for doing each week's readings, preparing a brief summary of the reading and offering one or two questions for the rest of the class to answer.
2. In-class participation is not optional. It is a requirement. Participation without attendance is not possible.
3. The cornerstone of expectations is a 20-25 page focused research paper. Students should immediately begin to think, together with the professor, about what kind of subject they would like to tackle. After the process of preliminary research (in the library as well as online), the student will develop a list of questions that her/his research will try to answer. In preparing this phase of the paper, the student will begin to develop a working bibliography. These phases of the research process should be finished by the fourth week. A working outline should be done by the sixth week. This will allow five weeks for writing. Students are encouraged to submit drafts to the instructor. The paper will be due the Friday of exam week.
4. Because film was such an important front in the cultural Cold War, we will watch excerpts of several movies which will also be available online.

Readings (on electronic reserve, except when noted)

Week 1

Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, pp. 1-32

Week 2

Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 8-72

David Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, pp. 1-16.

Week 3

Robert MacMahon, *The Cold War: a very short introduction*, (physical reserve or purchase)

Week 4

Steven Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, pp. 1-27, 87-119.

Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, pp. 123-161

Week 5

Frances Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, pp, 1-104

Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, pp, 87-150

Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, pp. 1-28,

Week 6,

Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, pp. 81- 188

Caute, pp. 19-116

Wilford, pp. 99-122

Kenneth Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: the Unconventional Cold War” (JSTOR)

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Week 7

Tony Shaw and Denise Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War*, pp.1-62.

Caute, pp. 117-246

Week 8

Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, pp 27-91

Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels*, pp. 168-205

Richmond, pp. 205-210

Week 9.

Greg Castillo – *Cold War on the Home Front*, pp. 139- 172

Peter Beck – “Britain and the Cold War’s ‘Cultural Olympics’” (JSTOR)

Damion Thomas – *Globetrotting*, ch. 3

Week 10

Robert Edelman, *Serious Fun*, (free download at LA84Foundation.org) pp. 79-238