

**History 390.450 - Historical Problems through Film:
Conspiracy and Paranoia in the 1970s
SUMMER II - 2020**

Professor: Dr. Kyle Riismandel
 Email: kriis@njit.edu
 Time: MWR, 9AM-12PM
 Classroom: ONLINE
 Office: GOOGLE MEET - meet.google.com/hva-kimx-yhw
 Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

During this semester, we will explore the origins and manifestations of paranoia and fears of conspiracy in 1970s America. We will consider how select films portrayed American institutions such as government, corporations, and the family, and the responsibility of the individual in society. We will analyze how these texts created and enhanced a sense that hidden, nefarious forces were at work throughout American life during the 1970s and put those views in the broader context of postwar American history.

Course Goals And Assessments:

At the end of the semester, students should:

Be able to identify and interpret primary and secondary source material	Film Worksheets Film Analysis Paper Final Exam Quizzes
Have experience expressing their thoughts clearly and concisely in class discussion and in writing	Participation Film Analysis Paper Final Exam
Be able to interpret a film, as a primary source, in its historical context	Participation Film Analysis Paper Final Exam Quizzes
Understand the key events and themes of 1970s America and their roles in the broader history of postwar America	Lecture Readings Class Participation Film Analysis Paper Final Exam Quizzes

Course Texts All course readings are available via Canvas.

Assignments:

Class participation: Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our classroom not on chatting or using digital

devices.

Participation will be assessed on the quality of contributions to class discussions. Quality participation demonstrates the following:

- Understanding of the historical context as gleaned from lectures and readings
- Completion of that week's assignments such as readings and worksheets
- A willingness to engage in critical assessment of course texts and lectures

This participation may be during class time using voice or text chat or outside of class in Canvas discussion forums.

Film Worksheets: For each film, students will complete a film worksheet that will ask them to not only identify basic elements of the films but also demonstrate critical thinking about the films as historical texts. The worksheet will be due the day of discussion of the film. These responses must be typed and uploaded to the proper link on Canvas.

Film Analysis Paper: Students must complete one film analysis paper including a draft and final version. This paper must be about one of the first three films screened this semester. You will submit a draft, receive comments, and then complete a final version of the paper based on those comments. An assignment sheet with more detailed instructions will be posted to Canvas.

Quizzes: Throughout the semester, you will complete quizzes based on lectures or readings. The goal of these quizzes is to encourage meaningful engagement with lectures and readings to facilitate better understanding of course content, and to more effectively analyze films as historical texts.

Final Exam: The final exam will be a cumulative exam that will test your ability to synthesize course lectures, readings, and screenings through essay questions that will ask you to think analytically about course themes. This means you will tie together the films and other texts of the course to say something larger about postwar American culture. An assignment sheet with more detailed instructions will be posted to Canvas.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Class Participation - 15%

Film Worksheets – 6 x 3% = 18%

Film Analysis Paper Draft – 5%

Film Analysis Paper Final Version – 21%

Quizzes – 4 x 4% = 16%

Final Exam – 25%

FAILURE TO COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS WILL RESULT IN AN F FOR THE COURSE.

Course Policies

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all course meetings on time unless receiving prior authorization. Missing class will not only adversely affect your class participation grade, but there will be screenings in class that will only be offered during that class period so do your best to attend. If you miss class to attend an NJIT sponsored event, to observe a religious holiday, or due to a documented illness, those absences will be excused. For these absences to count as excused, you must receive permission from the instructor in advance or provide a doctor's note in the case of sickness.

Classroom Conduct:

In this course, we welcome intellectual inquiry and thoughtful discussion of difficult questions, but hate speech and disrespectful comments will not be tolerated. We must come to class with an open mind, a willingness to learn, and fundamental respect for the humanity of each person in the room and the historical actors we discuss.

Office hours/student appointments: My office hours will be by appointment via Google Meet at this link - meet.google.com/hva-kimx-yhw. I am available throughout the week so please reach out if you have any questions about course topics, assignments, or grades.

Academic dishonesty: Students are expected to obey the NJIT honor code, and I will enforce this code to its fullest extent. The goal of this course is to evaluate your understanding of course materials and ability to express that understanding. Cheating, plagiarizing or otherwise violating the code of academic integrity not only breaks the trust between professor and student but keeps you from learning course content and improving writing and critical thinking skills. I am here to help so if you are having trouble, do not cheat, ask me for help.

For the tenets of the code or for clarification of what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please consult: <http://www.njit.edu/academics/honorcode.php>.

Generally speaking, it is a violation of the academic integrity code to:

- Use someone else's words or ideas without attribution
- Copy content from someone else's paper, quiz, or exam
- Pay for course assignments to be complete by someone else

Cell phones:

Students must turn off and stow their cell phones before class begins. Under no circumstances may students answer their phones, make calls, send text messages, or use their cell phone in any manner during class hours unless approved by me before class begins.

Though, you may think texting, using Twitter, etc. is innocuous or invisible, it is not. Research shows that nearly everyone cannot effectively do two tasks at once such as take notes and text or participate in a discussion and play a video game. So, I ask that during class time, you focus on class activities as you will get more out of it and whatever thing you might have been doing during class.

Students Requiring Accommodations:

Students who require accommodations should contact NJIT's Student Disability Services to help procure accommodations in completing coursework. The center can be found at <http://www.njit.edu/counseling/services/disabilities.php>. I am happy to help in any way I can to

facilitate your learning but I need the help of experts in that office to address so please register as needed.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – June 29

Monday

Introductions/Course Expectations/What is culture? How do we study it?/Discussion

Wednesday

Lecture: Richard Nixon and Postwar America

Assignments

Secondary Source:

- Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” (1964)

Thursday – Lecture

Screen on you own: *All the President’s Men* (1976)

- Canvas Quiz – Nixon Lecture

Week 2 – July 6th

Monday

Discussion – *All the President’s Men*

Lecture – Vietnam and American Values

Primary Source

- *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, Ch. 5

Assignments

- Film worksheet

Wednesday

Screening: *Hearts & Minds* (1974)

Assignments

- Canvas Quiz – *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*, Ch. 5

Thursday

Discussion – *Hearts & Minds*

Lecture – Feminism and Family: Making Sense of the Women’s Movement

Primary Source:

- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Ch. 2

Assignments

- Film worksheet
- Canvas Quiz – *The Feminine Mystique*

Week 3 – July 13th

Monday

Screen on your own: *The Stepford Wives* (1975)

Thursday

Discussion – *The Stepford Wives*

Secondary Source:

- Ann Silver, “The Cyborg Mystique: 'The Stepford Wives' and Second Wave Feminism,” pp. 60-76

Lecture – Surveillance and Everyday Life in America

Secondary Source:

- *Democracy Now!* Radio Documentary: *COINTELPRO*

Assignments

- Film worksheet

Week 4 – July 20th

Monday

Screening: *The Conversation* (1974)

Wednesday – NO CLASS – WORK ON PAPER

Thursday –

Discussion – *The Conversation*

Lecture – Nuclear Power and Environmentalism

PAPER DRAFT DUE BEFORE 5PM TO TURNITIN

Week 5 – July 27th

Monday

Screening: *The China Syndrome* (1979)

Wednesday

Discussion – *The China Syndrome*

Lecture – Urban Crisis, Racial Discord, and the War on Drugs

Assignments

- Film worksheet

Thursday

Screening: *Cleopatra Jones* (1974)

Secondary Source:

Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, Ch. 1

Assignments

- Canvas Quiz – Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*

Week 6 – August 3rd

Monday BIG TAKEAWAYS

Discussion – *Cleopatra Jones*

Assignments

- Film worksheet

Take home final distributed

Final Paper Draft AND Final Exam due August 6th at 5PM