

DC Semester Program

Spring 2022

Cold War Spies and Other Myths: The Development of Postwar American Culture

Taught by Professor Frederick Corney

The purpose of the program is to examine, in two courses, America's postwar mythmaking processes, and the ways in which these processes helped to forge a peculiarly American identity. The first course will examine America's postwar spy culture. The American intelligence services, evolving under the wartime guidance of the more established British domestic and foreign services, helped create a Cold War world that was marked by McCarthyism, Mutually Assured Destruction, and intense ideological competition with the USSR. It was further mythicized by a blossoming literary spy genre. The second course will examine the ways in which the US has memorialized or ignored its past, and how this has been defined by and helped shape modern American identity. Students will visit, read about, and discuss various key 'sites of memory' in DC. By examining their evolution, who sponsored (or opposed) their construction, their specific design and intended meaning, the political, gender, and ethnic disputes they triggered, and the various meanings read into them over time, students will gain insights into the complex processes of construction of postwar American identity. This semester will offer a range of lenses onto the development of a modern national culture-in-the-making.

Washington Program Internship

- *6 credit hours: INTR 499*

Students will work at a wide variety of institutions that deal with History, memorialization, and American spy culture. Examples include: Holocaust Memorial Museum, Smithsonian, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of the American Indian, Newseum, United States Institute of Peace, American Battle Monuments Commission, US National Archives, Museum of American History, USAID, White House, and the Spy Museum.

Cold War Spy Culture

- *3 credit hours: HIST 312 (Possible cross-listings with GOVT and IR)*

The postwar spy culture became such a part of both superpowers, America and the USSR, and an integral part of how they defined themselves vis-à-vis each other. Techniques of surveillance and spying, which were developed in both countries in the service of WWII, shaped their postwar practices. The perception of the enemy from within stamped both the American and the Soviet system in similar ways, spawning both McCarthyism and Zhdanovism. The animosity between the two systems hinged on the belief in both countries that surveillance was essential to national security, each government believing that not just security but essential American or Soviet values were at stake. These respective values became part of American culture through the spy genre in film and fiction and this will also be explored in this course.

History and Memory in Washington, DC

- *3 credit hours: HIST 312 (Possible cross-listings with GOVT and IR)*

This course will explore the ways in which the United States has used DC as a museum capital as part of a broad cultural mythologization of American history and of America's place in the world. National myths are enshrined in various sites of memory. The course will be built around student research projects which would constitute an effort to answer historian Alon Confino's question about the genesis of national memory: "Who wants whom to remember what, and why?" Sites to be visited will include the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Vietnam Women's Memorial, the Memorial to WWII, the Holocaust Museum, the Museum of Native American History, The Korean War Memorial, the MLK Memorial, and others. These sites will raise intriguing questions about competing national, ethnic, and gender issues; the complex politics of memory; and the search for useable pasts in the US.