Gallatin School, New York University

Interdisciplinary Seminar- Spies Like Us? Cold War Science as the Ultimate National Security Threat (IDSEM-UG1658)

Spring 2013 - Monday & Wednesday 3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. 194M - Room 307
Professor - José Perillán
Email – jgp10@nyu.edu
Office Hours – By Appt. M & W 2 – 3 p.m.; T 11:20 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.; & R 3 – 4 p.m.
Office - 411 Lafayette St., Rm. 302

Course Description -

On Friday June 19th, 1953 just before the sun set on Sing-Sing prison, Ethyl and Julius Rosenberg were executed by electrocution for their part in an espionage network that transferred classified information associated with top secret U.S. atomic research to the Soviet Union. This case was a landmark at the height of tensions associated with the second Red Scare of the 1940s and 50s, but the almost half-century of Cold War tensions, teetering on the brink of global annihilation, brought out the devastating threats of societal paranoia and political persecution. Throughout the Cold War period science was wielded by both the United States and the Soviet Union with alarming efficacy. As big science began to dominate international and domestic policy, the two superpowers played ‘chicken’ with an atomic arms race and ‘catch me if you can’ with a space race that seemed to fuel animosity and bring us ever closer to the brink of world catastrophe. In this seminar we use primary and secondary sources to examine the complex role of science during the Cold War, as weapon, threat, and salvation. Readings may include works by J.R. Oppenheimer, Deborah Cadbury, Albert Einstein, John Lewis Gaddis, John Earl Hayes, Harvey Klehr, and Jessica Wang among others.

General Expectations -

In this course we will focus on developing strong strategies for thinking, reading, and writing critically. Using a variety of readings, we will learn to deconstruct an author’s argument and subsequently evaluate its effectiveness. With the help of readings and class discussions we will learn about topics in cold war science. I look forward to animated yet respectful discussions of the topics covered.

Attendance is Mandatory-

In addition, on time attendance is expected. In the event of an unavoidable absence, please notify me by e-mail as soon as possible, and I will make arrangements with you to catch up on
the work you missed. Class participation is a significant portion of your grade, so please come to class on time, with your assignments completed, and prepared to engage the rest of the class in lively discussion.

Readings –

The following texts are required reading for this course. Books will be available for purchase through the NYU bookstore and all assigned readings that are essays, papers, or excerpts will be made available for copy or download.

Books –

Required -


Recommended –


Reading & Writing Assignments –

Students will be assigned both reading and writing assignments every week. The writing will include informal in-class writing, weekly responses to the assigned readings, and formal writing assignments. Formal assignments will include one shorter exploratory essay in addition to an analytic essay and a final research paper. All written assignments should be double-spaced, paginated, stapled, in 12-point font, and with 1-inch margins on all sides.

Formal Assignment 1: Analytic Essay (7-8 pages)

Formal Assignment 2: Research Paper (10-12 pages)
Late Assignments -

Assignments will be downgraded for every day they are late. If there are extenuating circumstances, please notify me in advance of the due date so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Academic Honesty -

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are very serious offenses and will not be tolerated in this course. Any act, deliberate or otherwise, will be reported immediately to the Gallatin administration for disciplinary action. More information about Gallatin’s expectations for academic integrity can be found at: www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html

Grading -

Formal Assignment 1: Analytic Essay 30%
Formal Assignment 2: Research Paper 45%
Response Papers 15%
Class Participation 10%
Tentative Syllabus -

Students are assigned weekly readings and regular reading response papers to encourage active participation in class discussions. 1-2 page e-journal response papers with reflections and observations on the reading assignments will be collected.

Week 1 – January 28 & 30

• Introduction to course - ICCI communication – overview
• Reading assignment: Macintyre p. 3 – 165

Week 2 – February 4 & 6

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Macintyre p. 166 - 350

Week 3 – February 11 & 13

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Gaddis p. ix - 155

Week 4 – February 18 & 20

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Gaddis p. 156 - 266

Week 5 – February 25 & 27

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Kelly selected sections 1 - 5

Week 6 – March 4 & 6

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Kelly sections 5 - 9

Week 7 – March 11 & 13

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Haynes and Klehr

Week 8 – March 18 & 20

• **SPRING BREAK**

Week 9 – March 25 & 27

• **Formal Assignment #1 due March 25**th
• Reading assignment: Wang p. xi - 147

Week 10 - April 1 & 3

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Wang p. 148 – 295

Week 11 – April 8 & 10

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Kackman (Complete)

Week 12 - April 15 & 17

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Black Board Reading

Week 13 – April 22 & 24

• Reading response due
• Reading assignment: Black Board Reading
Week 14 - April 29 & May 1

- Reading response due
- Reading assignment: Black Board Reading

Week 15 – May 6 & 8

- Bringing it all together
- **Formal Assignment #2 due May 8th by 5 pm**