Seminar Goals:

This course examines the intersection of politics, aesthetics and new media technologies in the United States between the end of World War II and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Topics include the aesthetics of "thinking the unthinkable" in the wake of the atom bomb; Abstract Expressionism and "modern man" discourse; game theory, cybernetics and new models of art making; the rise of television, intermedia and the counterculture; and the continuing influence of the early cold war on contemporary media aesthetics. Readings will be drawn from primary and secondary sources, and from the fields of art history, communication, and critical theory.

Assignments & Grading:

I’ve designed this course as a springboard for your own, independent research, during and after the quarter. Thus, you will need to do two kinds of work: first, you’ll need to read and analyze course materials; second, you’ll need to identify important questions and objects needing further research. The assignments are designed to help you accomplish both these goals.

1. Active and useful seminar participation. As part of this, you are asked to lead one (1) presentation at the start of a class meeting. 40%

Your presentations should be about 15 minutes long and should introduce an object, set of images or person through whom you can help us illuminate one or two of the key insights in that weeks’ readings. They should include PowerPoint slides or other visuals, should be well-organized and concise, and should help your classmates enter into that day’s discussions.

2. A Bibliographic Essay. 5-8 pages of text, plus notes. Due in class Week 6 (Feb. 18) (30%)

I’d like you to finish this course with a rich understanding of the major theoretical and historical debates in media studies and art history in this period, and with a map for a research project of your own. To get started, I’d like you to work from required and recommended course readings, as well as your own research in primary and secondary sources, to build and analyze a bibliography around an analytical question of your choice. Your bibliographic essay should map an intellectual debate related to media in the Cold
War period (1945-1989), outlining its key questions, texts and players. It should also identify the importance of that debate in shaping or potentially re-shaping our understanding of the era. Finally, it should identify and explain the likely significance of some object or objects that will become the basis of your final research proposal for the course.

3. **Final assignment: Research Proposal for a Journal Article.** 10-12 pages of text, plus notes. Due Exam Week (Precise date TBA). (30%)

I’d like you to identify a relevant journal (such as Grey Room; OCTOBER; Critical Inquiry; Media, Culture and Society; The Information Society; Computational Culture; Technology and Culture; American Quarterly; Communication, Culture and Critique) and write a detailed proposal for an article within it. The proposal will need to address how your topic and approach relate to the existing literature in the field, the primary and secondary source work you have done and still have to do, and the importance of your research project for the journal's audience and the relevant field more broadly. In contrast to the midterm bibliographic essay, this proposal will depend heavily on primary sources and archival work. (For example, Special Collections or the Hoover Institution archives.)

*Note: Journals don’t take proposals of course, just articles. But writing a proposal should help you think through the key issues for an article within the time frame we have for the course.*

**Readings:**
(Please buy the following online or through your local bookstore)


Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 2005


**Section One: Mass and Networked Models of Communication After World War II**
Week 1—January 14: Mass versus Network Culture

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Week 2—January 21: Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Man

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Christine Mehring, “The Art of a Miracle: Toward a History of German Pop,” in *Art of the Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures*, Los Angeles: LACMA

Paul Kaiser, “Symbolic Revolts in the ‘Workers’ and ‘Peasants’ State: Countercultural Art Programs in the GDR” in *Art of the Two Germanys*

Susanne Leeb, “Abstraction as International Language,” in *Art of the Two Germanys*

**Week 3 – January 28:** The Bomb: Performance and Simulation

*Required:*

Tracy Davis, *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense*, pp 1-102


*Recommended:*


“Dr. Strangelove” (the movie)


**Week 4 – February 4:** Systems of vision

*Required:*


**Recommended:**


**Section Two: Media in Everyday Life, At Home and Abroad**

**Week 5 – February 11**: Media at Home, Politics in the Living Room

**Due: Bibliographic Essay**

**Required:**


*Watch*: Emile de Antonio, *Point of Order*

**Recommended:**


**Week 6 – February 18**: New Media Spaces

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


Turner -- Media Cultures of the Cold War – Syllabus -- Page 6 of 10
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.


The films of Ray and Charles Eames (on DVD, at SUL)


**Week 7 – February 25:** Decolonization and the "Third World"

**Required:**

Jean-Paul Sartre, “Preface,” to Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, New York: Grove Press, 2005: 7-31

Fanon, “Concerning Violence,” “On National Culture,” and “Colonial War and Mental Disorders,” in The Wretched of the Earth: 35-106; 206-310


**Recommended:**

Gillo Pontecorvo, dir., The Battle of Algiers, 1966


Fred Turner, “The Family of Man and The Politics of Attention in Cold War America,”

Section 3: From Counterculture to Neoliberalism and Back Again

Week 8 – March 4: Early Counterculture and the Turn to Performance and Participation

Required:


Fred Turner, The Democratic Surround, Chapter 8 “The Coming of the Counterculture”


Recommended:


**Week 9 – March 11: Media and Consciousness, at Home and Abroad**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


**Week 10 – March 18: Neoliberalism and Postmodernism**

*Required:*


**Recommended:**

