

**History 4317**  
**Special Topics in History**  
**Baby Boomers' America: The United States, 1945-1974**  
**Fall 2014**

**Instructor:** Ms. Judith Parsons  
**Class Hour:** 6:00 - 8:50 p.m. Mondays  
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**Office Hours:**  
**9:00-10:00, 11:00-11:30 MWF**  
**2:00-3:00 TTH**  
**5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Monday**  
Other hours by appointment

**Texts (required):** James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*  
David Halberstam, *The Fifties*

At the end of World War II, Americans were euphoric that the war had ended and most were optimistic about the future. Many felt that the nation which had won the war could do anything. However, much of the euphoria and optimism was short-lived. The years after World War came to be defined by the contest between democracy and communism led by the two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union. The atomic bomb cast a long shadow not only over foreign policy but also over domestic policy as well. From 1946 through the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War affected every facet of American life. Yet, paradoxically, it also created possibility. How was it that a nation committed to freedom and democracy could so baldly deny basic civil liberties and opportunity to African Americans and other groups?

In 1945, the United States found itself virtually the only major nation involved in World War II to come out of the war in better shape economically than when it went in. Many Americans (or at least many white Americans) of this generation found themselves with a lifestyle that they could hardly have imagined before the war. As they found themselves in better economic circumstances, many began starting the families they had postponed during the Depression and the war. The result was a temporary population explosion.

Between 1946 and 1964 Americans had babies -- lots of babies -- 76,441,000 babies. In 1946 (although the boom officially did not start until May), 3.4 million babies were born in the United States – the most ever at that time. The baby boom peaked at 4.3 million babies in 1957 and continued at about 4 million per year from 1958 to 1964 (the last year of the boom). While an increased birth rate also showed up in Europe in 1946 and 1947, the birth rate there returned to pre-war levels in the late 1940s and 1950s. In only three other countries did the increased birth rate truly constitute a baby boom – Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Landon Y. Jones writes in *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* that this boom ". . . has affected every aspect of our society, from fads, fashions and music, to education, crime rates and Social Security." He continues, "From the first, the post-World War II baby boomers were endowed with great expectations: they would be the biggest, richest, best educated generation America has ever known." This generation has changed the way Americans look at themselves. As the first baby boomers are retiring, many in the United States have looked back on their lives and times. During this semester, we are going to study the first 28 years of the baby boom (after all this was the generation that said, "don't trust anyone over the age of 30"). In 2011 the first

Babyboomers turned 65 and are expected to change old age and retirement as they have changed other aspects of society.

This course will go from the end of World War II through the end of the American involvement in the Vietnam War, Watergate and the resignation of President Richard Nixon – encompassing the administrations of five American presidents: Harry S Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon. During class, we will discuss the reading assignments, view videos (something that did not exist in 1946), and generally try to immerse ourselves in the period.

### **Program Learning Outcomes/Primary Learning Objectives**

#### **The graduating student with a BA in history will:**

1. Develop an informed, critical, and articulate approach to the study of history.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of historical events, movements, major turning points and personalities of the past.
3. Demonstrate an ability to identify and relate the role that historical interpretation plays in assessments of the past.
4. Write effectively, logically and persuasively about topics in history.

Course assessments for the PLOs are as follows:

**PLO #1 will be assessed through class discussions, the written book review, and the final examination.**

**PLO #2 will be assessed through class discussions and the final examination.**

**PLO #3 will be assessed through class discussions, the written book review, video analyses, and the final examination.**

**PLO #4 will be assessed through the written book review, video analyses, and the final examination.**

### **GOALS OF THE COURSE:**

Students who have successfully completed History 5310 Babyboomers' America: The United States, 1945-1974 should have the following competencies:

1. Compare and contrast multiple points of view and recognize the concept of multi-causality in the history of the United States after World War II.
2. Understand the emergence of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and comprehend how it affected domestic policies in the United States and events world-wide.
3. Comprehend the changes in the political, social and economic aspects of life in the United States between 1945 and 1974 and analyze these changes.
4. Compare and contrast the emergence of rights' consciousness among various groups with little power before World War II and the attempts by those people who traditionally exercised power to prevent changes in the power structure.

- Analyze videos on a variety of topics and place them in the context of the times being studied. Write coherent and thoughtful reviews of these videos.

**Course requirements:**

Class participation	100 points
Film Reviews	150 points
Attendance	100 points
Final Examination	150 points

In order to receive an A for the course, you must have 90% of the possible points, a B, 80%, a C, 70%, a D 60% and below 60% an F.

**Attendance:** It is important that you attend class regularly and you will have 10 points deducted from your attendance grade for each class period missed. In case of an emergency or University sponsored trip, this may be adjusted at the discretion of the instructor.

**CLASSROOM COURTESIES:**

You are expected to observe the following classroom courtesies:

- No hats or caps will be worn in the classroom.
- No tobacco in any form will be used in the classroom.
- You may bring soft drinks, water, or coffee into the classroom, but please be sure to remove empty containers.
- No tape recorders may be used without prior consent of the instructor in cases of certified disability.
- You are expected to give your attention to this class.
- In discussions, be willing to listen to others' ideas and be polite in disagreements.
- Turn off and **put away** all cell phones, laptops, MP3 players, tablets and other electronic devices.

**About the Course.** This course emphasizes reading. You will be given reading assignments in the text and in some other sources as well. Because of the nature of the course, **it is extremely important that everyone in the class have the assigned material read and be ready to discuss it at the designated time.** There will be several films and videos shown. You will complete a film/video review for each one. There will be approximately 12 video reviews at 15 points each for a total of 150 points – if you complete them all you will get up to 30 points of extra credit. The video reviews will be turned in on Safe Assign in Blackboard and each one will have a deadline by which it must be completed.

**Blackboard.** This course has a companion on-line component on Blackboard. You access it from any computer by going to the Sul Ross home page ([www.sulross.edu](http://www.sulross.edu)) and finding Blackboard. Click on that and then log-in. Select History 5310 Babyboomer's America and it will take you to this course. On Blackboard the 4317 and the 5310 have been combined. Announcements, e-mails to the instructor, the grade book, the syllabus, and SafeAssign all will be found on this site.

Web Links: Links with music, images, etc. of the period.  
Baby Boomers' Headquarters <http://www.bbhq.com/>  
Aging Hipsters <http://www.aginghipsters.com/>  
Baby Boomer Memories <http://www.babyboomerememories.com/index.php>

## Course Outline

(Approximate. May be changed by instructor)

- August 25** Introduction  
Video “The Best Years of Our Lives” (1946)
- September 1** **Labor Day Holiday – No Classes**
- September 8** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*: Introduction, “Prologue: August 1945”; Chapter 1 “Veterans, Ethnic, Blacks, Women”; Chapter 2 “Unions, Liberals, and the State: Stalemate”; Chapter 3 “Booms”  
Video “The Homefront”
- September 15** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*: Chapter 4 “Grand Expectations About the World” and Chapter 5 “Hardening of the Cold War, 1945 - 1948”  
Video “The Berlin Airlift”
- September 22** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 6 “Domestic Policies: Truman’s First Term” and Chapter 7 “Red Scares Abroad and at Home”  
Halberstam, *The Fifties* Chapters 1-3, 25  
Video “The Investigation of William Mandel by Senator Joseph McCarthy” or “The Edward R. Murrow: the McCarthy Years,” or “Point of Order”
- September 29** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 8 “Korea” and Chapter 9 “Ike”  
Halberstam, *The Fifties* Chapters 4 - 7, 14, 16 - 18, 23  
Video “Korea: The Forgotten War”
- October 6** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 10 “World Affairs, 1953 -1956 “  
Halberstam, *The Fifties* Chapters 24 - 27, 32  
Video “Vietnam: A Television History. Roots of a War (1945-1953)”
- October 13** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 11 “The Biggest Boom Yet” and Chapter 12 “Mass Consumer Culture”  
Halberstam, *The Fifties* Chapters 8 - 13, 15, 33 - 35, 37 - 40, 42, 43  
Video “The Polio Crusade”
- October 20** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 13 “Race” and Chapter 14 “The Center Holds, More or Less, 1957-1960”  
Halberstam, *The Fifties* Chapters 28 - 31, 36, 41, 44 - 46  
Video “Eyes on the Prize: Awakenings, 1954-56” and/or “Fighting Back, 1957-1962”)

- October 27** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 15 “The Polarized Sixties: An Overview,” Chapter 16 “The New Frontier at Home” and Chapter 17 “JFK and the World”  
Video “Vietnam: A Television History. America’s Mandarin”
- November 3** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 18 “Lyndon Johnson and American Liberalism,” and Chapter 19 “A Great Society and the Rise of Rights-Consciousness”  
Video “Eyes on the Prize: Bridge to Freedom, 1965”
- November 10** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 20 “Escalation in Vietnam” and Chapter 21 “Rights, Polarization, and Backlash, 1966-1967”  
Video: ““Vietnam: A Television History LBJ Goes to War”
- November 17** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 22 “The Most Turbulent Year: 1968,” and “ Chapter 23 “Rancor and Richard Nixon”  
Video “Vietnam: A Television History. Tet 1968”
- November 24** Discussion of Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, Chapter 24 “Nixon, Vietnam, and the World, 1969 - 1974” and Chapter 25 “End of an Era? Expectations and Watergate and Recession”  
Video “Watergate: 30 Years After” or “Watergate”
- December 1** **Graduate Student Oral Presentation of Book Review**
- December 8** **Final Examination**