Title of the Course: Cold War in Europe 1945-1989

Code of the Course: 1681

Number of credits: 3

Any pre-/co-requisites: No

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Course Description

The period from 1945 to 1989 saw Europe divided into two opposing blocs, commonly known as Eastern and Western Europe. This course explores how and why this division emerged, how it shaped politics, security, and everyday life, and how it eventually came to an end. Alongside ideology, military alliances, espionage, propaganda, and technological competition such as the Space Race and "Star Wars," the course also examines sport—especially ice hockey—as a symbolic arena of Cold War rivalry, national pride, and international competition.

Through case studies including NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Prague Spring, the fall of the Berlin Wall, European integration, and sport events such as Cold War hockey rivalries and *Good Bye, Lenin!,* the course highlights both the political and cultural dimensions of the Cold War and its legacy in Europe.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- **Analyse** the origins, structures, and consequences of the division of Europe between 1945 and 1989, including its impact on politics, security, and everyday life.
- **Evaluate** the political, ideological, and cultural dimensions of the Cold War through key case studies such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Prague Spring, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and European integration.
- **Interpret** sport, popular culture, and media as symbolic arenas of Cold War rivalry and memory, with particular attention to ice hockey competitions and cultural representations such as *Good Bye, Lenin!*.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

[List specific assessed tasks, exams, quizzes, their weightage, and due dates; perhaps, add a summary table as below, to precede the details for each assessment.]

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Attendance and Active Participation	25%	Throughout the Course
First Assignment: Images of the Cold War. Ideology on Display: Cold War Propaganda Poster	25%	28/02/2026
Midterm Assignment: "Voice of the Cold War (Podcast) – (10-12 mins)	25%	17/04/2026
Final Assignment: Video Presentation – (14-16 mins)	25%	08/05/2026

* Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Attendance and Active Participation	ILO1, ILO3	This component assesses students' ongoing engagement with the political, ideological, and cultural dynamics of Cold War Europe (ILO1) and their ability to compare national and thematic case studies of the East–West divide through informed discussion and collaborative analysis (ILO3).
First Assignment: Images of the Cold War. Ideology on Display: Cold War Propaganda Poster (Visual poster + 100–200-word annotation)	ILO1, ILO2	This assignment assesses students' ability to analyse representations and imaginaries of Cold War Europe within their historical and cultural contexts (ILO1), and to evaluate how ideology, propaganda, and Cold War legacies shaped internal and external perceptions of Europe's division (ILO2).
Midterm Assignment: "Voice of the Cold War" (Podcast, 10–12 minutes)	ILO2, ILO3	This task evaluates students' ability to critically evaluate competing ideological, political, and cultural perspectives during the Cold War (ILO2) and to compare experiences and narratives across different national, bloc-based, or transnational contexts (ILO3).
Final Assignment: Video Presentation (14–16 minutes)	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	The final video presentation assesses students' ability to synthesise analysis of the origins, development, and consequences of Europe's Cold War division (ILO1), evaluate key political, ideological, and cultural processes between 1945 and 1989 (ILO2), and compare country-based or thematic

			case studies to assess divergent experiences and enduring Cold War legacies in contemporary Europe (ILO3).

Grading Rubrics

Assignment	A+, A, A- (Excellent)	B+, B, B- (Very Good)	C+, C, C- (Satisfactory)	D/F (Limited & Failure)
Attendance and Active Participation	Attends almost all sessions and participates consistently with well-prepared, analytically informed contributions that engage course themes and peer discussion.	Attends most sessions and participates regularly with relevant and informed contributions.	Attends regularly and participates occasionally, demonstrating basic understanding of course material.	Attendance and participation are inconsistent or minimal, with little evidence of preparation or meaningful engagement.
First Assignment: Images of the Cold War. Ideology on Display: Cold War Propaganda Poster (Visual poster + 100–200-word annotation)	Poster communicates a clear, original, and well-chosen message related to Cold War; strong and appropriate use of symbols, colour, and slogans; annotation clearly explains the theme, context, and student choices; historical references (if used) are accurate; all instructions followed.	Poster communicates a clear message with some originality; visual design generally effective; annotation explains the theme and intent but may lack clarity or depth in places; minor issues with historical accuracy or presentation.	Poster shows a basic idea, but message is unclear or overly general; visual elements or annotation are mostly descriptive; limited understanding of the region or theme; instructions partly followed.	Poster lacks a clear message or relevance to the course; visual design confusing or inappropriate; annotation missing, extremely weak, or inaccurate; instructions not followed.

Assignment	A+, A, A- (Excellent)	B+, B, B- (Very Good)	C+, C, C- (Satisfactory)	D/F (Limited & Failure)
Podcast: Voices of Cold War (10–12 minutes)	Podcast tells a clear, engaging, and well-organised historical story; perspective is consistent and easy to follow; effectively connects personal experience to larger historical themes; content is historically grounded and evidence-based; appropriate pacing and clear audio.	Podcast is mostly clear and organised; perspective generally consistent; makes some connections between personal experience and historical context; minor factual or structural issues.	Podcast has a basic storyline but lacks focus or clarity; perspective may shift or feel underdeveloped; limited connection to historical themes; content largely descriptive.	Podcast is confusing, inaccurate, or incomplete; perspective unclear or inconsistent; little connection to course themes; minimal evidence of research or historical understanding.
Video Presentation (Final Assignment) (14–16 minutes)	Presents a clear and focused argument related to Central and Eastern Europe from 1917 to the present; demonstrates understanding of key themes; **confident and engaging on-camera presentation**; visuals clearly support the argument; sources appropriately	Presents a clear topic with some argument and explanation; delivery mostly effective; visuals and sources generally relevant but not always well integrated.	Presentation is mainly descriptive with limited analysis or argument; delivery uneven or unclear; visuals and sources basic or loosely connected.	No clear argument or structure; poor delivery or presenter not visible; visuals and sources absent, inappropriate, or unrelated.

Assignment	A+, A, A- (Excellent)	B+, B, B- (Very Good)	C+, C, C- (Satisfactory)	D/F (Limited & Failure)
	used and integrated			

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	[Example: Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.]
B	Good Performance	[Example: Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.]
C	Satisfactory Performance	[Example: Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.]
D	Marginal Pass	[Example: Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.]
F	Fail	[Example: Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and lacks the necessary problem-solving skills. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort towards achieving learning goals. Does not meet the threshold requirements for professional practice or development in the discipline.]

Course AI Policy

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools (including text-, image-, audio-, and video-generating systems) is permitted only for limited support purposes, such as brainstorming, preliminary research, language editing, or technical assistance. Students must not use such tools to generate substantive content for assessment tasks unless explicit permission is granted by the instructor, and all submitted work must represent the student's own intellectual effort and comply with institutional academic integrity policies.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include [specific details, e.g., strengths, areas for improvement]. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

The course follows Tony Judt's *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005) and relevant chapters of Mark Mazower's Dark Continent (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999) and Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Details on Assignments

1) First Assignment (Poster)
   Students will create an original propaganda poster inspired by **Cold War in Europe (including United States and Soviet Union involvement) between 1945 and 1989**. Posters may focus on themes such as ideological conflict, security, economic progress, social unity, peaceful coexistence, or calls for cooperation and stability. Students are encouraged to do quick research and get familiarized with Cold War poster themes.
   The poster must use **visual symbols, colour, and short slogans** to communicate a clear and coherent message. Accompanying the poster, students must submit a **brief annotation (100–200 words, excluding any list of AI prompts)** explaining the choice of theme, historical or conceptual context, and the intended message of the visual design.
   The poster and annotation must be submitted **together as a single PDF file**.
   Students **may, but are not required to, use AI-based tools** (such as image generators or design assistants) in the creation of the poster. Regardless of the tools used, students remain fully responsible for the **historical accuracy** (where applicable), clarity of message, and appropriate use of imagery. If AI tools are used, students must include an **appendix listing all prompts** used in the creation of the poster.
   The source log submission should be done in a **PDF format**. **Template for this exercise is available on Canvas.**

2) **Source-Based Podcast (Second Assignment): "Voices from/to Central and Eastern Europe"**

   In this assignment, you will create a **10–12-minute podcast** that tells a **historical story from Cold War**.

   Your podcast should be told from the point of view of a **real person or a historically realistic individual** who lived through an important moment in the region's history. This person could be, for example, a civilian, soldier, student, worker, intellectual, athlete, scientist, politician, or activist. You may choose a setting such as the interwar period, the Second World War, life under socialism, the Cold War, the changes around 1989, or the post-socialist era.

   You may tell your story:

   - in the **first person** (using "I"), or
   - in the **third person** (telling the story of someone else)

   Whichever approach you choose, your podcast should connect **personal experience** to **larger historical themes**, such as war and peace, ideology, everyday life, social change, culture, sport, or encounters between different regions of the world.

Because this is an audio assignment, you do not need to include spoken citations in the podcast. However, you must submit a **written source log and bibliography** (800–1,200 words) that explains where your information comes from and how you used it in your podcast.

You must use:

- **At least three different sources** (for example, newspapers, diaries, maps, speeches, memoirs, or, posters, propaganda)

All sources must be listed and explained in the written source log. Every historical claim in your podcast must be supported by evidence in this written submission.

3) **Video Presentation (Final Assignment)**
The video essay is the main assignment for this course. In this assignment, you will create a 14–16-minute recorded video presentation that explains and analyses a topic related to the Cold War. Your video should either present a clear historical argument or reflect current affairs through research of local realities.

You may choose to:
- Build on your CW poster assignment, using the theme, sources, or historical questions you explored there, or/and
- Build on your "Voices of the Cold War" podcast, or
- Choose a new topic, as long as it fits the course themes.

If you build on an earlier assignment, your video must go beyond description and show deeper analysis. Possible topics include:
- Life in CEE
- Ideology and propaganda
- Protest movements and peaceful coexistence
- State power, control, and resistance
- Wars, Alliances, Organisations
- Sport, culture, gastronomy

Because this is a presentation, you will be assessed on how clearly you communicate your ideas.

Your video should have:
- A clear structure (introduction, main points, conclusion)
- A focused argument
- Clear speech and effective use of visuals (slides, images, maps, or short clips)

You must appear on camera during the presentation. Videos in which the presenter is not visible will be graded one grade band lower.
Along with your video, you must submit a short sources list as a separate file. This list should include:
- All books, articles, websites, or other materials you used
- A link to your video

An example of format and delivery (shared with the author's consent) is available here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwSEJwqAUUQ&ab_channel=ShermanLeung

Course Outline and Schedule

Week of Teaching	Date	Lectures	Remarks
1	06 February 2026	**Introduction of the Course and the Lecturer**	
2	13 February 2026	**Second World War and Cold War**	
3	20 February 2026	**Ideological Competition and Cold War: Liberalism, Capitalism & Democracy vs. Socialism, Communism & Dictatorship of the Proletariat**	
4	27 February 2026	**Iron Curtain and Its Impact** **(First Assignment Due: Cold War Propaganda Poster; 28 February 2026, 23.59)**	
5	06 March 2026	**Integration in the Divided Continent**	
6	13 March 2026	**Germany. Eternal European Troublemaker**	
7	20 March 2026	**On the Brink of the Nuclear War: Second Berlin Crisis (1961) Cuban Missile Crisis in Thirteen Days (1962)**	
8	27 March 2026	**Cold War Espionage**	**Movie Screening: Bridge of Spies (2015)**
	03 April 2026	**No Teaching**	**Good Friday / Mid-Term Break**
9	10 April 2026	**Cold War on the Ice:** Czechoslovak Revenge; Series of the Century; Canadian Cup, Miracle on the Ice	
10	17 April 2026	**Space Race & Star Wars** **(Second Assignment Due: Podcast "Voices of Cold War"; 27 March 2026, 23.59**	
11	24 April 2026	**1989: Implosion of the Soviet Bloc & Return to Normalcy**	

	01 May 2026	**No Teaching** **Final Assignment Due: Video Presentation** **8 May, 23.59**	**Labor Day (public holiday)**
12	08 May 2026	*Goodbye Lenin* (2003)	Movie Screening