

**From:** The Modern World Global History since 1760 Course Team <[REDACTED]>

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Starting Week 12

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jeffrey epstein,

The latest information from [The Modern World: Global History since 1760](#) on Coursera.

Dear jeffrey epstein,

Even as we enter Week 12, there are still new students joining the class. Welcome aboard. This weekend I am participating in a conference of Coursera partner universities, and it is interesting to hear about what everyone is learning and thinking about this educational adventure we are in. But most gratifying for me personally is to keep running into new virtual acquaintances, people who are taking this course and finding that it is enriching their lives, if only a little. I feel that a lot of higher education institutions like mine are slowly realizing that they are reaching — perhaps for the first time — a vast community of able, hard-working, passionate learners who do not fit their standard model for a "college student." These institutions, blinking and scratching their collective heads, are only beginning to rethink who they serve, and how.

The course this week concentrates on a period — 1950 to 1968 — dominated by what we generally call the "Cold War." It is a period in which the global influence of the United States — economic and cultural, not just political — probably was at its peak. So the week opens with some reflections on the changes inside America that enabled the country to play this kind of role. I call attention, for instance, to some important economic shifts like the incorporation of the American South fully into the national economy, a shift that began during the 1930s but was greatly accelerated by the war and postwar period, as was also true for the transformation of California and the American West. The struggle of African-Americans for civil rights was also very much related to America's sense of what it stood for in the world. The United States would eventually become a trendsetter for other aspects of the "rights revolution" that would touch so many other countries during the 1960s and especially the 1970s.

Not that the Americans felt all that complacent and secure. Their domestic prosperity was shadowed during the 1950s by a constant sense that an apocalyptic World War III could strike them with startling suddenness. As that danger peaked in the early 1960s and seemed to recede, social unrest was growing — associated with that "rights revolution" -- and the United States engaged in a draining war of containment, in Vietnam, that ate away at its national self-belief.

Europe became a divided continent, as the Western half reconstructed itself around new purposes and slowly, painfully gave up global empires. The Soviet domain suppressed its revolts and seemed to establish a successful if stodgy socialist realm while China went through waves of horrific turmoil, barely understood at the time by the outside world. Dozens of new states created a strong awareness that there was now a "third world" -- very much a phrase of that time -- choosing its future amid the Cold War contest. We will spend a good deal of time trying to understand the choices and dilemmas those new countries faced.

This week will again offer some interesting media features — another film clip to help bring some of the atmosphere to life, as well as a unique opportunity to actually travel in a kind of time machine back into the inner sanctums of American leaders of the 1960s and listen to some then-secret recordings from the deliberations at a couple of key moments. As this part of the course more and more touches your own memories of events, you will attach your own recollections to some of these signposts. For those of you who remember this era, this week — and those to come — can be an invitation, an invitation to reconceive some of what you already know.

Best wishes,

Philip Zelikow

The Modern World: Global History since 1760 Course Team

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