This course will focus on significant (primarily) American films and works of fiction – and a few photographers - that are especially revealing of their cultural contexts and/or that cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural contexts that shaped them. We will consider classic American films such as *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Godfather, On the Waterfront,* and *Chinatown.* We will read works of fiction such as Hemingway’s *In Our Time,* Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried,* and selected short stories of James Baldwin. We will look at the photographs of Dorothea Lange, Robert Frank, and others. Student essays will explore in depth the contexts crucial to understanding one or more of these works.