

*Film Noir* and Its Relevancy to American Society

Certain remarks made last class (2/25/14) about *film noir* dramatizing the bleaker features of American society at a time when the United States was the most powerful and richest country in the world was, to me, an astute observation. Yet, was *film noir* really so out of touch with what was going on in mainstream American society in the years after World War Two? The United States was in a period of rapid social change. Millions of veterans were re-integrating themselves into the society, race relations were in a state of flux, the U. S. economy was already changing from an industrial to post-industrial model, gender roles were being redefined, and the mass migration of people from the cities to the suburbs was already underway, all of which contributed to creating a state of uncertainty which, I believe, is the cornerstone of *film noir*.

And when you add to the mix the anxiety caused by the introduction of nuclear weapons, the advent of the Cold War, and the emergence of the United States as a superpower with obligations spread around the world, it is not surprising to me that the movie industry would make movies that would attempt to capture the feeling of the time. *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *From Here to Eternity*, and *Gentleman's Agreement* all deal with issues that were relevant at the time of their release and are still relevant now.