

OLLI at DU Syllabus – Spring 2024

From Pumpkin Papers to Pentagon Papers: Famous trials of the Cold War and Vietnam War Periods

Wednesday Morning Online; first 4 weeks

Facilitator: Neil Adelman

RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS: none

Weekly Topics

We will address four trials in our four weekly sessions as follows:

- 1. April 3.** The Trials of Alger Hiss (1949-50) Alger Hiss, a former highly regarded State Department official, was accused first of being a Communist, and then a Soviet spy. His accuser, Whittaker Chambers, was an admitted Communist and a spy. Hiss's subsequent trial and conviction for perjury shocked the nation.
- 2. April 10.** The Trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (1951) J. Edgar Hoover called their atomic bomb spy trial "the trial of the century" even though the century was only half over. The trial helped usher in the McCarthy era. Facts learned years later shed new light on their convictions and death sentences.
- 3. April 17.** The Trial of the Chicago Eight (1969-70) The anti-Vietnam war movement and the Democratic Convention brought about a violent confrontation in Chicago in 1968. The conflict moved to the courtroom as the protest leaders were put on trial. The courtroom conflict, although not violent, became as brutal as the confrontation on Michigan Avenue.
- 4. April 24.** The Pentagon Papers Case and the Trial of Daniel Ellsberg (1973) Ellsberg stole a top-secret government report on the history of the Vietnam War. The press began printing it. The administration tried to stop it. The issue ended up in the Supreme Court in a critical First Amendment case. Ellsberg was subsequently tried for espionage. The outcome was bizarre.