



# The Modern Scholar: American Inquisition: The Era of McCarthyism

Ellen Schrecker

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During the early years of the Cold War, the anti-communist witch hunt that we now call McCarthyism swept through American society. As we will discover, McCarthyism was much more than the career of the blustering senator from Wisconsin who gave it a name. It was the most widespread and longest-lasting

blustering senator from Wisconsin who gave it a name. It was the most widespread and longest-lasting episode of political repression in American history. Dozens of men and women went to prison, thousands lost their jobs, and untold numbers of others saw what happened to those people and refrained from expressing controversial or unpopular ideas.

McCarthyism remains all too relevant today; if nothing else, it reminds us that we cannot take our basic freedoms for granted. This audio course aims to provide a basic understanding of what happened during the Cold War red scare of the late 1940s and 1950s. It will look at this red scare from the perspective of both the victims and the perpetrators, and will try to answer the following question: How could such a politically repressive movement arise in a modern democratic society such as the post-World War II United States?

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