

INST 154
Apollo AT 50
Discussion Questions
Session 2: The Cold War

The Apollo Program was a part of the Cold War – the Cold War made Apollo possible, in the view of many participants the Cold War made Apollo important, and Cold War thinking helped to shape what Apollo could and could not become. So it is important to understand some aspects of the Cold War. Draw on your readings and the lectures to discuss these three questions in your discussion group.

1. Nuclear weapons were never used during the Cold War because both sides were fearful of the consequences of using them. Given that both sides understood that well, why did they both create thousands of nuclear bombs?
2. The nuclear “triad” consists of three parts: bombers, ICBM’s and Submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Much more so than the bombers, building the missiles required very substantial (and thus very expensive) advances in technology. What advantages did missiles have that made people on both sides believe that it was important to invent them?
3. Popular support for Apollo depended in part on how ordinary people understood the Cold War and how they felt about the actions of their government in that conflict. How did the Cold War affect the lives of ordinary people?