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- Steven Ambrose, Rise to Globalism (Penguin).
- Myra MacPherson, Long Time Passing (Signet).
- John E. Schwarz, America's Hidden Success (Norton).
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HISTORY 398
America, 1945-Present

LECTURE OUTLINE

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(Jan. 25) Postwar Trends: An Overview

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WEEK 6 (Feb. 27) The Political Economy of Urban America
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WEEK 7 (Mar. 6-8) The Kennedy Years: A Thousand and One Knights

(Mar. 15) * * * * * M I D - T E R M E X A M I N A T I O N ( I N C L A S S ) * * * * *
(SPRING RECESS--MARCH 17-27)

WEEK 9 (Mar. 29) Civil Rights and Black America, 1945-1955

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Professor John Sharpless
History Department
263-1800

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WEEK 8 (Mar. 13)
Social Trends, 1958-1972: Courtship, Marriage, and the Family in Transition
(Mar. 15)
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(Spring Recess--March 17-27)

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Describe the ways in which the federal government assisted the rise of the white urban middle class in the post-war era. Focus on specific government and identify the implication for American society.
D. Anxiety over the "communist threat" deepened in the early years of the 1950s as Americans sought to provide an explanation for troubles at home and abroad. As we look back from today's perspective, it is often difficult to imagine what all the fuss was about. It is one thing to be concerned about spies but to view all dissent as unpatriotic seems a bit paranoid. Could it really be true that all deviance away from the "mainstream" (artistic, literary or political) was communist inspired? After all, we have long cherished individual freedom of expression. It now seems ironic that some Americans went so far as to demand not only the suppression of basic civil liberties but also enforced conformity and mindless obedience to the State in order to protect the "American Way of Life." [Isn't that what we feared most about communism?] How can we explain this extreme reaction to communism in this era?

Trace the growing concern over "communist infiltration" in America during the period between 1946 and 1956. What events led many Americans to believe that the forces of communism were at work in America? What was done to deal with this "threat"? Who were the leaders in the movement to identify and eliminate subversives? What groups supported their campaigns? Who opposed their efforts? And, finally, what were the "long run" implications of the anticommunism movement in the 1950s?

E. Clearly, patterns of family life are directly related to the "accepted" definitions of sexual roles both within the family and in the larger social and economic environment. Focusing on the period 1945-1960, chart the major changes in the role of both males and females in the economic and social life of America. Identify the interrelationship between forces "external" to the family and the internal processes that affect such traditional "familial" activities as child rearing. What tensions arose from these changes and were they (in your opinion) resolved? (or did they remain unresolved?)

II. Each student will write a short essay. The essays should not exceed eight (8) typed pages. The problem will be researched and the essay written outside of class. However, these are not to be considered cooperative ventures. Indeed, any evidence that our essay was not totally the result of independent effort will result in a failing grade.

THE MID-TERM ESSAYS ARE DUE IN CLASS (LECTURE HOUR) ON APRIL 17TH. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE ALLOWED. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

The 1960s were a time of protest and conflict. The growing divisions in American society broke along four primary dimensions: race, class, gender and generation. Utilize these basic concepts to examine the origins and development of either the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement or the Anti-war Movement. Compare the issues each movement addressed, the tactics they employed, their influence on one another and their visions for America's future. In writing your essay, refer directly to the readings.
III. The questions on the final exam will be taken from the following:

A. Identify and describe the basic values which Americans bring to foreign policy, and how those values shape and influence America's relationship with either Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Draw examples from each of the time periods listed below:

1. 1945-1953 (Compare Truman and Eisenhower)
2. 1964-1973 (Compare Johnson and Nixon)
3. 1977-1985 (Compare Carter and Reagan)

B. There is little doubt that the role of the media in American politics has increased greatly since the forties. The question is, how does the media affect the political process. Compare the presidential elections of 1960 and 1968 with the election of 1988, focusing on the relationship between the candidate, the media and the voter. To what extent were issues of importance? Do "debates" help or hinder the electoral process?

C. Over the last fifty years there has been a radical shift in people's attitude about mortality and ethical behavior. The sources for these changes are many. At one level, changes in economics, science and technology have placed different demands on people as they confront the problems of daily life. At another level, social philosophers, religious leaders and intellectuals have been rethinking age-old philosophical problems of "good and evil." The force of their ideas has been keenly felt as well. Write a short essay reviewing the major trends since 1945 in moral and ethical behavior. Attempt to isolate the reasons why the changes have occurred. Refer directly to Habits of the Heart.

D. In the late 1960s and middle 1970s, political scientists, journalists, historians and, at least, one President of the United States complained of a "crisis of confidence" and loss of public faith in American institutions. First, explain what they meant by this phrase. Identify the key elements of the argument. Second, identify any trends in the 1960s and 1970s which would have contributed to this "crisis of confidence."

E. Both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon have been described as the prototype of today's media politician. In what ways did they anticipate the television politics of the 1980s? Make specific comparisons to President Reagan's style and presentation. In what specific ways has the media transformed American politics from the 1960s to the present? Assess whether television politics has made it harder to maintain accountability of public officials.
F. In fashioning foreign policy between 1945 and 1985, American policymakers were determined not to repeat past mistakes, but to learn from history. As a result, each policy proposed during this era was a direct response to the shortcomings (perceived and real) of its predecessor. How did previous experiences influence, for better or for worse, the policies adopted between 1975 and 1985? Were these policymakers good historians, or did they derive the wrong lessons when better alternatives, also based on experience, were readily available? (Refer directly to the readings on foreign policy.)

G. By the late 1970s and early 1980s the social and economic programs of Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" legislation (including the "War on Poverty") has become a symbol of what was perceived to be the failure of government intervention. The notion that these programs had not only failed but had made things worse was instrumental in the election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Ronald Reagan in 1980. It is useful, therefore, to evaluate both the goals and content of the "Great Society" program. Select two or three major pieces of legislation to serve as examples. To what extent were the policy measures of the late sixties a departure from earlier approaches to social and economic reform? How successful were these programs? Why did many Americans come to believe that the reforms of the "Great Society" program were failures?