

- WEEK 9 (March 26) President Johnson and the American Dream
(March 28) Civil Rights and Black America
- WEEK 10(April 2) Johnson's Foreign Policy: Force and Counter Force
(April 4) VIETNAM
- WEEK 11(April 9) Forces for Change: Music, Youth and the Counter-Culture
(April 11) The Sixties Merge with the Seventies: Time Passes -
People Forget
- APRIL 11 * * * TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS * * *
- WEEK 12(April 16) The Nixon Presidency: A Man Without a Past?!
- (April 18) The Nixon Presidency: Domestic and International Policies
- WEEK 13(April 23) Social Trends, 1972-1984: Down the Road to Hell and
Damnation.
- (April 25) The American Economy, 1958-1978: The Rise and Fall of
Economics.
- WEEK 14(April 30) The Ford-Carter Years: America Without Destiny.
(May 1) Foreign Policy in the Eighties: The Loss of Confidence.
- WEEK 15(May 7) Reagan and the Second Great Depression
(May 9) Morality and Destiny: Hope and Fear in Our Declining Years.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
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History 398

American History, 1945-Present

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ABOUT THE MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS

To avoid misunderstanding over the goals and direction of the course I have made it a practice to distribute the questions for both the mid-terms and final examinations in advance. In each case, the questions which will appear on the examination will be taken from the list of questions provided below.

I. The questions on the first mid-term examination will be taken from the following:

- A. "Economy determines the options available, cultural preference determines the alternative chosen." Choose four of the following groups of Americans; discuss the ways in which the changing structure of the American economy set limits to their social and political (collective) behavior. Note the extent to which the political system served to make the situation better or worse. Limit your discussion to the period 1945-1963.
- Students in college
 - Blacks in the urban areas
 - Middle-class Americans in suburbs
 - Soldiers returning home from war
 - Midwestern farmers and their families
 - White working class Americans
 - Small Town Families
- B. "At first glance, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy would seem to be three very different people. In fact, both Eisenhower and Kennedy presented themselves as repudiating the preceding administration promising a new and different approach to national problems. In reality, however, all three men pursued essentially similiar programs once in office. At most, style, not substance, set these men apart from each other."
- Assess the validity of this statement, drawing from domestic policy and events between 1945 and 1963.
- C. A near-famous historian once said, "Traumatic episodes like depression and war decisively mark the character of the people who live through them." Analyze this statement by examining the generation which reached maturity in the depression years of the 1930's and went to war in the 1940's. Your answer must consider:

1. The formative impact of the Depression and World War II.
 2. The possible effects of the Depression and World War II on their social and economic behavior in the 1950's and 1960's.
- D. In fashioning foreign policy between 1945 and 1963, American policy makers 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 1945 and 1963? Were these policymakers good historians, or did they derive the wrong lessons when better alternatives, also based on experience, were readily available.
- 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 will be written outside of class. However, these are not to be considered cooperative ventures. Indeed, any evidence that your 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 11th. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE ALLOWED. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

THE PROBLEM

It was once very popular among American historians to speak of an "American experience." (For reasons which will become clear in the course of the semester, this view has fallen into disfavor.) They were not making the claim that all Americans were (or are) alike. Presumably, they meant that most Americans in the past and present share an essential core of common experience, culture and ideology which binds them together and separates them from other "national types." While this "core experience" has changed over time, it is something that natives and immigrants, blacks and whites, old and young, northerners and southerners could all identify as part of their lives.

Whether this "core experience" exists or ever existed is a matter of considerable debate. Drawing on the materials presented in this course, you are to address this problem.

Attempt, first, to define as best you can what the "core of common experience" might have been (your definition should focus on the period 1945-1968). Then attempt to answer the following kinds of questions (this is not an exhaustive list):

In general,

- What kinds of economic and social forces tend to encourage or retard the development of a common national experience or belief system?
- Were there factors in this particular period of time (1945-1968) that affected this process?

- To what extent and in what ways do you think the development of a common social experience occurred in this period?
- Were there groups that resisted this process? How? Was it by choice or chance?
- Finally, what kinds of effects did this kind of national socializing process have on particular individuals?

Write a well organized essay developing your ideas on this subject. Provide support for your view with logic and evidence.

III. The following questions will appear on the final exam:

- A. A famous historian has written that a basic trend in American society over the past 50 years has been the triumph of organization over individualism. Assess the accuracy of this statement by concentrating on three of the following: farmers; black Americans; urban blue collar laborers; businessmen; women; and college students. Support your generalizations with specific evidence.
- B. Since 1945 Americans have struggled to reconcile American values with the conduct of foreign policy, with mixed results. Identify and describe the basic values which Americans bring to foreign policy, and how those values shape and influence (a) America's relationship with other powers, notably the Soviet Union, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East (b) the ongoing debate among Americans over the correct course to pursue in foreign policy. Draw examples from each of the time periods listed below:
 - 1. 1945-1950
 - 2. 1961-1973
 - 3. 1977-1983
- C. Assess the impact of television on American politics between 1952 and 1984. Ask yourself: Has television made the United States impossible to govern? If not, on what terms is government possible?
- D. Over the last fifty years there has been a radical shift in people's attitude about morality 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 in moral and ethical behavior. Attempt to isolate the reason why the changes have occurred.

- E. Although we like to think of ourselves as a "classless society" there is strong evidence that the structure of the economy limits our choices of life-style and behavior. Focusing on the post-World War II era, discuss effects of the economy on social structure and political behavior. Try to focus your discussion on specific groups and regions. Note changes that have occurred with time.
- F. American foreign and domestic policy since 1945 has been shaped by a generation of leaders who came of age between 1929 and 1945, a generation shaped by the experiences of depression and world war. How have the experiences of the years 1960-1980 shaped the attitudes and perspectives of the next generation of leaders described in David Broder's The Changing of the Guard?