

History 223: Twentieth Century U. S

The Humbling Decade and the Conservative Ascendancy

1. What policies did Richard M. Nixon pursue after winning the presidency in 1968? Why did this Nixon look very different from the vice-president that served in the Eisenhower administration? What, for instance, was Nixon's approach to the Great Society? Were conservatives thrilled with Nixon's policies? Explain.

2. What was the Philadelphia Plan and what was it supposed to accomplish? What did Nixon intend for the Philadelphia Plan? What fate did the plan ultimately suffer? Why?

Here are some important identification terms and names:

Richard M. Nixon New Federalism Environmental Protection Agency
Occupational Safety and Health Administration Clean Air Act
Philadelphia Plan Warren Burger *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974)
Title IX Equal Credit Opportunity Act
Henry Kissinger Salvador Allende Augusto Pinochet
Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)
Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Vietnamization
Kent State University Jackson State University
My Lai Massacre (1968) Pentagon Papers War Powers Act
Robert McNamara Watergate Church Committee
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) stagflation
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
Gerald Ford Whip Inflation Now (WIN) Jimmy Carter
Andrew Young Three Mile Island Camp David Accords
Anastasio Somoza Sandinistas Shah of Iran
Ayatolla Khomeini Heritage Foundation Jerry Falwell
ERA Phyllis Schlafly *Roe v. Wade* (1973)

Sagebrush Rebellion Ronald Reagan supply-side economics

PATCO SDI Jeane Kirkpatrick

Iran-Contra Affair Mikhail Gorbachev *glasnost*

3. When Warren Burger replaced Earl Warren as head of the Supreme Court in 1969, he was expected to lead the justices in a conservative direction based on his frequent hand wringing about “judicial activism.” Things, however, did not go exactly as planned. Explain.

4. During the early and mid-1970s, affirmative action became a political and social flashpoint, as the Supreme Court initially supported private, voluntary affirmative action programs. Did the Court’s ruling in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) help to solve the status of affirmative action? Explain.

5. How did Nixon and Kissinger’s approach to foreign relations reflect a “realist” philosophy? In what ways did Nixon’s foreign policy strategy fundamentally alter Cold War policies?

6. One of Nixon’s campaign promises in 1968 was that he had a secret plan for ending the Vietnam War. What was this plan? How did the war in Vietnam ultimately conclude? Why? What larger implications did the loss in Vietnam have for the United States, as well as the future of liberalism? Why is it important to consider Vietnam in the context of Nixon’s overall political fall?

7. If Nixon’s pursuit of détente with China and the Soviet Union represented his best intentions, Watergate captured Nixon at his worst. What happened and why? What were the larger implications and lasting effects of Watergate and Nixon’s resignation?

8. The beginning of the 1970s marked, as Eric Foner put it, “the end of the golden age.” What economic problems did the United States experience at the beginning of the 1970s? What were the causes of these problems? Why were solutions hard to come by? Exacerbating these economic problems was the perception that Americans’ morale had reached a nadir. What were the sources of the social and cultural crisis that the United States faced during the 1970s?

9. What new ideas and assumption informed the Carter administration’s approach to international relations? What were the successes of Jimmy Carter’s new approach to international relations? Would you characterize his emphasis on human rights to be a successful foundation for international relations? Explain. What developments forced Carter, himself, to step back from this policy?

10. During the 1970s, a cultural crisis appeared to grip the United States. What was the origin of this crisis? How, for example, were sexual norms and gender

roles changing? Who was upset and threatened by these changes? What was their response?

11. Despite good intentions, the identification of energy policy as crucial to solving the United States' economic malaise, and a facility for peacemaking, historians have ultimately conclude that Jimmy Carter's presidency was a failure. What were the main contributing factors to the failure of the Carter administration? Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

12. How and why did Ronald Reagan win the 1980 presidential election? How did he sell the American public on his brand of conservatism?

13. What were the immediate and long-term effects of Reagan's economic policies? Why, for instance, does Eric Foner refer to the 1980s as "the Second Gilded Age"? Did supply-side economics work? What was the long-term effect of the massive federal budget deficit on government spending on social programs?

14. Eric Foner argues that the Reagan Era helped to develop a new idea of freedom in the United States. What attributes distinguished this new freedom?

15. Reagan began his presidency as an ardent cold warrior, yet was partially responsible for a serious thaw in the Cold War during the arms control talks of 1985-1987. What accounts for this change in attitude?

16. How would you characterize Ronald Reagan's two terms as president? What were the successes and the reasons for these successes? What failures did the administration experience? What do you feel were some of the long-term effects of the Reagan years?