I. Overview
   A. The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable postwar world by asserting and working to maintain a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.
   B. Rapid economic and social changes in American society fostered a sense of optimism in the postwar years.
   C. Cold War policies led to public debates over the power of the federal government and acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals while protecting civil liberties.

II. Postwar America
   A. GI Bill: Help for Veterans
      i. More than half the returning men and women in service seized the opportunity afforded by the GI Bill to continue their education at government expense. Over two million World War II veterans attended college, which started a postwar boom in higher education.
      ii. The veterans also received over $16 billion in low-interest, government-backed loans to buy homes and farms and to start businesses.
      iii. By focusing on a better educated workforce and also promoting new construction, the federal government stimulated the postwar economic expansion.
   B. Baby Boom
      i. Following World War II, there was a rapid population explosion known as the baby boom.
ii. The rise in population contributed to the growth of the suburbs, consumer culture, and the sharp increase in college enrollment in the 1960s.

C. Suburban Growth
   i. The high demand for housing after the war resulted in a construction boom. Levittown, a project of 17,000 mass-produced, low-priced family homes made the move from city to suburb affordable for even families of modest means.
   ii. For many older inner cities, the effect of the mass movement to the suburbs was disastrous. By the 1960s, cities became increasingly poor and racially divided.

III. Postwar Politics
    A. Strikes
       i. In early 1946, the United Auto Workers and steelworkers went on strike against General Motors and U.S. Steel, respectively. President Truman suggested an 18 cent per hour wage increase and allowed the corporations to raise prices to cover the cost of the increase. This formula became the basis for settlements in other industries.
       ii. After John L. Lewis’s (CIO) United Mine Workers struck in April 1946, Truman had the government take over mines and railroads and accepted the union’s demands of safety, health, and welfare benefits, but threatened to draft strikers into the military.

    B. Civil Rights
       i. Prior to the Korean War, Black and White Americans fought in segregated units. President Truman ordered the racial desegregation of the armed forces. The Korean War marked the first time American forces had fought in integrated units.
       ii. Truman also established the Committee on Civil Rights and strengthened the Justice Department’s powers to fight segregation in schools.

    C. Republican Control of the 80th Congress
       i. 22nd Amendment
          a. Reacting against the election of Roosevelt as president four times, the Congress proposed a constitutional amendment to limit a president to a maximum of two full terms in office.
          b. The 22nd Amendment was ratified by the states in 1951.
       ii. Taft-Hartley Act
          a. The Taft-Hartley Act was passed in 1947 with the primary purpose of curbing the power of labor unions.
          b. The Taft-Hartley Act outlawed closed-shop unionism, which would require workers to join a union before being hired.
          c. Supporters of the Taft-Hartley Act believed that unions were abusing their power, widespread strikes would endanger the nation’s vital defense industries, unions had been infiltrated by communists, and employers were being coerced into hiring union workers (closed-shop unionism). By 1954, 15 states had passed “right to work” laws, which forbade the “union shop” (a non-member could not be hired to a job if a union was present).
          d. The act outlawed secondary boycotts, the practice of several unions supporting a striking union by joining a boycott of the company’s products, and gave the president the power to invoke an 80-day “cooling off period” before a strike endangering the national safety could be called.
          e. Organized labor strongly opposed the Taft-Hartley Act.
IV. The Second Red Scare

A. Security and Civil Rights

i. Americans debated policies and methods designed to expose suspected communists within the United States even as both parties supported the broader strategy of containing communism.

ii. In 1940, a law made it a crime to advocate the overthrow of the government by force or to belong to an organization advocating such position. It was used by President Truman’s administration to jail leaders of the American Communist Party.

iii. In the late 1940s, Congress formed the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

iv. Contributing factors to the Second Red Scare included fears raised by the “fall” of China to communism and the emergence of Mao Zedong as the leader of the People’s Republic of China, the Soviet Union’s development of an atomic bomb, President Truman’s emphasis on a foreign policy designed to contain Soviet expansion, and revelations that Soviet spies had infiltrated sensitive agencies and programs in the United States.

v. Both Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy began their political careers as outspoken opponents of communism.

B. Espionage Cases

i. Hiss Case

a. The first major case involved a former State Department official named Alger Hiss.

b. Hiss was not convicted of spying, but was sentenced for perjury.

c. Richard Nixon, at this time a young California Congressman, played a highly publicized role in the investigation of Hiss.

ii. Rosenberg Case

a. The second major case involved Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.

b. The Rosenbergs were executed for secretly giving information to the Soviet Union about the U.S. atomic bomb project.

C. The Rise of Joseph McCarthy

i. McCarthy’s Tactics

a. Joseph McCarthy was a relatively unknown U.S. senator from Wisconsin who catapulted to national attention by making sensational accusations that the U.S. state department was “thoroughly infested with Communists.”

b. McCarthyism is the making of public accusations of disloyalty without sufficient evidence.

c. McCarthy directed his attack at alleged communists and communist sympathizers.

d. Senator McCarthy played on the fears of Americans that communists had infiltrated the State Department and other federal agencies.

e. McCarthy’s accusations helped create a climate of paranoia, as Americans became preoccupied with the perceived threat posed by the spread of communism.

f. As a result of McCarthy’s anti-communist “witch hunt,” millions of Americans were forced to take loyalty oaths and undergo loyalty investigations.

g. The fear of communist infiltration even spread to the motion picture industry. Hollywood executives instituted a “blacklist” of about 500 entertainment professionals who were denied employment because of their real or imagined political beliefs or associations. The blacklist ruined the careers of many actors, writers, and directors. Even the Screen Actors Guild, then headed by actor Ronald Reagan, was attempting to discover and purge its own communists.

h. Senator McCarthy cynically used the climate of fear for his own political advantage.
ii. Army-McCarthy Hearings
   a. In 1954, Senator McCarthy accused the U.S. Army of being infiltrated by communist sympathizers.
   b. A huge national audience watched the Army-McCarthy hearings. McCarthy’s boorish conduct and lack of evidence turned public opinion against him. A few months later, the Senate formally condemned him for “conduct unbecoming a member.”
   c. McCarthy died three years later of chronic alcoholism.

V. Eisenhower’s Domestic Policies
   A. Modern Republicanism
      i. Modern Republicanism combined the basic features of the New Deal with a conservative economic policy, particularly controlling government spending.
      ii. Eisenhower sought to balance the federal budget and lower taxes but did not attempt to curtail existing social and economic legislation.
      iii. Social Security was extended in 1954 and 1956 to an additional 10 million people, including professionals, domestic and clerical workers, farm workers, and members of the armed services.

B. Interstate Highway System
   i. Passed during the Eisenhower administration, the Federal Highway Act of 1956 created the interstate highway system.
   ii. The 1950s witnessed the beginning of a mass migration of middle-income Americans from cities to their surrounding suburbs.
   iii. The creation of interstate highways vastly accelerated the growth of suburbia.

C. Prosperity
   i. The decade after World War II was characterized by unprecedented prosperity and a rapid suburbanization.
   ii. The Gross National Product (GNP) doubled between 1945 and 1960, growing at an annual rate of 3.2% while inflation grew at just 2%.
   iii. Defense spending was the most important stimulant, and military-related research helped create or expand the nation’s new industries of chemicals, electronics, and aviation.
   iv. The U.S. had a virtual monopoly over international trade, because of the devastation of WWII.
   v. Home ownership grew by 50% between 1945 and 1960. These new homes required consumer appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines, but the most popular product was the television, increasing from 7,000 sets in 1946 to 50 million by 1960.

VI. Popular Culture in the Fifties
   A. Consumer Culture and Conformity
      i. Television, advertising, and the middle-class movement to the suburbs contributed mightily to the growing homogeneity of American culture.
      ii. Large corporations of the 1950s promoted teamwork and conformity, including dress codes for workers.

B. Social Critics
   i. Novels
      a. Social commentators criticized the conformity of postwar culture.
      b. Critics lambasted most television programs, calling the new medium a “vast wasteland.”
ii. Beatniks
   a. Led by Jack Kerouac, Beat Generation writers, or Beatniks, rejected middle class culture and conformity.
   b. In his book *On the Road*, Kerouac expressed the alienation and disillusionment he felt toward mainstream American culture.

C. Cultural Rebels
   i. Rock and Roll
      a. Rock and roll first emerged during the 1950s.
      b. Rock and roll music was inspired and strongly influenced by Black musical traditions, especially rhythm and blues.
      c. Key musicians included Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Elvis Presley.
   ii. Abstract Expressionism
      a. Abstract expressionist art emerged in New York City in the late 1940s and early 1950s.
      b. Led by Jackson Pollock, abstract expressionist artists abandoned paintings that represented reality. Instead, they created works of art that expressed their state of mind.
   iii. Movie Stars
      a. Movies stars such as James Dean and Marlon Brando symbolized youthful rebellion.

VII. John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier
   A. Election of 1960
      i. John F. Kennedy was a Roman Catholic—the first to be nominated since 1928 and first ever to become president. Kennedy’s Catholicism was a major issue until he told a group of Protestant ministers that he accepted the separation of church and state and that he would not allow Catholic leaders to tell him how to act as president.
      ii. The 1960 election was the first to include televised debates. Audiences estimated at 60 million or more watched each of the four debates between Kennedy and his opponent Richard Nixon. The debates helped create a positive image for Kennedy and served as a turning point in the 1960 campaign.
      iii. John Kennedy was the youngest elected president in American history. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, presided over a glamorous and elegant White House that was soon nicknamed Camelot after the legendary court of King Arthur.
   B. New Frontier
      i. JFK challenged Americans to boldly enter the “New Frontier” of the 1960s.
      ii. Liberalism, based on anticommunism abroad and a firm belief in the efficacy of government power to achieve social goals at home, reached a high point of political influence by the 1960s.
      iii. Kennedy proposed plans for federal aid to education, urban renewal, medical care for the elderly, reductions in income taxes, and the creation of a Department of Urban Affairs. None of these proposals passed.
      iv. Kennedy was unable to get much of his program through Congress because of an alliance of Republicans and Southern Democrats.
VIII.  Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society

A.  The War on Poverty  
   i. Despite an overall affluence in postwar America, advocates raised concerns about the prevalence and persistence of poverty as a national problem.
   ii. Liberal ideas found expression in Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society, which attempted to use federal legislation and programs to end racial discrimination, eliminate poverty, and address other social issues.

B.  Great Society Reforms  
   i. Food Stamp Act  
   ii. National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities  
   iii. Medicare  
      a. The Medicare Act of 1965 combined hospital insurance for retired people with a voluntary plan to cover physician’s bills.
   iv. Medicaid  
      a. Medicaid provided grants to states to help the poor below retirement age have access to medical care.
   v. Head Start  
      a. Head Start prepared educationally disadvantaged children for elementary school.
   vi. Housing and Urban Development Act  
      a. The Housing and Urban Development Act provided 240,000 housing units and $2.9 billion for urban renewal.
      b. The Department of Housing and Urban Development was established in 1966, and rent supplements for low-income families became available.

C.  Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965  
   i. Outraged by racial violence, President Kennedy called upon Congress to pass a comprehensive civil rights bill that would end legal segregation on the basis of race. On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act.
   ii. The landmark legislation prohibited discrimination because of race, religion, national origin, or gender. The act banned racial discrimination in private facilities such as restaurants and theaters that accommodate the public.
   iii. In 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. announced a voter registration drive. With help from the federal courts, he dramatized his effort by leading a march from Selma, Alabama, to the capital of Montgomery. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 authorized the attorney general to appoint officials to register voters.

D.  Evaluating the Great Society  
   i. In the 1960s, conservatives challenged liberal laws and court decisions and perceived moral and cultural decline, seeking to limit the role of the federal government and enact more assertive foreign policies.
      a. Some groups on the left also rejected liberal policies, arguing that political leaders did too little to transform the racial and economic status quo at home and pursued immoral policies abroad.