I. American Dream

A. Early American Dreams

1. Early immigrants: opportunity, land and escape from feudal constraints

2. Industrialization of U.S.: economic success - "rags to riches"

3. 1920s, incipient forms of the dream: advertising, consumerism, Victorian family, technologies of production, radio, ideology (modern

vs old fashioned)

B. "American dream" 1950s

1. nuclear family

a. marriage

i. survey 1950s: 90% can’t be happy outside of marriage

ii. over 95% married, highest per cent ever

iii. social norm: early marriage (19w, 21m)

iv. romantic love

b. man’s role: breadwinner, husband, father

i. breadwinner, needs to make enough for the house in

the suburbs and “keeping up with the Joneses”

ii. “King of the castle”: authority

c. women’s role – mother, wife, domestic sphere

i. child bearing , raising: nurturing the development of the children

ii. housekeeping.-time for house work increased despite

domestic conveniences, a medium of expression for their

feminism and individuality

iii. emotional support for husband

iv. sex

v. head consumer

"the new culture of consumerism told women they should be homemakers and saw them merely as potential buyers for all the new washers and dryers, freezers, floor waxes, pressure cookers, and blenders."

vi. Mrs. America competition: making bed, vacuuming,

cooking, and swimsuit

2. Suburbs

a. Ranch house with white picket fences

b. two cars

i. husband to commute

ii. wife for errands and to chauffeur the kids

c. television

i. life around TV set

ii. evenings watching Leave It to Beaver

<https://www.facebook.com/bigmaxsfilms/videos/leave-it-to-beaver-the-black-eye/1061884897292397/>

d. suburban environment gradually emerges

i. fast foods

ii. malls

3. Consumerism as a way of life

a. be able to acquire all the goods and services being produced

b. social role in relation to economy: consumer

a. social norm: conspicuous consumption

b. TV as the "dream machine"

B. Ideology or Conventional wisdom of the 50s

1. American society is not a “class” society

a. everyone could live the dream, equality of

opportunity for all

b. basically a middle class society with no class

divisions

c. meritocracy, rewards hard work and talent

2. Business is Business of America: what is good for GM is good for

America

a. social contract between worker and corporation

b. benefits to all

3. political system is best in world

a. Americans are free

b. two party system makes our democracy stable, eliminates

radical elements

c. Eisenhower: only viable ideas are ideas of the center

4. technological development = quality of life, moving towards the Jetsons

a. capitalism+science will create new and better stuff washing machines, to cars, to television, to clothes, new technologies

b. and technology will develop more and better ways to produce them

c. technology will raise the quality of lives by solving problems

i. cost of living: atomic energy no limits “too cheap to meter”

ii. eliminate hunger: pesticides and insecticides “increase crop production and decrease disease’

iii. eliminate disease: antibiotics

iv. increase convenience and leisure time: robotic butlers, jet backpacks, flying cars, atomic cars

<https://www.google.com/search?q=the+jetsons&rlz=1C1RUCY_enUS692US693&sxsrf=APwXEddCElN4chjOdRMIXo-GLCwh5AhFaQ:1682920939479&source=lnms&tbm=vid&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiKkqGGudP-AhVfEFkFHWANDIEQ0pQJegQIBhAE&biw=1920&bih=937&dpr=1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:e6052980,vid:0JQbeCAlF6s>

5. But: Commies everywhere: they are trying to conquer the world and impose their inhuman, conformist, unfree ways upon everyone. They just hate America for who we are: our freedoms

a. they threaten us with nuclear war

b. and threaten to conquer us internally, using subversion - neighbors, teachers, ministers, media, government employees

c. Invasion of the Body Snatchers (film)

Films to watch and discuss:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

Salt of the Earth (1954)

Short Stories

“The Veldt ,” “There Will Come Soft Rain,” and “The Pedestrian”, by Ray Bradbury