I. WWII and social change

A. global

1. collapse of colonialism and its empires

2. rise of US empire

3. Cold War and technologies of destruction

4. movements of national liberation

5. International Institutions - UN

6. International Agreements on Rights

B. Domestic

1. end of depression

2. economic boom based on good fortune vs bad fortune

of Europe

3. propaganda and expectations

4. power elite

5. military industrial complex

II. We are going to examine American culture and society by looking at the birth of the "American Dream" and one aspect of conventional wisdom, "American ideology."

A. Ben Franklin's American Dream *Autobiography*

1. economic success - "rags to riches"

2. the philosophy of individualism, i.e., "rugged individualism"

3. personal fulfillment

B. Prior to the late 1940s the American Dream had not taken complete shape, although certain strands of it, incipient forms of advertising, consumerism, Victorian family, but it hadn't taken the form of a "dream" for all, nor had it congealed into a dominant ideology

I. American Society -1950s

A. The "American dream" that took shape in the 50s

1. nuclear family

a. definition

b. companionate marriage, free mate selection

c. 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)

d. wife's world - domestic sphere

e. social role

i. child raising: nurturing the development

of the child

ii. housekeeping.-time for house work increased despite

domestic conveniences, a medium of expression for their

feminism and individuality

iii. emotional support

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: making bed, vacuuming,

cooking, and swimsuit

c. children

i. lots of children

ii. subordinate your life to children and husband

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

d. suburban environment

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"

4. good job for the man

a. afford the above

b. meaningful work

c. retirement and insurance

d. gender role

i. man is breadwinner

ii. family is patriarchy - king of his castle

B. 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

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

4. technological development = quality of life, moving

towards the Jetsons

a. technology will solve problems

i. atomic energy no limits

“too cheap to meter”

ii. pesticides and insecticides

“increase crop production and decrease disease

iii. antibiotics

b. increase convenience and leisure time

i. robotic butlers, jet backpacks, flying cars, atomic cars

5. Commies everywhere: they just hate America for who we are: our

freedoms

a. threat of nuclear war

b. subversion - neighbors, teachers, ministers,

media, government employees