

DIRECTIONS. Write a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced; 12 pt. font) in which you respond to one of the following three prompts. You may refer to your class lecture summaries and class textbooks when writing your paper, but make sure to cite any quotations and/or paraphrases from the course texts in parenthesis at the end of the line in which one occurs (for example The Struggle for Freedom and Justice Lecture Summary p. 2 or For the Record p. 227).

*You do not need to use any outside sources to write the paper but if you do choose to include outside sources, please cite them in your paper and attach a bibliography.*

Write a paper in which you respond to ONE of the following:

1. Offer a history of American life in the early postwar era, from roughly 1945 through the 1950s. Briefly examine the origins of the Cold War, fears over internal security, affluence and consumer culture and assess the effects of these events on American life. Why did some critics (give examples) of American culture suggest that the United States was becoming too conformist and that Americans were falling prey to bureaucratic structures that were robbing citizens of their spontaneity and individuality? Do you see these criticisms as valid? What is your assessment of American life during the early postwar era?
2. Offer a history of the African American Civil Rights Movement from 1954 through 1972. As you develop your essay, address such issues as school desegregation, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Civil Rights Bills of 1957, 1960, and 1964, disenchantment with reform within the African American community, and the busing controversy. Pay particular attention to the contributions of both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X to the Civil Rights Movement(s). How does Dr. King differentiate between a “just law” and an “unjust law” in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and how does Malcolm X support his arguments in “The Black Revolution Speeches”? Also, compare the writing/speaking styles of the two men. How do each man’s personal and educational backgrounds and linguistic styles differ?
3. Why are the 1960s sometimes known as a “decade of protest”? What role did the war in Vietnam play in fomenting social unrest? Why did many protestors of the “counterculture” react against patterns of American life in the 1950s? How did protest over the war and support of the Civil Rights Movement strengthen a number of other protest movements in American life? Give specific examples of other protest movements and the goals their supporters sought to achieve.