



## Response to Readings

Saturday, December 4, 2004

### **1968: The Unmaking of Liberal America and the Making of Conservative America**

Core theme: Of Campaigns and Conventions

American elections are sometimes hinges between one period in the nation's political history and the next. The presidential election of 1968 was one of those hinge points. The election of 1968 was the culmination of a tumultuous year that saw demonstrations, assassinations, and political twists and turns that were even sharper than is usual for politics. And when it was over, though it wasn't necessarily clear at the time, a new period in American politics had come into being.

From a teaching standpoint, hinge elections such as 1968 are useful because they provide a point for summarizing what came before and what comes after while also featuring events that are dramatic and illustrative. 1968 provides a model for looking at political history not as a chronology of elections, as some historians and textbooks tend to present it, but in terms of focusing on hinge points. Other key elections (such as 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, 1920, 1932) can be studied in a similar way.

#### **Secondary Source Reading Assignments:**

"1968," from *The Unfinished Journey* by William Chafe. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003

*1968: The World Transformed*, edited by Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker. Washington, DC: German Historical Institute ; Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

"1968 and the Unraveling of Liberal America" by Alan Brinkley

"Tet and the Crisis of Hegemony" by George Herring

"1968: A Turning Point in American Race Relations?" by Manfred Berg.

"George Wallace and the Politics of Rage" by Dan Carter, from *George Wallace, Richard Nixon, and the Transformation of American Politics*. Baylor University Press, 1992.

"The Conservative Capture: From Nixon to Reagan," Chapter 10 from *The Populist Persuasion* by Michael Kazin. New York: BasicBooks, 1995.

## **Writing Assignment**

After reading the essays below, please answer the following question in 1-2 pages. Answers must be typed, double-spaced, and no more than two pages.

The essays look at 1968 from various angles and address different aspects of what made the year so pivotal in American politics. As you read them, you will note some common material but focus on the differences, especially in interpretation. After reading the pieces, consider the following:

What do you think were the one or two most important factors that made 1968 the hinge between the liberal decades before and the conservative decades since.

### **Primary Sources:**

Skim the following:

“Grooving in Chi,” by Terry Southern, from *Esquire*, 1968

Editorials and political cartoons from Ohio Newspapers in 1968

American Independent Party (George Wallace) Platform.