

Spring Semester 2020:

Distance Learning Assignments: US

Each week, there will be a reading assignment from your textbook. For each assignment, you will need to read the assigned pages AND:

- 1. Write a 5+ sentence summary in your own words of the material covered in the reading.**
- 2. Include 2 vocabulary definitions from the reading. The definitions should be in your own words.**
- 3. You will need to email me at dalmasc@luhsd.net your summary and vocabulary. (both should be in the same email.) BE SURE TO INCLUDE IN YOUR EMAIL YOUR FULL NAME (First and last) AND Period AND THE TITLE OF THE READING ASSIGNMENT. (for example, US Reading Assignment Week One)**

**You can email throughout each week day (Monday through Friday) 8:15 a.m. - 3:00p.m. if you have any questions.
Email: dalmasc@luhsd.net**

1. The Triumph of the Conservative Coalition

Two years after the assassination attempt, Ronald Reagan addressed a gathering of conservative Christian organizations. They were part of a broad coalition of diverse groups of Americans with traditional social values. In his speech, Reagan referenced many of the points that had helped him win conservatives' support, including religion's important role in the founding of the nation. "Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged," he said.

Evangelical Christians Gain a Political Voice Reagan's audience comprised evangelical Christians, or evangelicals. Evangelicals are Christians who emphasize the authority of the Bible, believe strongly in spreading their faith, and seek a direct, personal experience with God. Many describe their conversion to evangelical faith as being "born again." By the late 1970s, evangelicals had become a significant force in both religion and politics.

Many evangelicals, particularly conservative fundamentalists, were upset by the perceived decline of moral and religious values in American society. They were distressed by rising divorce rates, drug use, gay rights, and feminism, as well as Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion and banned prayer in public schools. They feared that the nation was spurning religion, thereby becoming a "godless culture."

In 1979, evangelical leaders united to form the Moral Majority, a political lobbying group led by Reverend Jerry Falwell. Falwell wanted to train Christian activists to make their voices "heard in the halls of Congress," and also called on Christians to elect public officials who were "pro-life, pro-family, pro-moral, and pro-America." The Moral Majority was succeeded by an even larger group, called the Christian Coalition, led by Reverend Pat Robertson.

These groups formed part of a political movement known as the New Right, which comprised various special-interest groups and activists who supported conservative causes. New Right groups lobbied Congress, raised money for political campaigns, and supported the growth of conservative "think tanks" like the Heritage Foundation, where scholars wrote policy papers and opinion pieces for publication. The New Right influenced public debate on many issues and helped catalyze the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s.

Reagan Wins the 1980 Election As the 1980 election drew near, conditions at home and abroad prompted many Americans to seek a change in leadership. The nation faced high inflation and unemployment, in addition to soaring energy prices. Meanwhile, the Iran hostage crisis continued overseas, and the United States seemed to be losing ground to the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

For many voters, Ronald Reagan offered an appealing alternative to President Jimmy Carter. Before he launched his political career, Reagan was a film actor and the host of a popular TV show. He served two terms as governor of California before running for president. On the campaign trail, he demonstrated a talent for public speaking, a skill that earned him the nickname "the Great Communicator." He was adept at conveying messages and wielding humor to attack political opponents. One of Reagan's most memorable jabs targeted Carter's handling of the economy. "A recession is when your neighbor loses his job," Reagan said. "A depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his."

During a televised debate with President Carter in October 1980, Reagan delivered the most famous line of his campaign, asking viewers, "Are you better off than you were four years ago?" For millions of Americans, the answer was no. Reagan promised to pull the nation out of its slump and restore its international standing. His optimism appealed to many Americans, restoring their confidence in the nation's future.



A former actor and Republican governor of California, Ronald Reagan made an appealing presidential candidate. His friendly manner and positive, "can-do" attitude won the support of voters across the country, including some moderate Democrats. Reagan's natural public speaking ability earned him the nickname "the Great Communicator."

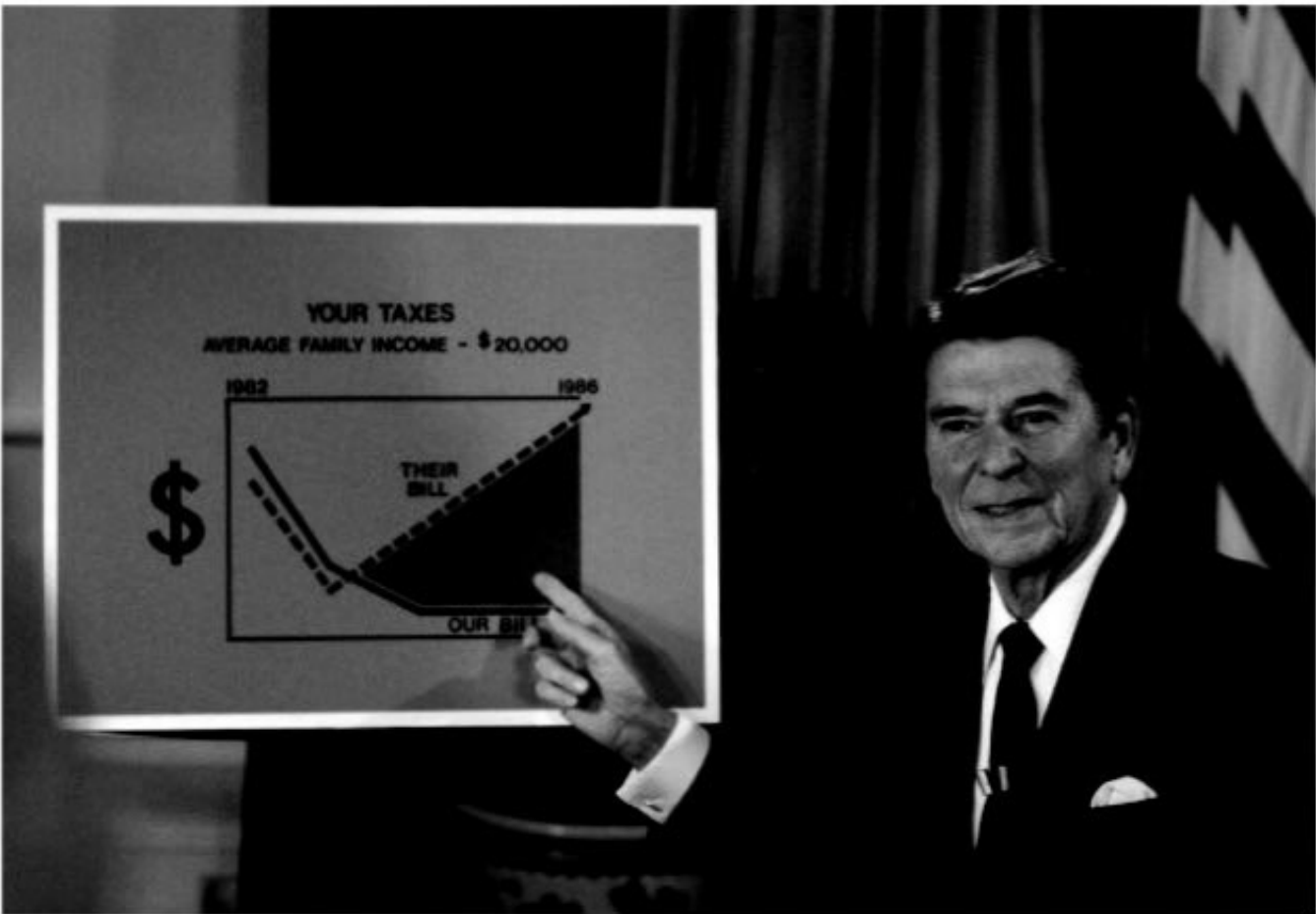
On election day, Reagan defeated Carter by more than 8 million votes. He owed part of his success to the Republican Party's effective use of databases to identify potential supporters and encourage them to vote. Reagan won the support of the religious right, most Republicans, many business leaders, and many moderate Democrats. Republicans secured control of the Senate for the first time since 1955, and while Democrats managed to retain their House of Representatives majority, Republicans made significant gains in the House as well.

Reagan in the White House In his inaugural speech, Reagan introduced many of the ideals that he would work toward as president. Recognizing that many Americans had become disillusioned with government in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, he called on his audience to have faith in themselves and in their ability to solve the country's problems. "After all," he said, "why shouldn't we believe that? We are Americans." Mere minutes after Reagan was sworn in, Iran released the American hostages as a result of previous negotiations. Across the country, Americans celebrated the hostages' release, giving Reagan's first term an auspicious start.

As president, Reagan used televised and public speeches to amass support for his programs, sometimes referencing scenes from old movies to explain his ideas in a more understandable way. Charming and friendly, he was often liked even by those who disagreed with his policies. Reagan's advisers soon learned, however, that the president rarely involved himself with policy details or the daily tasks of governing. Instead, he provided a general overview of what he wanted done and relied on his advisers and staff to carry out his wishes.



Reagan carried nearly every state in the 1980 election, winning the Electoral College vote by a landslide. He also secured the popular vote by a wide margin. This overwhelming victory bolstered the new president with a strong mandate to enact his policies.



Reagan was a talented orator, and he effectively used public and televised speeches to garner support for his policies. Reagan's charm endeared him to many Americans, even those who did not support his politics. Here, Reagan explains his tax reduction policies in a televised speech that was broadcasted from the Oval Office in 1981.

2. Reagan's Economic Policies

Ronald Reagan came into office promising to change government, since he had won the support of voters who resented the federal government for overtaxing and wasting tax funds. Pledging to get the government "off their backs," Reagan aimed to reduce the federal government's power. "Government is not the solution to our problem," he said. "Government is the problem."

The Evolution of the New Federalism As part of his assault on "big government," Reagan expanded Richard Nixon's New Federalism policy. Like Nixon, Reagan wanted to shift power from the federal government to the states. However, while Nixon had used revenue sharing to distribute federal tax dollars to the states, Reagan delegated responsibility for many health, education, and welfare programs to the states.

Reagan helped states fund these social programs by issuing block grants from the federal treasury, or lump-sum payments that states could use freely. This system gave the states more flexibility, allowing them to design programs and allocate resources to suit their needs. Because these block grants often provided less funding than the federal programs they replaced, some liberal critics charged that the block grant system was being used to reduce federal spending on social programs.

Supply-Side Economics Leads to Tax Cuts When Reagan became president, the economy was burdened by inflation. According to the law of supply and demand, inflation occurs when demand exceeds supply. It often occurs in times of low unemployment, when more workers are purchasing goods and services, thereby raising prices. As president, Reagan faced both inflation and high unemployment, partly the result of soaring oil prices. To address these issues, he promised to stimulate the economy by cutting taxes and promoting private enterprise, an economic plan that was soon named Reaganomics.

Much of Reagan's plan was based on a theory called supply-side economics, which states that economic growth depends on increasing the supply of goods and services. The way to increase supply is to cut taxes. Lower tax rates will leave more money in the hands of individuals and businesses, providing an incentive for them to save and invest. Individuals will work harder, save more, and spend more. In turn, companies can hire more workers and increase the supply of goods and services. As businesses create more jobs, new workers will pay taxes, which will replace at least some of the revenue lost through lower tax rates.

Critics called this theory "voodoo economics," claiming it was unrealistic to believe that lowering tax rates would increase revenue. But Reagan and his advisers believed it was the optimal path to stimulate economic growth. In August 1981, Reagan signed a bill to cut federal taxes by 25 percent over a three-year period. The economy continued to lag for another two years, producing even greater rates of unemployment. Yet inflation gradually began to improve, and by the end of 1983, the economy was making a strong comeback. The following year, the gross national product grew by 7.1 percent, and the stock market rose as well.



Tax cut supporters claimed that lower taxes would promote economic growth and create more jobs. In contrast, critics argued that lowering taxes helped only rich Americans, while poor and middle-class Americans had to wait for the benefits to "trickle down" from above. Some critics referred to the theory of supply-side economics, which supports lowering taxes to increase economic revenue, as "voodoo economics."

The economic recovery created 18.4 million new jobs.

Economists still debate the impact of tax cuts on the resurgence, but many agree that increased defense spending was an important factor. Military spending pumped billions of dollars into the economy.

The economic recovery did not benefit all Americans equally. Although personal incomes grew in every economic stratum during the 1980s, the income gap between rich and poor widened considerably. Because incomes of the wealthy increased significantly more than those of lower economic classes, liberals argued that Reaganomics helped the rich and hurt the poor. One economist noted that tax cuts redistributed "income, wealth and power—from government to private enterprise, . . . from poor to rich." A Reagan official claimed that the tax cuts were intended to produce wealth at the upper classes, which would eventually "trickle down" to all Americans.

The economic boom boosted Reagan's popularity during the 1984 election. He centered his campaign around the theme "It's Morning Again in America," suggesting a new era of pride and prosperity. A Reagan adviser remarked on the uphill battle faced by the Democratic challenger, Walter Mondale, saying, "It's like running against America." Reagan won by a landslide.

Reagan Calls for Deregulation Another key element of Reagan's economic plan was deregulation, or the reduction or removal of government controls on business in order to promote economic efficiency and stimulate free enterprise. Reagan believed deregulation was a viable way to limit the power of government. Like many conservatives, he believed that deregulation would foster businesses' efficiency and competitiveness, which would generate profits transferrable to consumers. Under President Carter in the 1970s, Congress eased restrictions on the airline, railroad, and trucking industries that determined what they could transport, where, and at what price. Reagan believed further deregulation would increase business activity in other industries, thereby boosting the economy.

Some deregulation efforts focused on eliminating laws designed to curb pollution and ensure safety in the workplace because many companies believed such regulations were a costly obstacle. A Reagan deregulation task force delayed and obstructed regulation of companies handling hazardous waste, as well as rules against exposing workers to toxic chemicals. Per Reagan's guidelines, the Environmental Protection Agency began to lower federal standards on air and water quality.

Reagan chose officials who supported deregulation to lead government agencies. For example, Secretary of the Interior James Watt removed many environmental regulations, arguing that these laws prevented industry from creating jobs and expanding the economy. He portioned more national forest land for logging operations and gave oil and gas companies offshore drilling rights. He also approved cheap public land sales to oil and mining companies.

Many public-interest groups challenged these efforts to revise environmental laws and workplace safety rules, arguing that the proposed changes endangered workers and the general public. In some cases, court decisions and Congressional action delayed efforts by Reagan officials to eliminate environmental regulations.

Deficits and Debt Grow Under Reagan Despite Reagan's efforts to minimize government spending, federal budget deficits soared during his two terms in office. A budget deficit occurs when government spending exceeds government revenues in a given year. U.S. budget deficits remained below \$75 billion before Reagan, but from 1982 to the end of his second term, annual deficits exceeded \$100 billion. In 1986, the annual deficit reached a record \$221 billion.



President Reagan campaigned for reelection in 1984, easily defeating Democratic challenger Walter Mondale. The president's election campaign emphasized renewed American optimism and pride. Reagan's popularity was boosted by the flourishing U.S. economy. At the 1984 Republican Convention, above, Reagan and running mate George H. W. Bush wave to cheering crowds.

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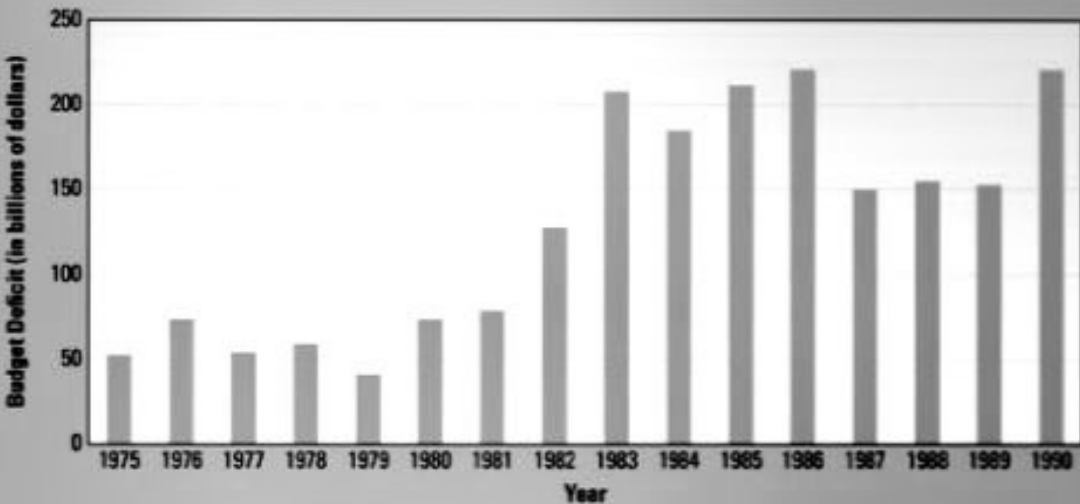
These expanding deficits were due in part to Reagan’s tax cuts, which considerably decreased government revenue. Another contributing factor was increased military spending—the Department of Defense’s annual budget increased nearly 85 percent in Reagan’s first term. Budget deficits also grew with the rising costs of Social Security and Medicare.

Federal budget deficits caused the national debt, or the sum of all loans taken out by the government to finance its annual deficits, to skyrocket. During the Reagan years, the national debt nearly tripled, rising from \$908 billion in 1980 to \$2.6 trillion in 1988. This sum was far greater than the debt accumulated by all former U.S. presidents combined. The government was forced to borrow hundreds of billions of dollars each year just to pay the debt’s interest.

Conservatives and liberals held conflicting views on the deficits and national debt. Although both favored a balanced budget, each said a national debt could be justified for the right reasons. Conservatives believed that low taxes and strong defense were good debt justifications, while Liberals argued that debt was acceptable if it resulted from investing in transportation, education, health care, and other social and economic programs. Analysts called this the “guns or butter” debate, in which conservatives favored “guns,” and liberals favored “butter.”

Under Reagan, federal budget deficits skyrocketed. These annual deficits, in turn, caused the national debt to swell. In less than a decade, the United States went from being the world’s largest creditor, or lending, nation to one of the world’s biggest debtor nations. Democrats had often been called “tax-and-spend liberals.” Now liberals called Republicans “borrow-and-spend conservatives.”

U.S. Federal Budget Deficit, 1975–1990



U.S. National Debt, 1975–1990

