Slide 1

Text: The Perils of Prosperity: Contemporary United States 91968-present)

[Graphic of US Debt Clock]

Audio: Given widespread concerns about the US economy today, in 2011, I thought that I would open this lecture with a display of the US debt clock, which is a real time calculator of all sorts of economic indicators, and other key statistics, including demonstrating how rapidly that our national debt is growing, or how rapidly that various interest rates contribute to the principle on the US national debt. And this is one of the dramatic features of US life over the last 60, 70 years that is perhaps only recently getting the attention that it should. At the end of World War II in 1945, the United States was the world's largest creditor nation, meaning that our government and our citizens held more of the debt of other countries than any other single nation. Gradually since then, we've become the world's largest debtor nation, by far, and economists debate the extent to which this is really a problem. But the situation is now worse than it's ever been. And so I would like to point out that the prosperity of the post-World War II years, some of those years being covered in this lecture, to some extent rest on an artificial foundation, because the US government, whether Democrats or Republicans have had the White House, whether Democrats or Republicans have had the Congress, the US government has been living consistently beyond its means. So this debt is to some extent a product of financing foreign wars, to some extent it's a product of making certain promises to citizens at home in terms of various government benefits and entitlements. But the situation has now reached a barely manageable condition, and it is something that more and more American citizens are waking up to today.

Slide 2

Text: Chaos of 1968

- Tet Offensive in Vietnam raised skepticism in American and disrupted presidential campaign
- President Lyndon Johnson dropped out of race
- Martin Luther King, Jr. assassinated
- Senator Robert Kennedy assassinated while running for president
- Democratic Convention leads to widespread violence in streets of Chicago while Cold War consensus disintegrates

Audio: I would like to add two statistics to the previous slide on the U.S. debt clock. Currently the federal government has to borrow 47 cents for every dollar that it spends and 10 percent of the annual federal budget goes into just paying off the interest on the national debt let alone getting into any of the principle. Be that as it may this lecture begins in the particularly tumultuous year of 1968, a year when this country was literally coming apart at the seams. I have
covered the key events of 1968 in two other lectures, one basic lecture and one augmented lecture but I'm going to run through the highlights once again. 1968 happened to be a presidential election year; it was also a year when there would be events that really changed the nature of the Vietnam War for this country. There will be some high profile assassinations of prominent social activists and politicians in this country. And this entire maelstrom will come together to create a bizarre but also fascinating chain of events that the American people had to deal with so let me step back to the beginning of 1968. As I said there is the presidential campaign season getting underway and normally an incumbent president, especially if there's a war going on, is pretty safe to be re-nominated by his party and at least fairly safe in terms of being reelected by the country in general. As a matter of fact, even to this day the United States has never removed a President in the midst of any sort of a major war. So America's incumbent at the beginning of 1968 is Democrat Lyndon Johnson and initially it did look as though it was going to be smooth sailing for him to be re-nominated by his party but in early 1968 the nature of the Vietnam War changed dramatically. Up to this point most of the military operations that had been waged against U.S. forces and those of our South Vietnamese allies had been through guerilla tactics. These tactics being used by the Viet Cong also known as the National Liberation Front operating in South Vietnam and then also North Vietnamese army units were infiltrating down into South Vietnam, but were also for the most part avoiding conventional engagements with U.S. and South Vietnamese forces but instead using stealthy, smaller unit hit and run tactics. And so this had been a big part of the frustration of the Vietnam War was that you often did not see your enemy. Many of the casualties that you were taking were from snipers and mines and booby traps. You often did not ever see who was inflicting casualties upon you and so U.S. and South Vietnamese forces could pretty well control the major urban areas of South Vietnam, especially during the daytime but there were other parts of the countryside and even in urban areas at night where things got much dicier. In early 1968 that pattern temporarily changed because America's enemies came out in the open. North Vietnamese units and Viet Cong guerilla fighters suddenly came out in the open and captured essentially all of the major urban areas of South Vietnam. As a matter of fact even the ultimate symbol of U.S. power in this part of the world, the U.S. embassy in Saigon, the capitol of South Vietnam was temporarily captured by Viet Cong guerillas who were basically on a suicide mission. I mean they knew that they were never going to get out of there alive and so this is the Tet Offensive. It began during the Chinese New Year of Tet, which was traditionally a time of a cease-fire by all parties in Vietnam. America's enemies recognized they could use that to the gain an element of surprise, and so suddenly this war was not so much about a shadowy enemy any longer but an enemy who had come out in the open and taken major population centers from U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, and of course with Vietnam being the first television war there was dramatic footage being shown every night on what was then just the three major news networks and so the American people who had been told repeatedly by their political leaders that our enemies didn't have much fight left in them, that we can see to light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, that this war was just about over, it was hard to believe that when you looked at the magnitude of this Tet Offensive. And what it was going to
take to ultimately defeat it. And I would like to point out, because this part of the story often gets overlooked. The United States with limited help from South Vietnamese forces did defeat to Tet Offensive. I mean it took some time but gradually those urban areas were reoccupied. In some many cases you had to level portions of cities block by block to do it but the Tet Offensive did end up being a military defeat for America's enemies. As a matter of fact the Viet Cong was never the same again after the massive casualties that it suffered but even if it was a military victory for the United States it was a political disaster for supporters of the Vietnam War and of course that included President Lyndon Johnson himself because as I've indicated here on this slide the American people became far more skeptical about the reports they had been getting as to the real conditions on the ground in Vietnam. And so for Lyndon Johnson the timing of the Tet Offensive was disastrous for his presidential campaign. When the first democratic primary was held in New Hampshire, although Lyndon Johnson won that contest, an antiwar senator who had gotten into the race named Eugene McCarthy finished only about 6 percentage points behind Lyndon Johnson and McCarthy was for the most part, and he was a single issue candidate. He was basically in the campaign to make his case for getting out of Vietnam. And he so he had originally been seen as just sort of a protest candidate, somebody who would probably fade away rather quickly, instead he finishes a very strong second to Lyndon Johnson in the New Hampshire primary. And the President begins to see the handwriting on the wall. And so in the spring of 1968 while his reelection campaign was in progress Lyndon Johnson made a surprise announcement to the American people that he was dropping out of the presidential campaign in order to concentrate on the Vietnam War. And so we never get to see now if the American people would have ultimately removed this President in the middle of a war. He decides to take himself out instead. And this of course throws the democratic side of the presidential campaign into total chaos. With Lyndon Johnson out of the race one Democrat who jumps in is Senator Robert Kennedy of New York, the younger brother of slain President Jack Kennedy in fact, Robert Kennedy had served as his Attorney General back in the early 1960's. Robert Kennedy some contemporaries have referred to him as actually brighter and ultimately more capable than his older brother. He got into the race. He'd wanted to get in sooner. He had never gotten along with Lyndon Johnson. He'd wanted to challenge LBJ right from the start but democratic leaders had pressured Kennedy that it wouldn't look good to have a serious democratic candidate taking on a sitting President. It's very embarrassing for a political party when it can't give its own President a smooth sailing on the way to the nomination. So Kennedy had hung back for a while very frustrated at having to do so but now with have the President out of the race Robert Kennedy jumped in and it was after he had gotten into the race that the American people were rocked by another unexpected event. In April of 1968 while Martin Luther King Jr. was in Memphis, Tennessee he was shot dead on the balcony of a Memphis hotel. Whether or not this assassination was part of a larger conspiracy is perhaps a story for another time. The man who shot King, James Earl Ray maintained near the end of his life that there was a larger conspiracy behind it and the King family had shown some interest in trying to get to the bottom of this but no substantial investigation was conducted or at least if it was it wasn't made public. So the jury
is still out on exactly who may have been behind this but one way or another America's single, most prominent civil rights leader had been taken from the country. And we sometimes forget that by 1968 Martin Luther King was a much more frustrated individual than we tend to remember him as today when we have a holiday on his behalf. He had come to realize that racism ran far deeper in U.S. society than he had originally thought. Some of his initial optimism with which he had entered the civil rights movement had been dimmed but he still had that essential integrationist message that I talked about at an earlier lecture. He was still dreaming of a color blind America and although he had become a prominent critic of the Vietnam War, and again you know, there was more of an edge to his criticisms of this country he still, in many ways, died as a hopeful, inspiring figure. And of course it was a terrible development for those Americans who were still hoping for peaceful change. And Robert Kennedy ended up taking political advantage of King's death and the way I just said that makes it sound very negative and that's not really my intention so let me explain what I mean. When Robert Kennedy got the news of King's assassination he was preparing to give a speech in an inner-city area in Indiana, in a predominately black neighborhood and please keep in mind by the late 1960's there was quite a bit of racially motivated violence in America's major cities that had mixed race populations. And certainly many white politicians under any circumstance is in the late 60's would not have felt comfortable going and speaking to a predominately black audience in their neighborhoods. But especially of course, to do it right after Martin Luther King Jr. has been killed was truly a risky endeavor. But Robert Kennedy decided to go ahead and do it and as a matter of fact he had to break the news to the crowd that he was speaking to. They had not gotten the word yet about King's death and Robert Kennedy, in what was a pretty brave and risky effort for a white politician, he told this crowd about King's death but also told them that if they really believed in King's vision and King's goals that they should get behind his candidacy for President. And again, many white politicians would not have been able to pull that off. They would not have been taken seriously and they might very well have generated all kinds of anger but Kennedy made it work. His presidential campaign really began to pick up steam. He was very much running as the candidate for those who were on the margins of U.S. power, whether it was the sort of Latino migrant workers who were rallying behind see Cesar Chavez or whether it was frustrated African-Americans who were still clinging to Martin Luther King’s dream, Robert Kennedy really clicked with the down trodden in America. He also was a critic of the Vietnam War, which in a way was ironic because back when he'd been his brother's Attorney General, Robert Kennedy had been very much what we call the hawk. He had been a big supporter of policies that were deepening America's commitment to the Vietnam conflict. He had very different perspective. Now he'd come around almost full circle here in the late 1960's but as his campaign was picking up steam he would end up suffering the same fate as his brother. Shortly after winning the California primary which was a huge triumph to position Kennedy to ultimately get the nomination of his party, he had just been giving a victory speech in a Los Angeles hotel, and while he was being escorted out of the building he was shot dead, died very shortly after the attack, and so another Kennedy brother, same decade, same basic result, just a
stunning development. And so in a period of a few months, it was June of ’68 when Robert Kennedy was killed. In a period of just a few months two of the most prominent and eloquent voices for reform in America had been taken from the scene and this just raised the level of skepticism, the level of frustration in this country in a way that it's difficult to convey in words.

Back to the presidential campaign now once again, you've got a pretty significant vacuum in the Democrat side of the race. And so now many of the primaries are over as the Democrats are preparing to hold their presidential convention and so there isn't really a clear dominant figure at this point to become the nominee of the Democratic Party. Most of the party's leadership decides to make what it sees as a safe choice. They decide to go with America's sitting Vice President, a gentleman named Hubert Humphrey who actually had many doubts about the Vietnam War but because he's part of the Johnson presidential administration he's been a good trooper and he's been towing the party line and supporting the conflict and he is a very widely respected figure in the Democratic Party. He was the sort of man that for years many had been figuring someday he's going to be President it's just a matter of the particular timing. And so the democratic leadership is preparing to hold their convention in Chicago and their plan is to make Hubert Humphrey their nominee. Well meanwhile, there are plenty of frustrated Americans, many of them young, many of them part of the antiwar movement who feel like they're going to use the opportunity of this democratic convention to as forcefully as possible make their case against the war and for the Democratic Party to make a different choice in a nominee, somebody who's not going to carry on the conflict, not going to carry on the status quo. And so what happens in Chicago in the late summer of 1968 is in many ways a microcosm of the decade of the 1960 he's in general. What you have are thousands of activists. Again most commonly opposition to the Vietnam War being what's brought them together but they do have other issues that they're concerned about as well but you have thousands of activists who descend upon to city of Chicago. And ironically, this is actually a democratic city. The Daley family has an, to all effects, has a political machine that has been controlling Chicago politics for quite a while and will continue to for quite a while after 1968. As a matter of fact, today in 2011, only recently has there been anyone other than a member of the Daley family serving as mayor of Chicago. Recently, Rahm Emanuel, former White House Chief-of-Staff was elected into that position. But for a long time the Daley family, big supporters of the Democratic Party, had a firm control of municipal politics in Chicago, but Richard Daley, the mayor of Chicago back in 1968 was more of an old style Democrat, more of a Franklin Roosevelt, FDR, New Deal Democrat, someone who didn't have much sympathy for the sort of activism and radical protests tactics that many younger Democrats were involved in. So as these activists descend upon Chicago, it is actually the democratic leadership of the city who calls out the police force and eventually the National Guard as well and you have a series of street battles that are very dramatically captured on television because of course the media is providing plenty of coverage for this event. And so while the Democratic Party is trying to present itself as a big tent party and trying to put as happy as face on things as it can, while it nominates a candidate for President, out in the streets of Chicago it is complete chaos. And of course ultimately this is the worst sort of environment to
try to bring your party together to nominate a President. Ultimately, Hubert Humphrey does become the nominee of the party but for many younger Democrats or young people who might vote Democrat they tune out at this point. This is not the outcome that they were looking for. And so this is going to present a golden opportunity for the Republican Party which will eventually settle upon Richard Nixon as its candidate. But the last thing I want to say in conjunction with this slide, my final bullet point down here mentions the Cold War consensus disintegrating. And this is a really important point, so let me amplify this a little bit. Until 1968, for the most part, whether you were a Republican or a Democrat in this country the vast majority of Republicans and Democrats in Washington, D.C. had basically agreed on the nature of America's primary foreign policy threats and the tactics necessary to defeat them. And that's what I mean by the Cold War consensus. U.S. politicians regardless of which side of the aisle they occupied had generally agreed that monolithic communism operating as an international conspiracy was the primary threat to America's national security. And that using the containment policy that I described in a previous lecture was the most appropriate way to meet that threat. By 1968, thanks to all of the ambiguity raised by the Vietnam War, many on the political left, in other words Liberals or what today we might call Progressives those who are predominately found in the Democratic Party but not exclusively, by 1968 many on the political left were getting off that bandwagon. For a variety of reasons they were feeling as though, for example, that the United States might really be fighting third world nationalism in Vietnam rather than communism. And if that was the case then the containment doctrine was not the best way to go about meeting that threat. I'm trying to keep a very complicated story simple but basically, this kind of common ground on foreign policy to a large extent evaporates in 1968. So for any of who have paid close attention to more recent presidential campaigns you know, I'm thinking of 2004, 2008, you may have noticed that back in the democratic primaries in both 2004 and 2008, you know, back when you had multiple Democrats in the presidential race you may have noticed that depending upon whom you listened to they had very different, strikingly different foreign policy views. I mean if you went from Dennis Kucinich in 2004 to a Howard Dean, to Joe Lieberman, to a John Kerry, I mean the variation was quite striking. And you may have noticed that when it came to discussing national security policy that many of these democratic candidate didn't seem as comfortable as they were when discussing let's say social and economic policy. You know, they may not have felt as though they were really in their wheelhouse. I would suggest to you much of this has to do with the breakdown of the Cold War consensus. I would suggest to you that the Democratic Party has continued to be in something of a post-Vietnam hangover because if you think about the two Presidents that put most of the effort into escalating the Vietnam War they did happen to be Democrats. Jack Kennedy and then Lyndon Johnson. If you look at who controlled Congress during most of the time that the Vietnam War was being waged in this country it was the Democratic Party. Now don't get me wrong, there were plenty of Republicans who contributed significantly as well but if you had to assign percentages to it you'd have to say it would be at least 60/40 if not more like 70/30 that was Democrats who were behind the Vietnam War. And so as the war raised these questions over time it was the
Democratic Party that has ended up doing the most soul-searching over it. And I would suggest to you that some of that soul-searching still exists today. I'm not passing a value judgment here. This is not meant to be any kind of partisan slam but I would just point out to you that when you look at where Democrats and Republicans stand today in 2011 there's greater consensus among Republicans. Certainly their leaders will tell you that they've learned some lessons from the Vietnam era as well but they were not as ripped apart over this war as the Democrats ultimately were. So I'm going to cut it off there and move on to the election of Richard Nixon in my next slide.

**Slide 3**

**Text:** Rise of Richard Nixon

[Image of cover of newspaper with headline “At last, he’s President!”]

**Audio:** With the Democrats ripping each other apart in 1968, the primary political beneficiary would be Richard Nixon. In some ways, this was a very ironic development. After all, back in the early 60s, Nixon had seemed to be on his way out in terms of high-level politics. He has suffered a narrow defeat in the Presidential campaign of 1960 against Jack Kennedy, two years later he ran for Governor of California unsuccessfully, with a very uninspiring campaign. In a moment of frustration with reporters afterwards, he had made some comments to the effect that he was done with politics. But after a few years out in the wilderness, concentrating on his law practice, Nixon was back. And he ran a very media-savvy campaign in 1968. He hated reporters, by the way, but he'd learned to script his appearances much more, to use his handlers, to keep the media at arm's length, and to really filter his message so that there would less likely be any sort of gaffes or embarrassments. Nixon was really doing a much better job of controlling his image. He referred to himself as the new Nixon; it was really just a clever repackaging of the old Nixon. He had been prepared to wage a very negative campaign against the Democratic nominee, but because of the way the Democrats went at each other, he didn't have to do that. And although the final results in 1968 will be fairly close, Richard Nixon ultimately gets that prize that he's coveted for so long. But this is also going to mean now that the Vietnam War is going to rapidly become his headache.

**Slide 4**

**Text:** Nixon’s Accomplishments

- Visit to People’s Republic of China in 1972 to pave the way for normalized relations with a major communist power (détente)
- Cease-fire in Vietnam negotiated in 1972 to begin the following years that vast majority of U.S. military personnel could be evacuated from South Vietnam and POWs returned
- SALT I Treaty (1972) marked first limiting of nuclear weapons between USA & USSR
Audio: Richard Nixon's first term as president was marked by some extraordinary successes that left him in an excellent position to be reelected in 1972. For one thing, he was able to accomplish what Lyndon Johnson had never been able to do with the Vietnam War and that was to find a respectable way for the United States to extricate itself. By 1972, the Nixon Administration had negotiated a deal whereby all of the different warring parties in the Vietnam conflict would agree to freeze their units in place for a cease-fire. A cease a fire that would the United States to evacuate the vast bulk of its military personnel and also for U.S. prisoners of war to be returned. So the South Vietnamese Military, the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong, as well as the United State forces of course, all agreed to this cease-fire. Now the one party that was pretty unhappy with the arrangement was the South Vietnamese Government because it recognized this move for what it was. The Untied States was essentially giving up on the Vietnam conflict with U.S. forces out of Southeast Asia, South Vietnam was doomed. And this was open secret; everybody knew it so of course the South Vietnamese Government was none too thrilled with this. But this was basically the face saving gesture that allowed Richard Nixon to get peace with a reasonable degree of honor in 1972. Americans would stop suffering heavy casualties in Southeast Asia and there was at least some fiction being maintained that South Vietnam might be able to survive this whole thing. The reality was that not too long after U.S. forces were gone, the cease-fire broke down and South Vietnam will be well on its way towards losing the war. But again, the goal here for the Nixon Administration was to concentrate on building an exit strategy for the United States. Moving to other topics in foreign policy, Richard Nixon was able to drive a bit of a wedge between the two major Communist powers of the world, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union by actually improving relations with both of them, pursuing a policy of what the French called [Foreign name], which is the relaxation of tensions. In that spirit in 1972, Richard Nixon, the ultimate anti-Communist, the man who had largely built his career on being resolute against the Red Menace actually visited Communist China to put the finishing touches on establishing normalized relations between those two countries after years of the United States refusing to officially acknowledge that this Communist country even existed. With respect to the Soviet Union, in 1972 the Nixon Administration finished off the first nuclear arms treaty between the super powers that actually limited the construction of certain types of nuclear weapons. It was SALT 1 or the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty and it did limit the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that both sides could build. These were the long-range missiles that were kept in hardened silos. In the case of the United States, out in places like the Great Plains States. There were some in Arizona and other parts of the Southwest as well. These weapons had ranges in the thousands of miles and although there were other parts of the nuclear arsenals for both countries that were not touched by the treaty, it was seen as a major step in the right direction. It was seen as a sign that both countries recognized that no one was likely to be able to win a nuclear war. It also limited the number of anti ballistic missile systems you could have because both sides were concerned that if one country got an edge in defensive technology against nuclear weapons and began to feel more comfortable in that regard, it might cause that nation to then launch a nuclear war against its rival, figuring that it could withstand the counter
attack from the other side. So there was a principle referred to in the 1970s and MAD or Mutual Assured Destruction and diplomats on both sides felt it was important to preserve that principle and for both sides, again, to recognize that in terms of really walking away relatively unscathed, there was no way that you could actually win a nuclear war. So on the foreign policy front, Richard Nixon had quite a bit that he could point to, you know, there have been many protests against his policies in Vietnam because he did earlier in his presidency, try to pretty much pick up where Lyndon Johnson had left off and still try to win the Vietnam War but now with the cease fire agreement, the anti war movement was, for the most part, off his back and meanwhile, those who had been defending the war were reasonably satisfied that he had given the United States peace with honor. So Richard Nixon could look forward to a very comfortable reelection campaign in 1972 but he's going to be his own worst enemy thanks to a variety of illegal activities that he had sponsored in one form or another, there will be some political funny business during the 1972 campaign that will ultimately bring down his entire presidency and that's what I'll be describing next.

Slide 5

Text: Watergate & the Fall of a President

[Photo of Richard Nixon]

Audio: My next subject has been covered in more detail in another lecture, but here I will deal with the Watergate scandal and how it ultimately brought down Richard Nixon's presidency. Watergate has become in American popular culture the ultimate symbol for malfeasance in office for what the constitution refers to as high crimes and misdemeanors, and finally for a gross abuse of high governmental position. The short version of the Watergate story is that members of the Nixon administration directed various individuals to break into the Democratic Party headquarters in 1972. That headquarters being located in the Watergate office complex in Washington D.C. These individuals were caught and later confessed to having ties to the White House staff. Investigations ultimately revealed that those ties went all the way to the inner circle of Richard Nixon's White House. The president and others lied by denying those connections, and taped conversations eventually revealed that the president not only planned the cover-up of those ties, but may have actually instigated other illegal activities. Now, there is no smoking gun to indicate that Richard Nixon personally ordered the Watergate break-in itself, but he was intimately involved in a cover-up. And as you often hear said, when it comes to political scandals, it's not so much the initial bad act that outrages the American people and really gets you into trouble. It's the cover-up. Now, that's the summary, the short story. What I'd like to do now is to step back and tell you how the Watergate scandal unfolded in its entire comprehensive nature. As early as 1969, the first year that Richard Nixon was in the White House as president, one of his lawyers had set up a private security unit within the White House for the purpose of investigating individual citizens and also seen to it that the White House staff was not leaking
unfavorable information to the press. So right there from the very beginning, something fishy was going on. And I ask you to keep in mind that Richard Nixon by his very nature had a real pension for secrecy and conspiracy. And so the kind of individuals that he surrounded himself with were those whom he know would do his bidding for these sorts of activities. In other words, it wasn't by accident that the Nixon White House ends up with these kinds of operations going on. Now, ideally, Richard Nixon would've loved to have used the Central Intelligence Agency to investigate individual citizens, but law bars the CIA barred from domestic surveillance. Nixon also would've loved to use the FBI, but FBI officials rightfully refused to get involved in this, because they recognized that it was really a political operation, and you're not supposed to go after Americans strictly for their political views, unless those views involve acts of treason. So instead, it was a private security unit that Richard Nixon created, although some of its operatives were former CIA and former FBI agents. This private security unit came to be referred to as "the Plumbers," because as I said a moment ago, one of their key missions was to prevent leaks by White House employees. One of the leaks by government employees that was of greatest concern to Richard Nixon came not from the White House itself, but from a former Defense Department employee, Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg had served in the Pentagon -- in other words, in the Defense Department -- back during earlier years of the Vietnam War when presidents Kennedy and Johnson had been running the conflict. And becoming a critic of the war, Ellsberg had been concerned that the US government had not been honest with the American people about the way the war was being managed. So he had taken the controversial step of surreptitiously photocopying classified documents. And then once he left the Pentagon, he began supplying those documents to US newspapers, most notably the New York Times. And this set off a huge legal controversy. It added to the overall debate surrounding the Vietnam War, and Richard Nixon was very upset about what Ellsberg was doing, even though Ellsberg was airing out the dirty laundry of Democratic presidential administrations. So in other words, Richard Nixon might not necessarily have cared what Ellsberg was doing, because it was really only embarrassing to Democrats, but Nixon would have this private security unit spy on Ellsberg, because Nixon was still trying to win the Vietnam War in the early years of his presidency, and he felt that any revelations like Ellsberg's that raised the skepticism level about the effectiveness about the Vietnam War effort would naturally make things harder for Richard Nixon. So one of the activities of this private security unit known as "the Plumbers" would be to break into the psychiatrist's office of Daniel Ellsberg. You know, Ellsberg was seeing a psychiatrist. And the idea was to get one's hands on his confidential medical records and to publicize that information as a way to discredit Ellsberg as a whistle-blower. So that's just one example here. In any case, by 1971, this White House security unit, or Plumbers, was branching into other areas of activity. Much of what they did could loosely be called political "dirty tricks." For example, and some of this is going to sound absolutely silly, but it really happened. One example was setting off stink bombs at Democratic rallies, Democratic Party rallies, Democratic campaign events. Another dirty trick was to phone in false pizza orders in the name of the Democratic Party in your particular community. But there were also more serious activities going on. Bugging phones,
break-ins to gather political intelligence. I just mentioned the efforts with regards to Daniel Ellsberg. And by 1971, the Plumbers were now being lumped into a larger operation. And that was the president's re-election campaign, and his re-election campaign team went by the ironic acronym of CREEP -- C-R-E-E-P, Committee to Re-Elect the President -- although they often referred to themselves as just CRP to avoid the inevitable jokes that would follow. So you now have Nixon's re-election team involved in surveillance, espionage, dirty tricks. And much of this was being financed with millions of dollars of unreported money. In other words, funds being gathered outside of campaign finance laws. So much of this is the background for what happened in June of 1972. By '72, Nixon is involved in a re-election campaign. And one of the ironies of this entire episode is that Nixon already pretty much had the campaign locked up. He had huge foreign policy victories on his watch, a cease-fire negotiated to get US troops out of Vietnam, the first major nuclear arms control agreement with the Soviet Union, normalizing relations, or at least starting the process of normalizing relations with communist China, while meanwhile reducing tensions with both China and the communist Soviet Union. The Democrats, still badly divided going back to 1968, were in the process of nominating a candidate, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, who was largely seen as outside the mainstream of America's political views. So Richard Nixon had an absolute cakewalk to getting a second term as president. And yet, he still felt compelled to take all of these extra steps, many of them illegal, to try to secure his re-election, and in this will lie his downfall. So in June of 1972, there were a collection of burglars who were caught at the Watergate office complex. Because they were well dressed and carrying electronics equipment, there was a real suspicion on the part of the police right from the beginning that this was not a run-of-the-mill burglary. Now, as I said a moment ago, there's no direct evidence that Richard Nixon told anyone to go break into the Democratic Party headquarters. But he was very quickly involved in the cover-up, because he didn't want anyone to figure out that these burglars had ties that went deep into the White House. What Richard Nixon will end up authorizing was paying hush money to these burglars, so that as they were out on bail and they were waiting for their trial and investigators were talking to them, that they would not reveal the full extent of their activities and how high up their supervision went. So Richard Nixon is on tape talking about paying hush money to burglars. And this is where he really pulled this scandal in close into the Oval Office. And keep in mind that left over from the previous presidential administration, there was a taping system in the oval office. And so there was actually a record being compiled of conversations like this. So the break-in occurs in June of 1972, which was still roughly five months before the American people voted for president, but by November of '72, although there certainly were some suspicions about how big this story might be, investigations had not progressed far enough yet for Watergate to really ruin Richard Nixon's re-election chances. So in November of 1972, he took every state except Massachusetts as he rolled on to re-election. Nevertheless, the foundation had been laid for, ultimately, the end of his presidency. So continuing into 1973, Richard Nixon was very involved in trying to cover up the ties of these burglars to larger White House operations. He encouraged the FBI to be very lax in investigating the break-in. Because some of the burglars were ex-CIA agents, Nixon tried
to suggest to the FBI that they shouldn't look too closely at this whole matter, because national security might be involved. At one point in 1973, when talking to one of his White House lawyers, a man named John Dean, who would eventually go to jail for his involvement in the cover-up, in Nixon's words, "I don't give a shit what happens. I want you all to stonewall it. Let them," referring to the burglars, "plead the Fifth Amendment. Cover up or anything else. If it'll save it, save the plan." And by plan, he's referring to the cover-up plan. But the federal judge who was trying the burglars in court gave them maximum sentences in an effort to encourage them to tell all that they knew. And over time, information is going to begin to come out. And much of the credit for the investigations that ultimately brought down Richard Nixon really goes to two Washington Post reporters who, at the time that this scandal began were a long way from being household names, but today of course they're giants in the history of journalism. And these two men were Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, who really plugged away at the story from the very beginning. They started talking quietly to certain members of the White House staff who were willing to talk to them. And ultimately they put together many of the pieces to help Congress be able to conduct a more effective investigation. If you like to use movies as a way to learn history, there was a pretty good one put together back in the 1970s called All the President's Men, based on the Watergate scandal. And Dustin Hoffman and Robert Redford played Woodward and Bernstein. I think it might've been the other way around; they played Bernstein and Woodward. But anyway, it's a great flick. And not to get to salacious here, but the editor at the Washington Post for Woodward and Bernstein suggested that they dub their main leak, turned out to be the number-two man in the FBI, but the public didn't know it at the time. But their editor suggested giving him the code-name "Deep Throat," referring to a popular pornographic movie at the time. But this number two man at the FBI, his name was Mark Felt, who passed away not too many years ago, he was the one who supplied Woodward and Bernstein with much of the best information. Kind of pointing them in certain directions, making sure they knew where to look. In any case, by late 1973, public confidence in Richard Nixon had slipped quite a bit. It was in November of that year that he gave a famous press conference, where he announced that he was not a crook: words that would come back to haunt him. And it was not long after this press conference that there was the first major defection in the ranks of the White House staff. Counsel John Dean, whom I mentioned a moment ago, was rightfully afraid that he was about to be made the scapegoat for the entire conspiracy. So he began to cooperate with the authorities and told them what he knew. Now, he was still going to end up doing some jail time in a minimum-security prison, but he gave the public a rather full chronicle of what Richard Nixon's re-election committee had been all about. And so this began to set off a chain reaction where investigators were able to gradually move up the hierarchy of the White House staff, getting more and more of Nixon's key advisors for some combination of perjury and obstruction of justice. And by the time it was all done, more than 20 members of Richard Nixon's administration would end up going to jail. Now again, the sentences didn't tend to be very long and tended to be in those minimum-security, country-club-style prisons. But more than 20 members of Richard Nixon's administration went to jail for crimes related to Watergate. Now,
one of the features of our political system is that, if there is the possibility of serious wrongdoing within the executive branch, then the president is supposed to appoint a special prosecutor to get to the bottom of it. But this naturally presents a conflict of interest, because you're asking the president to appoint a lawyer to look into the president's dirty laundry, which means on some level, and this would be the case with almost any president that you'd find in this situation, on some level the president doesn't really want that lawyer to find anything. Because you know it's going to be damaging to you one way or another. But Richard Nixon had to appoint a special prosecutor. And of course the expectation was that he'd have to appoint someone known to be a Democrat, because obviously the fear was, if you as a Republican president appoint someone from your own party, how hard are they really going to work on this? Just like in the 1990s when Bill Clinton got caught up with what we'll loosely call the Monica-gate scandal, he had to appoint a special prosecutor, and it really had to be a Republican. Anyway, Richard Nixon appointed a special prosecutor named Archibald Cox, who was a very aggressive, very effective in doing his work, such that in 1973, Nixon decided that he had to find a way to get rid of this man, because he was doing such a good job. It was too embarrassing. But Nixon knew that if he fired the special prosecutor himself that would look terrible. I mean, that would look like the President obviously doesn't want justice in this scenario. So Nixon called in his attorney general, the official most responsible for enforcing our nation's laws, other than the president himself, and Nixon asked his attorney general to fire the special prosecutor. And Nixon's attorney general in a crisis of conscience said, basically, "Mr. President, I can't do that," and therefore, he resigned, because if you can't follow the president's instructions, you basically have no place in his cabinet. Nixon then called in his deputy attorney general and asked him to fire the special prosecutor, and that official also refused, and therefore, had to resign. Nixon eventually found someone to fire the special prosecutor, but by the time the episode was over, the press had dubbed it the Saturday Night Massacre. And obviously, in terms of political reputation, this did not look good for Richard Nixon. So he did fire the special prosecutor, ended up with a new one. But the damage continued to be done. While all of this was going on, another aide brought before Congress had revealed the taping system installed in the Oval Office. And this set off a huge legal battle over whether or not investigators could get their hands on the tapes, or on transcripts of what was contained in the tapes. Richard Nixon used his lawyers to argue that these tapes were his personal property, and later he tried to argue for executive privilege, but ultimately he lost in the Supreme Court, and he was forced to turn over transcripts of the tapes, which became bestsellers when they were turned into paperback books. And actually the tapes set off a mini-scandal of their own, because of how much it revealed about Richard Nixon's use of profanity and ethnic stereotypes. He did have a habit in the evening after maybe... a few too many drinks of kind of getting off on these rants about one group or another. So it really showed a coarser side of Richard Nixon as these tapes came out. But they also showed that Richard Nixon was involved in the cover-up. And there was even a mysterious gap in one of the tapes. And Nixon's secretary came forward and said that she had accidentally erased this material. But of course there was a strong suspicion that Nixon had seen to it that one portion of these tapes were deliberately
erased, because there must've been something incriminating in there. One way or another, Richard Nixon was in a great deal of trouble by 1973 into '74. There were other abuses of power that were being revealed as well, things not directly connected to Watergate, but in 1970 and '71, Nixon had paid virtually no federal income taxes, which seemed suspicious, given that his assets were pretty respectable. He also had cost taxpayers generally $20 million in improvements to his primary home and his summer residence while he'd been serving as president. And so with all of this going on, by the end of 1973, the House Judiciary Committee began holding hearings on the possibility of impeaching the president. And if I could just diverge into our constitutional system for a moment. Part of the checks and balances that different branches of government have upon one another is that the Congress has the ability to impeach and ultimately remove a president if it has enough votes to do so. Now, impeachment is the responsibility of the lower house of Congress: the House of Representatives. And impeachment is, loosely speaking, like an indictment in the legal process. Impeachment means that a majority of the members of Congress have decided that a president has committed at least one high crime or misdemeanor as the Constitution defines those terms. And so the way impeachment would work is that first, the House Judiciary Committee takes a look at things, and if it recommends to the larger House of Representatives that there are legitimate impeachable charges involves, then the House takes a vote. And if the majority of the House impeaches a president, then this is a significant stigma brought upon him. In our nation's history, only two presidents have ever been impeached: Andrew Johnson, during the period of reconstruction after the Civil War, and reconstruction had much to do with why he was impeached; and then Bill Clinton, much more recently here, in the late 1990s. So we'll get back to that in a moment. The problem with going after Richard Nixon was that Nixon had deliberately selected a man to be his Vice Presidential running mate, who was far more corrupt and over-the-top than he was. Therefore, Nixon had actually referred to his own Vice President as his "insurance policy." As Nixon put it, "No assassin in his right mind would kill me. They knew that if they did, they would end up with Agnew." This Agnew was a gentleman named Spiro Agnew, former governor of Maryland, who brought nothing to the ticket as Nixon's Vice President, again, other than the fact that he was sort of, as Chris Matthews of -- well, now he works for MSNBC. But as Chris Matthews put it years ago, "Agnew was Nixon's Nixon." Nixon had always been known as the attack dog, politically, as someone who could be kind of a shady character, who was willing to do just about anything to win. Well, Agnew had all of Nixon's political qualities except magnified to an even greater extent. So he was literally Nixon's Nixon. So investigators recognized that although Agnew had nothing to do with Watergate itself, they had to go after him for other illegal acts and get him out of office so that you wouldn't end up with a President Agnew, who might then use the power of the office to protect Richard Nixon. So Agnew had been taking kickbacks from contractors while he was governor of Maryland. Investigators went after him for that. He was forced to resign and eventually went to prison himself. Again, not connected to Watergate. But once he was out of the way, it made it easier to then go after Richard Nixon. When Agnew stepped down, Nixon now had to appoint a Vice President. He couldn't wait for the next election, because frankly, there was
a constitutional crisis in progress. And so Nixon selected House minority leader Gerald Ford of Michigan. And so Ford becomes Vice President with many people recognizing that he was very likely going to be president before much longer as Richard Nixon's days were numbered. By the mid-summer of 1974, Richard Nixon could read the handwriting on the wall. He'd been having private discussions with Republican leaders in the House and the Senate, and it was becoming clear that at the very least he was going to be impeached and quite possibly removed. As a matter of fact, the House Judiciary Committee did vote to impeach the president. Now again, the larger House still had to make their own decision, but the House Judiciary Committee recommended several articles of impeachment. And I've seen some footage of the vote. Some members of Congress were actually crying while they voted to impeach the president, especially Republicans. And ironically, Richard Nixon really united this polarized nation at the time, united people in a way that he had not anticipated, and that was uniting them on the basis of their outrage against his behavior. Now, not every Republican on that Judiciary Committee voted against -- I mean, excuse me. Not every Republican on the Judiciary Committee voted for impeaching Richard Nixon. But enough of them did that you could say this was legitimately a bipartisan effort. It wasn't just all Republicans lining up to blindly defend the president and all Democrats lining up against him. So the House Judiciary Committee did recommend articles of impeachment. And so this was when Richard Nixon decided he had to go. Let me just say, too, because we've seen this in our history twice. If a president does end up impeached, the second step is for the Senate, the upper house, to then hold a kind of trial before voting on whether or not to actually remove that president from office. Now again, we've only seen this twice in history, and in both cases, Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton survived those removal votes. But what happens is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will come over to the Senate and act as a kind of judge, presiding over the trial. Some of those House members that had voted for impeachment basically come over and operate as prosecuting attorneys, making the case for removing the president. Meanwhile, a president can hire lawyers or speak on his own behalf or do whatever he wants to make a kind of defense in this trial. And the jury, if you will, are the various members of the Senate. And when they vote, they need a two-thirds majority to remove a president, because obviously you're talking about a dramatic step here. So the drafters of the Constitution wanted to make sure that it wasn't just a simple majority that you needed to remove a president, but a two-thirds majority. And although we've never actually removed a president, Andrew Johnson survived by just one vote back in the late 1860s. Bill Clinton survived by a more comfortable margin in the late 1990s. But Richard Nixon did not let the process get that far. Once he realized that he was very likely going to be impeached, he went ahead and resigned from his office. And in August of 1974, he will leave. In an emotional farewell to his staff, he declared, "Always remember: others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them. And then you destroy yourself." Well, that's exactly what happened: Richard Nixon did destroy himself over his own paranoia and insecurities. I'm not sure even as he uttered these words in August of 1974 that he completely realized how much that he had epitomized this very warning. But one of the last images of Richard Nixon in public life was his final walk to a
presidential helicopter, with his wife and also with a newly sworn in President Gerald Ford and Ford's wife. And Richard Nixon, as he got to the top of the ladder to get on this helicopter, gave the "V" for "victory" salute, which was actually started by Prime Minister Winston Churchill of England during World War II. But Nixon had been borrowing this trademark salute during his political campaigns. So he gave one last "V" for "victory" salute before he went off into retirement. And although Richard Nixon lived until 1994, he was virtually never again really seen out in public. Certainly not in political settings. I mean, you'd never see him at a Republican convention, you'd never see him at the White House. Presidents both Democrats and Republicans would quietly consult him for advice on foreign policy, recognizing that he was quite talented in that regard. But of course, nobody wanted to be too closely associated with him again. And shortly after he resigned, President Gerald Ford gave Nixon a full pardon, so that all investigations into Nixon's behavior came to a halt. And many people felt that the minute that Ford did this, he guaranteed that he would not win a presidential term of his own in 1976, and sure enough, he didn't. Whether it was right or wrong, Ford's reasoning was that, to put the country through the ordeal of watching a former president going on trial, and chances are it would've been a lengthy trial, and chances are Nixon would've been found guilty of more than a few things, Ford was concerned that it would be too traumatic for the nation to see that, especially since there were some questions about Nixon's mental stability. So I mean, if he had some kind of a breakdown, if he really was not composed while this trial was going on, again, Ford was concerned, "How would this look to the American people?" So Ford did give Nixon the ultimate "get out of jail free card," rightly or wrongly. So that brings us to the end of the Watergate episode and the fall of a president.

Slide 6

Text: Women’s Liberation Movement

[Photo of Women’s Liberation Movement protest]

Slide 7

Text: Campaign for Equal Rights Amendment

- Language of amendment: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.”
- Modern effort was focused between 1972-1982 on getting necessary 38 states to ratify once Congress had passed the measure.
- Only 35 states ratified it by 1982

Slide 8

[Photo of gas station with closure sign]

**Slide 9**

**Text:** End of Vietnam War (1975)

[Photo of Vietnamese people scaling the wall of the US Embassy in Saigon just before the end of the Vietnam War]

**Slide 10**

**Text:** Disco Phenomenon (John Travolta from the movie Saturday Night Fever)

[Photo of John Travolta dancing in a scene from Saturday Night Fever]

**Slide 11**

**Text:** Camp David Accords (1978)

[Photo of President Jimmy Carter, Egyptian premier Anwar Sadat and Israeli Premier Menachem Begin shaking hands at the Camp David Accords]

**Slide 12**

**Text:** Iranian Hostage Crisis (1979-1981)

[Photo of one of the hostages being held at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran displayed, blindfolded and with his hands bound, to the crowd outside the embassy]

**Slide 13**

**Text:** Miracle at Lake Placid

[Photo of US Hockey team celebrating their win against the USSR in the 1980 Olympics]

**Slide 14**

**Text:** Election of 1980

[Photo of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, and Ronald and Nancy Reagan during transition]

**Slide 15**

**Text:** Key features of Reagan Agenda

- “Peace through strength” – revamp military with major spending increases to challenge what he termed the “evil empire” (USSR)
• Back anti-communist resistance forces around the globe (what became the Reagan Doctrine)
• Fiscal conservatism, i.e. cutting federal spending (except defense), reducing regulations, and lowering corporate and individual taxes.

**Slide 16**

**Text:** Birth of MTV – Aug ‘81

[Screenshot of MTV launch video]

**Slide 17**

**Text:** Shooting of President Reagan -1981

[Photo of scene moments after the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan]

**Slide 18**

**Text:** Peacekeeping in Lebanon (1983-1984)

[Photo of cover of Time magazine with headline, “Carnage in Beirut”]

**Slide 19**

**Text:** Distraction in Grenada?

[Photo of prisoners in Grenada]

**Slide 20**

**Text:** Loss of the Space Shuttle Challenger

[Photo of the crew of the Challenger]

**Slide 21**

**Text:** Iran-Contra Scandal (1985-1986)

[Photo of Oliver North being sworn in to testify]

**Slide 22**

**Text:** Iran-Contra Details
• While proclaiming neutrality in Iran-Iraq War, USA secretly sold weapons to Iran in exchange for its influence in freeing hostages held in Lebanon by Shiite terrorists (meanwhile secretly assisting Iraq as well).
• Proceeds from Iranian arms sales secretly funneled to anti-communist Contras in Nicaragua despite congressional ban on aid.

Slide 23

Text: Reagan and Gorbachev

[Photo of President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev]

Slide 24

Text: End of the Berlin Wall

[Photo of a man hammering the Berlin Wall]

Slide 25

Text: First Persian Gulf War

[Photo of a view of Iraqi armored personnel carriers, tanks and trucks destroyed in a Coalition attack along a road in the Euphrates River Valley during Operation Desert Storm]

Slide 26

Text: Collapse of the USSR – 1991

[Photo of statue of Lenin being taken down]

Slide 27

Text: Election of 1992

[Photo a George H. W. Bush] [Photo of Bill Clinton]

Slide 28

Text: Dynamics of Campaign

• Ross Perot carried 19% of the popular vote for Reform Party, but no states – likely siphoned away support that otherwise would have gone primarily to President Bush
• Bill Clinton’s campaign team focused on bread-and-butter economic issues to overcome Bush’s foreign policy expertise and popularity from recent war

Slide 29
Text: .com Revolution

[Photo of t-shirt with slogan “My dot-com burned through $30 million in venture capital and all I got was this lousy t-shirt”]

Slide 30

Text: Impeachment of Bill Clinton

[Photo of Bill Clinton hugging Monica Lewinsky]

Slide 31

Text: Anatomy of a Scandal

• President Clinton impeached by House of Representatives for perjury and obstruction of justice
• Following a trial in the Senate, Clinton survived removal votes by comfortable margins
• Public opinion polls indicated disgust with personal behavior, but aversion to removal

Slide 32

Text: Election of 2000

[Screenshot of news photos of Al Gore and George W. Bush]

Slide 33

Text: Florida as the Deciding Factor

• Debate emerged over whether to recount manually all ballots and what criteria would be used
• One issue was chad (residue from hole punched ballot)
• U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 (along ideological lines) in favor of halting recount and giving Bush the election
• Key error by Gore team was in asking for hand recount only in counties known to be Democratic strongholds

Slide 34

Text: 9/11

[Screenshot of news photo of World Trade Center after second plane struck]

Slide 35

[Photo of statue of Saddam Hussein being knocked down by US forces]

Slide 36

Text: War on Terror at Home

[Photo of a woman at a full-body scanner in an airport]

Slide 37

Text: Election of 2008

[Photo of Hilary Clinton] [Photo of Barack Obama] [Photo of John McCain]

Slide 38

Text: Useful Primary Sources

- Redstockings Manifesto (1969)
- Farewell Address to his staff by Richard Nixon 91974)
- Final Report of Senate Select Committee on Presidential campaign Activities (1974)
- “Human Rights and Foreign Policy” speech by Jimmy Carter (1977)
- “Tear Down this Wall” speech by Ronald Reagan (1987)

Slide 39

Text: Useful Primary Sources (continued)

- Oklahoma City Bombing memorial speech by Bill Clinton (1995)
- Ground Zero speech by George W. Bush (2001)
- Bush Doctrine (2001)
- Patriot Act (2001)