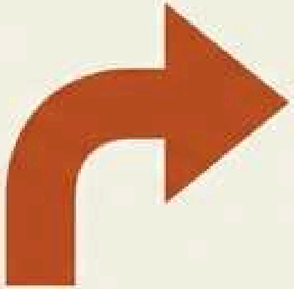
6.1



The Shocks

How did the economic and political shocks of the seventies change the country?



The Shift

How did the conservative movement rise, and how did the Cold War end?



The Synthesis

What themes connect the whole story since 1877?

Gemini Notebook

6.2

1971

Nixon ends dollar convertibility into gold.

Bretton Woods system closes

1973

Arab members of OPEC impose an oil embargo.

Fuel prices soar

The Stagflation Era



Slow economic growth combined with high inflation (reaching double digits in 1974, 1979, and 1980). Industrial jobs begin to disappear.

Gemini Notebook

6.3 **Détente:** The Diplomatic Strategy

February 1972



Nixon visits China, beginning a historic normalization of relations.

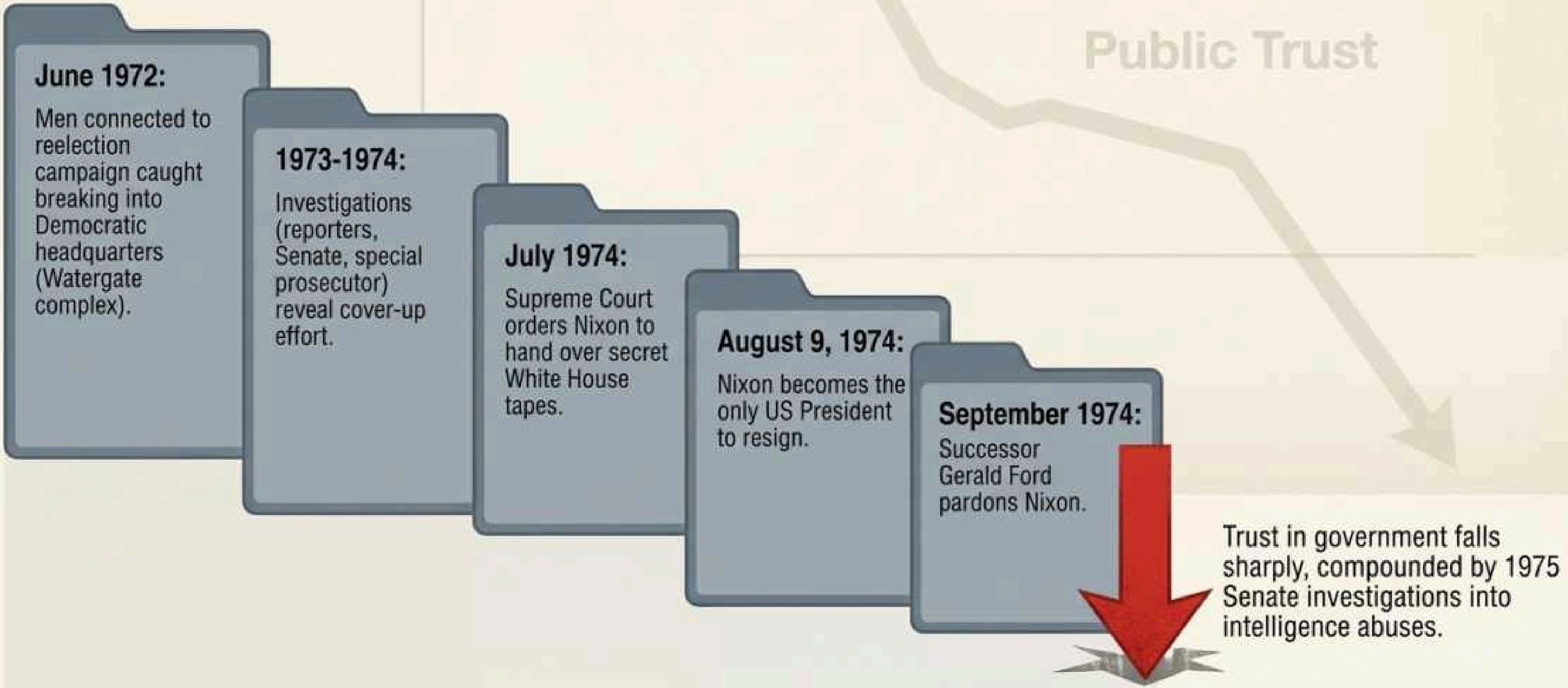
May 1972



Nixon signs the first Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) agreement with the Soviets.

Gemini Notebook

6.4



Gemini Notebook

6.5

Diplomatic Triumphs

- **1978:** Brokers the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel
- **Treaties:** Negotiates the return of the Panama Canal to Panama

Cascading Crises

- **Domestic:** Severe struggles with inflation and energy shortages
- **November 1979:** Revolution brings Islamic government to power in Iran; militants seize the US embassy, holding 52 Americans hostage for 444 days
- **December 1979:** Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (effectively ending the era of détente)

Gemini Notebook

6.6

The Conservative Rise

Political Energy: Energized by opposition to expansive government/Soviet communism following Barry Goldwater's 1964 defeat.

Religious Entry: Evangelical Protestants enter politics; founding of the Moral Majority (1979).

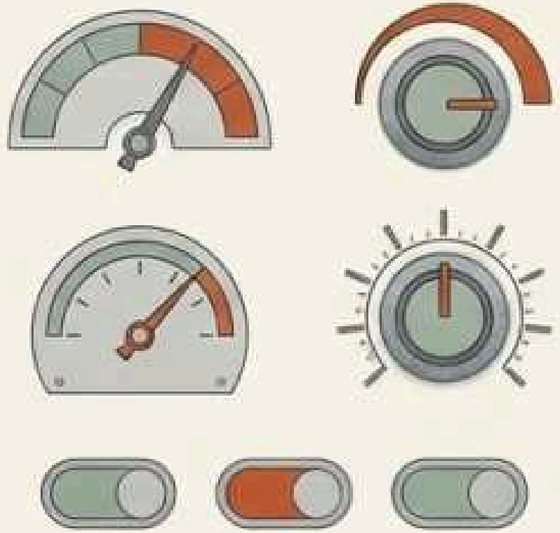
The Tax Revolt: California voters pass Proposition 13 (1978).

Corporate Organizing: Business groups formally organize to influence Washington lobbying.

Gemini Notebook

6.7

Policy Inputs



Smaller government & stronger defense.

Lower taxes: 1981 cuts, followed by the 1986 Tax Reform Act (lowering top rate to 28%).

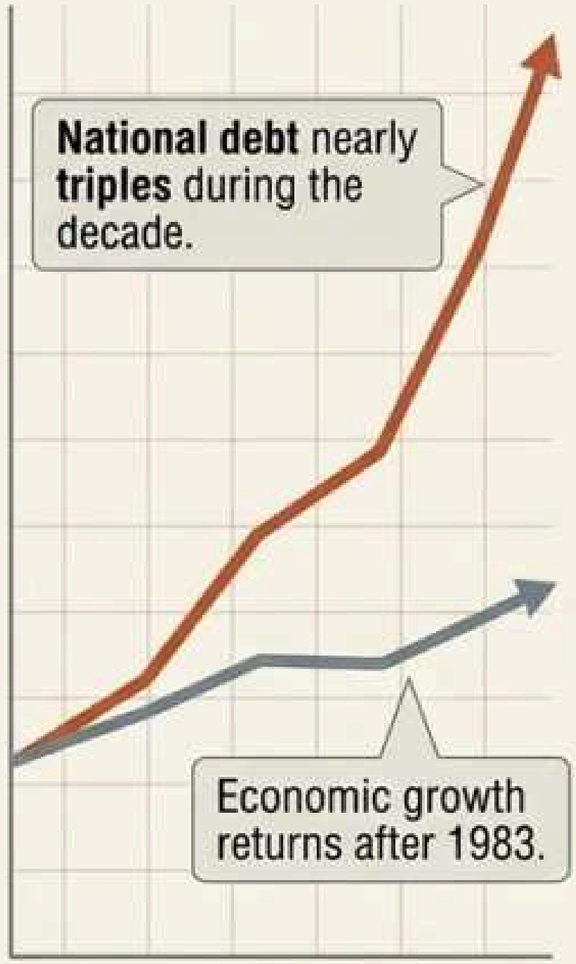
The Volcker Shock



Fed Chair Paul Volcker raises interest rates sharply.

Effect: Breaks inflation, but triggers deep recession (unemployment nears 11% in 1982).

The Outcome

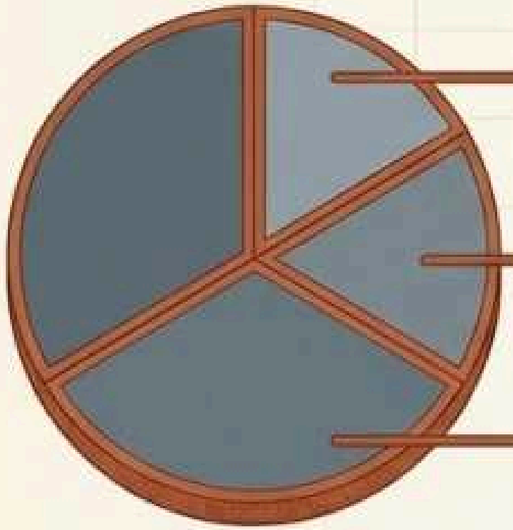


Gemini Notebook

6.8

The Collapse of the Cold War

Milestone 1	Milestone 2	Milestone 3	Milestone 4
Phase 1: Reagan builds up US defenses ("Evil Empire" rhetoric).	**1987:** Reagan & Gorbachev sign treaty eliminating a class of nuclear missiles.	**1989:** Eastern European communist governments fall; Berlin Wall opens (Nov 9).	**Dec 1991:** The Soviet Union formally dissolves.



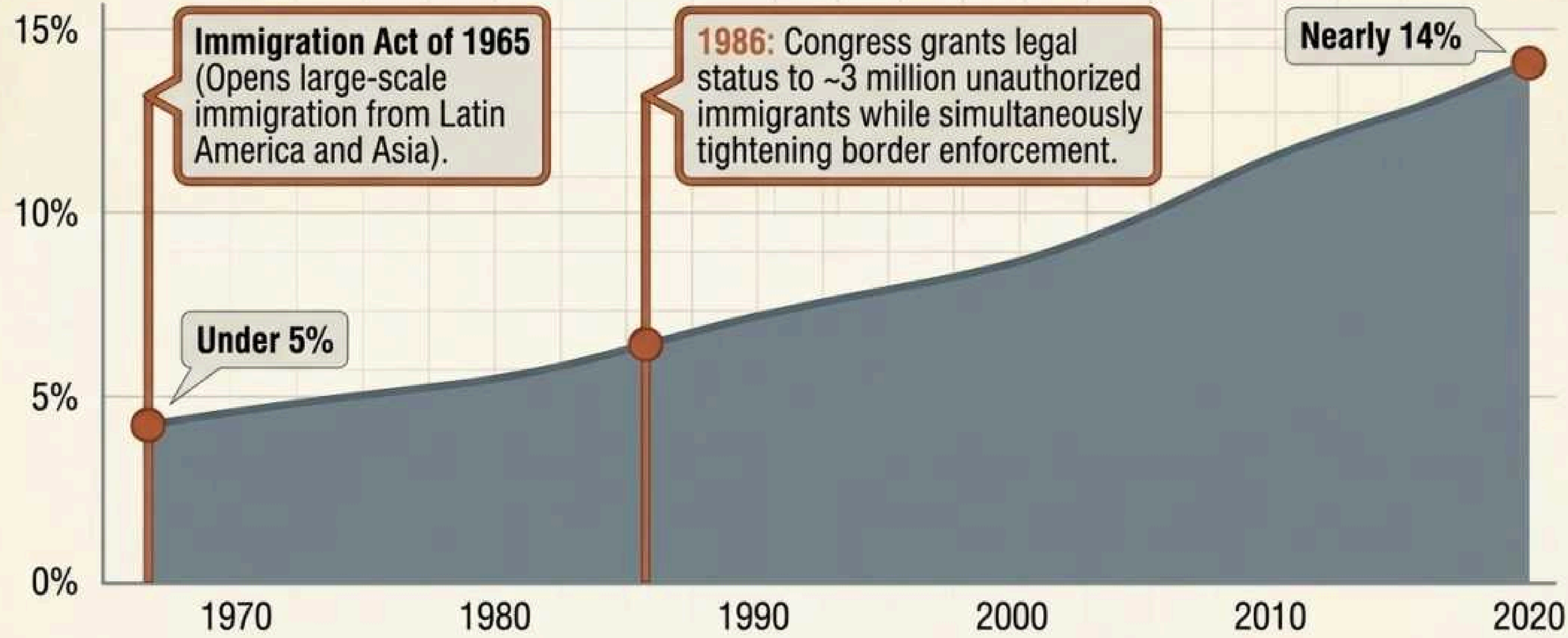
The Historical Debate: Who gets the credit?

- American pressure.
- Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.
- Internal Soviet economic/political weakness.

Gemini Notebook

6.9

Foreign-Born Population as a Percentage of U.S. Population (1970–2020)



Gemini Notebook

6.10

Global/Military

1991: US leads coalition driving Iraq out of Kuwait (Gulf War).

Domestic Politics

1994: Republicans win control of Congress.

1998/1999: House impeaches Clinton; Senate acquits him.

Economy/Policy

1992: Bill Clinton elected.

1993/1994: NAFTA signed and takes effect.

1996: Welfare reform law signed.

Late 90s: Federal budget is balanced amid high prosperity.

Gemini Notebook

6.11

Trending Up (The Growth Sectors)

Services and technology sectors boom.

Inequality widens: Top 1% income share roughly doubles between 1980 and 2019 (though economists debate exact numbers/causes).



Trending Down (The Contractions)

Manufacturing employment falls (due to factory closures, offshoring, and spreading automation).

Union membership drops from ~20% of workers in 1983 to ~10% by 2020.



Gemini Notebook

6.12

September 11, 2001: Terrorists hijack four airliners, attacking NY and DC, killing nearly nearly 3,000 people.

The Homeland Response

- Congress passes the Patriot Act.
- Creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

Foreign Wars

October 2001: US invades Afghanistan.

March 2003: US invades Iraq.

Note: Both conflicts last far longer than expected.

The Legacy Debate

Lasting national debates over the limits of global power and the protection of domestic civil liberty.

6.13

The Crash (2008-2009)



Trigger:
Housing bubble bursts.



Collapse:
Lehman Brothers fails (September 2008), setting off a global financial crisis.



Bottom out:
Unemployment reaches 10% in 2009.

The Response & Reality



Intervention:
Congress approves bank rescue.



Leadership:
Barack Obama elected (2008) as first Black president.



Legislation:
Economic stimulus, Dodd-Frank financial reform, Affordable Care Act (2010).



Result:
Debates over the right response deeply divide the political parties.

Gemini Notebook

6.14

Criminal Justice



Dramatic system expansion; prison population grows several times over since the 1970s.

Voting Rights



2013 Supreme Court strikes down central part of the Voting Rights Act (*Shelby County v. Holder*), sparking new voting rule debates.

Marriage Equality



2015 Supreme Court holds same-sex couples have a right to marry (*Obergefell v. Hodges*).

Racial Justice



Black Lives Matter movement draws intense national attention to police violence.

Gemini Notebook

6.15

The Drivers of Fracture

Voters sort themselves more consistently by party.

Media and the internet fragment, causing Americans to consume entirely different news ecosystems.

The Cascading Events

2016: Donald Trump wins presidency.

2020: Joe Biden wins presidency.

COVID-19 pandemic kills more than 1 million Americans.

January 6, 2021: Crowd attacks the Capitol during electoral vote counting.

Historian's Note: Historians are only beginning to study these recent events, and judgments about them remain contested.

Gemini Notebook

6.16 The Overarching Synthesis (Since 1877)

Citizenship

The definition expanded continually, yet met with repeated, cyclical resistance.

Federal Government

Power grew consistently during crises, followed by intense arguments over its scope each time.

The Economy

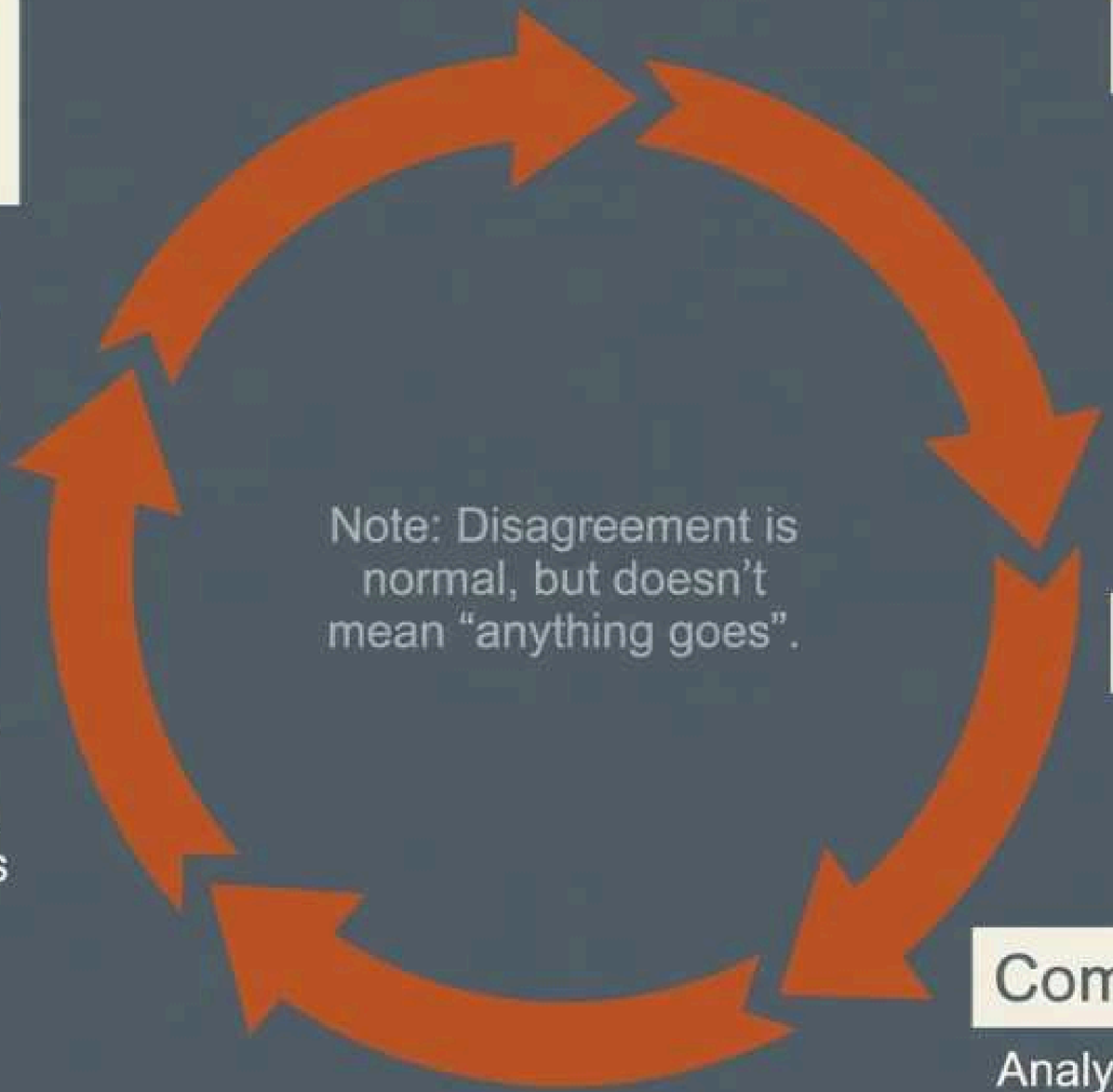
Repeatedly transformed by technology and trade, creating distinct eras of structural winners and losers.

Global Role

The nation shifted from a regional power to a global superpower, leading to endless debate over how to wield that role.

Gemini Notebook

6.17



Gather 1

Collect primary sources (from the time: letters, speeches, laws) and secondary sources (later interpretations).

Question 2

Interrogate the source: Who created it? For whom? Why?

Compare 3

Analyze accounts that disagree.

Analyze 4

Look for complex causes beyond a single event.

Revise 5

Update views as new evidence appears.

Note: Disagreement is normal, but doesn't mean "anything goes".

Gemini Notebook

6.18

- **Verify** What specific evidence supports this claim?
- **Source**
  Who is making the claim, and what is their motive?
- **Falsify**
  What would the evidence look like if this claim were false?
- **Simplify**
  Be wary of stories relying on a single cause or a single villain.
- **Contextualize**
  Consider what the people in the story could and could not actually know at the time.

Gemini Notebook

6.19

Step 1: Read Primary Sources

Examples: The Plessy dissent, FDR's fireside chats, MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail, Eisenhower's farewell address.

Step 2: Visit History

Action: Go to a local historical society or a national park to bridge the gap between text and physical space.

Step 3: Synthesize a Theme

Action: Choose one theme from this lecture, track it through every period studied, and write a one-page summary on what changed and what remained the same.

Gemini Notebook

6.20



The Survey Text

Eric Foner's "Give Me Liberty" (a highly respected one-volume survey).



The Archives

Library of Congress & National Archives (offering massive, free online collections of original documents and photographs).



The Method Tip

Pro-Tip: Read a secondary book and a primary source on the same topic together to see exactly how historians work.

Gemini Notebook

6.21

Anderson Academy

Course Provider

Found an error? Have a question or comment?

Email: garyanderson@mail.grokbot.com

Social: @garyanderson

Gemini Notebook

6.22

Thank you for taking this course.

Gemini Notebook