**Learning Objective:**

Explain how and why opposition to existing policies and values developed and changed over the course of the 20th century.

**Thematic Focus:**

*Creative expression, demographic change, philosophy, religious beliefs, scientific ideas, social mores, and technology shape national, regional, and group cultures in America, and these varying cultures often play a role in shaping government policy and developing economic systems.*

1. Cold War policies led to public debates over the power of the federal government and acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals while protecting civil liberties.
2. Although anticommunist foreign policy faced little domestic opposition in previous years, the Vietnam War inspired sizable and passionate antiwar protests that became more numerous as the war escalated and sometimes led to violence.
   1. A group known as the Doves opposed the Vietnam War and staged massive demonstrations, demanding immediate troop withdrawals. Senator William Fulbright was a leading Dove who wrote a critique of the war entitled *The Arrogance of Power*.
   2. Reports of an American massacre of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai reignited controversy over the nature of the war, but Nixon continued to defend his policy of Vietnamization.
   3. Stunned by the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970, college students across the nation erupted in protest. More than 1.5 million angry students shut down 1,200 campuses. Disaster struck hardest at Kent State University in Ohio. A massive student protest led to the burning of the ROTC building. In response to the growing unrest, the mayor called in the National Guard. Nervous members of the National Guard fired into a crowd of protestors, killing four students and wounding nine. The Kent State shootings triggered massive antiwar rallies across the United States.
3. Some groups on the left also rejected liberal policies, arguing that political leaders did too little to transform the racial and economic status quo at home and pursued immoral policies abroad.
4. New demographic and social developments, along with anxieties over the Cold War, changed U.S. culture and led to significant political and moral debates that sharply divided the nation.
5. Young people who participated in the counterculture of the 1960s rejected many of the social, economic, and political values of their parents’ generation, introduced greater informality into U.S. culture, and advocated changes in sexual norms.
   1. Groups who protested various aspects of American society in the 1960s included African Americans, American Indians, women, youth (Woodstock), and Hispanic Americans. Major issues included the Vietnam War, exclusion of women from the mainstream of American life, increasing bureaucratization and impersonality of American life, the marginal economic status of minorities, and materialism.
   2. Many young people formed communes in places such as San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district or in rural areas. Hippies, as they were called, experimented with Eastern religions, drugs, and sex, but were unable to establish a self-sustaining lifestyle.