

## ABSTRACT

### EXPANDING RHETORIC: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF THE POST WWII ERA AND THE VIETNAM WAR ON POSTMODERN THEORY

This study examines the cultural and material influences of American society after World War II on the popularization of postmodern theory in the 1970s. It begins with the dramatic shifts in American culture after the use of atomic weapons on Japan, examines the creation of a consensus culture in the 1950s, and uses the social movements of the 1960s to set the stage for the reaction against the Vietnam War in the late 1960s as a catalyst for the expansion of postmodern theory. Vietnam turned Americans away from the authority of official discourse and toward alternative rhetorics, particularly the visual, in attempts to study and offer critical response to the war. This turn from reliance on the official and the loss of the belief in language itself as a clear path to transcendent truth contributed dramatically to emerging postmodern rhetoric.

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