

History 376: The Emergence of Modern America, 1877-1929

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Elliott Hall: (740) 368-3634
Office Hours: M 10-11 / W 4-5 / F 2-3 (or by appointment)

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Texts:

- E.L. Doctorow, Ragtime*
- John Chalberg, Emma Goldman*
- John Milton Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest*
- Kevin Boyle, Arc of Justice*
- William Leuchtenburg, Perils of Prosperity*
- Course reader [Brinkley, chapters 17, 18, 20, 21, 23]*

*All texts are available at the bookstore. The * indicates the text is also on reserve in the library.*

Requirements:

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|------------------------------------|------------|
| • Class participation | 10 percent |
| • Reading essay (750-1000 words) | 15 percent |
| • Research paper (1500-2000 words) | 30 percent |
| • Mid-term exam | 15 percent |
| • Final exam | 30 percent |

Class participation will include regular attendance, informed discussion, and the Wilson debate. Significant progress will receive appropriate recognition.

Deadlines:

- September 12: Reading essay (required)
- September 29: Issue précis
- October 10: Mid-term exam
- October 27: Research paper (required)
- November 12: Research rewrite (optional)
- December 1: Reading essay (optional)
- December ??: Final exam

Late work will result in substantial penalties (one full letter grade per day). Academic misconduct will lead to severe sanctions in full accordance with university policy.

Topics and Readings (due that day):

Week One: August 25-29

Course Introduction

The Construction of the “New South”

Due: Boyle, Arc of Justice, chapter 2

Discussion: 1) Why were so many whites so determined to hail the rise of a “New South”? 2) How “new” was the “New South”? 3) How and why did the ideas of Du Bois and Washington differ? 4) Who had the better approach to African-American advancement at the time? Why?

The Conquest of the “Old West”

Due: Begin Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) Why were Native Americans unable to defend their lands? 2) Was the U.S. guilty of cultural genocide in relation to American Indians?

Week Two: September 1-5

The Gilded Age: Politics and Patronage

Due: Continue Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) Was the tariff a symbolic or substantive issue? 2) Were the secret ballot and direct primary positive or negative reforms? Why?

The American Farmer and the Populist Movement

Due: “Populist Party Platform” (reader); continue Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) What were the main problems facing American farmers in the late 19th century? 2) What were the main elements of the Populist Platform? 3) Was the Populist Party a success or failure? 4) What was the most important legacy of the election of 1896?

The Rise of Industrial America

Due: Brinkley, chapter 17 (reader); continue Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for the emergence of industrial capitalism? 2) Were Rockefeller and Carnegie “robber barons” or “industrial captains”?

Week Three: September 8-12

The World of Industrial Workers

Due: “Our Daily Life” (packet); continue Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) How were the jobs and lives of blue-collar workers transformed during the era? 2) How did the workers struggle to retain control?

The Battle for Industrial America

Due: Finish Doctorow, Ragtime

Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for the failure of labor unions in this period? 2) Was the failure of labor unions in this period inevitable?

The World of Non-Industrial Workers

Due: **Reading essay** (required)

Discussion: 1) How were the jobs and lives of white-collar workers transformed during the era? 2) How did the workers struggle to retain control? 3) Why were some characters in *Ragtime* better able to cope with the changing conditions of American society than others?

Week Four: September 15-19

The Rise of Urban and Suburban America

Due: Brinkley, chapter 18 (reader); “Boss” Plunkitt (packet)

Discussion: 1) How were American cities and suburbs transformed? 2) Was the emergence of the “political machine” a positive or negative development? Why?

The Immigrant Experience

Due: Anzia Yezierska (reader); begin Chalberg, Emma Goldman

Discussion: 1) What were the main reasons immigrants came to America? 2) Why were the “new” immigrants faced with more hostility than the “old” immigrants? 3) What was new about the “new nativism”?

The Transformation of Urban Leisure

Due: “Drama of the People” and “Athletic Craze” (packet); continue Chalberg, Emma Goldman

Discussion: 1) How were leisure patterns different between middle-class and working-class men, between married and unmarried men? 2) What was the role played by spectator sports in urban-industrial America?

Week Five: September 22-26

The World of Female Work and Leisure

Due: “A Day’s Work” (reader); “A 1911 Inferno” (packet); continue Chalberg, Emma Goldman

Discussion: 1) How were the goals of women workers similar to and different from those of men? 2) How were leisure patterns different between men and women?

The Battle for the Ballot

Due: Finish Chalberg, Emma Goldman; “Declaration of Principles” (packet)

Discussion: 1) Why were women finally able to win the right to vote? 2) Why were women unable to unite on other issues? 3) Do you admire Goldman? Why or why not?

The Progressive Impulse

Due: Brinkley, chapter 21 (reader) and John Dewey (packet)

Discussion: 1) What was the most important progressive reform? 2) What were the greatest successes and failures of the progressives? Why?

Week Six: September 29-October 3

The Progressive Crusade

Due: **Issue précis**; Jacob Riis (reader)

Discussion: 1) Why were the progressives (to an extent) successful? 2) Was the camera a

“mirror of reality”?

Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power

Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10

Discussion: 1) How “progressive” was Roosevelt? 2) What was his most significant reform? 3) How do you explain his contradictions?

No Class

Week Seven: October 6-10

William Howard Taft and the Election of 1912

Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 11-14

Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for Taft’s failure as president? 2) In the election of 1912, who had the most realistic approach for controlling large corporations? 3) Why was the election so critical – and so heated?

Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality

Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 15-16

Discussion: 1) How “progressive” was Wilson? 2) What was his most significant reform? 3) Was it inevitable that he would govern according the principles of the “New Nationalism”?

Mid-Term Exam

Week Eight: October 13-17

American Expansionism (I)

Due: Brinkley, chapter 20 (reader)

Discussion: 1) What was the most important cause of American expansionism? 2) Was American expansionism inevitable?

Mid-Semester Break

Mid-Semester Break

Week Nine: October 20-24

War with Spain and the Philippines

Due: “In Defense of Imperialism” and “A Criticism of Imperialism” (packet)

Discussion: 1) What was the main cause of the Spanish-American War? 2) What does the outcome of the war suggest about American policy? 3) Was annexation the proper action? 4) Was annexation helpful or harmful for the Philippines?

American Expansionism (II)

Due: Brinkley, chapter 23 (reader)

Discussion: 1) To what extent were the policies of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson in Latin America

similar and/or different? 2) What was the main motivation behind the Open Door policy? 3) How and why was U.S. policy different toward developing nations?

Woodrow Wilson and the Coming of World War I

Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 17-19; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, prologue and chapter 1

Discussion: 1) What was the main reason the U.S. entered the war? 2) Was U.S. entry inevitable? 3) What was Wilson's main motivation in issuing the Fourteen Points?

Week Ten: October 27-31

Over There

Due: **Research paper** (required)

Discussion: 1) Why was World War I so horrific? 2) Why was it so significant?

Over Here

Due: Eugene Debs (reader); Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 2

Discussion: 1) How was American society affected by World War I? 2) What was the most important impact of World War I (short-term or long-term) on American society? Why?

The “Lost Peace”: Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations

Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 20-21; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 3

Discussion: 1) Was Wilson primarily responsible for the failure of the U.S. to ratify the Treaty of Versailles? 2) Was the subsequent failure of the US to join the League of Nations a significant cause of World War II? 3) Was Wilson a man ahead of his time?

Week Eleven: November 3-7

The “Bitter Peace” (I): The “New Negro” and “Red Summer” of 1919

Due: Boyle, Arc of Justice, prologue, chapters 1, 3; “The Great Migration” (packet)

Discussion: 1) What was the most important factor in the emergence of the “New Negro”? 2) How new was the “New Negro”?

The “Bitter Peace” (II): Labor Unrest and the Red Scare of 1919

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 4; “Sacco and Vanzetti” (reader)

Discussion: 1) What was the main source of labor unrest? 2) How did labor unrest contribute to the Red Scare? 3) Does war fervor inevitably lead to domestic purges?

No Class

Week Twelve: November 10-14

The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (I)

Due: Continue Boyle, Arc of Justice

Discussion: Did the Wilson administration pursue a misguided and ineffective foreign policy toward Europe from August 1914 to April 1917?

The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (II)

Due: **Research rewrite** (optional)

Discussion: Did the Wilson administration unjustifiably infringe upon civil liberties during and after World War I (the Espionage Act, the Sedition Act, the Alien Act, and the Palmer Raids)?

The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (III)

Due: Continue Boyle, Arc of Justice; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 8

Discussion: Did the Wilson administration mishandle the negotiations for, and the ratification of, the Treaty of Versailles (including the League of Nations)?

Week Thirteen: November 17-21 (University Holiday)

Week Fourteen: November 24-28

Artistic Life: The “Harlem Renaissance”

Due: Finish Boyle, Arc of Justice; Langston Hughes (packet)

Discussion: 1) What impulses motivated the artists of the Harlem Renaissance?

2) What is the proper role for art to play in a democratic society and consumer culture?

The Politics of Reaction

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapters 5, 7

Discussion: 1) What was the fate of Progressivism in the 1920s? 2) Which scholarly interpretation of the 1920s makes the most sense? Why?

Cultures in Conflict (I): Nativism and Prohibition

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapters 11-12

Discussion: 1) What were the main impulses behind the Nativist and Prohibition movements?

2) To what extent were both reflective of tensions between urban and provincial America?

Week Fifteen: December 1-5

Cultures in Conflict (II): The New Klan

Due: **Reading essay** (optional); “The Klansman’s Manual” (reader)

Discussion: 1) How was the New Klan similar to and different from the Old Klan?

2) What were the main factors in the New Klan’s rapid rise and fall?

Cultures in Conflict (III): Darwinism and Fundamentalism

Due: William Jennings Bryan (reader); “The Scopes Trial” (packet)

Discussion: 1) To what extent were the Fundamentalists similar to the other oppositional movements of the decade? 2) Why have scholars tended to deemphasize the role played by religion – particularly Fundamentalism – in American life?

The “New Woman”: Image and Reality

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 9; Margaret Sanger (packet)

Discussion: 1) How new was the “New Woman”? 2) Why were women in the 1920s unable to form a common political agenda? 3) What does the fate of the Sheppard-Towner Act suggest?

Week Sixteen: December 8-12

The “New Consumer”: Identity and Technology in Transition

Due: “Drinking on Campus” and “Petting on Campus” (packet); Bruce Barton (reader)

Discussion: 1) How was the “culture of consumption” received by different groups (men and women, blacks and whites, the young and old, the working and middle classes)? 2) Was the emergence of a “culture of consumption” a positive or negative development? Why?

The “New Era”: Prosperity and Poverty

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 10

Discussion: 1) Why were workers so passive and docile in the face of continuing inequality and mistreatment? 2) How significant were racial and gender tensions among workers? 3) How was welfare capitalism a double-edged sword for employers?

The Great Crash and the Great Depression

Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 13, epilogue

Discussion: 1) To what extent was the Great Crash the cause of the Great Depression? 2) Which scholarly interpretation of the causes of the Great Depression makes the most sense? Why? 3) In what sense was 1929 the end of an era?

For changes and updates, please consult the ERes course page. The discussion questions serve as a general guide to reading assignments and class participation.