

History 467: The Origins of Modern America

Fall Semester 2018

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 12:30-1:20 a.m.

Recitation 303

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Required Books

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom* (Available as an e-book through Purdue University Libraries)

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*

Kristina Bross, ed., *Little Else Than a Memory*

Additional Readings can be found on Blackboard

Learning Objectives

1. Develop skills used by historians to make sense of U.S. History from 1870 to 1920
2. Gain experience using original materials to understand the past
3. Practice reading and writing with the goal of understanding why things happened
4. Engage a key organizing principle, "Modernity," to consider the consequences of historical change

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Course Description

The years between the end of the Civil War and the end of the Great War in Europe represent one of the most important eras of social, cultural, and political transformation in U.S. history. As the title of this course suggests, it marks a moment when the U.S. emerged as a modern nation. While the term "modern" connotes positive advancement and progress, we'll see that "modernity" exacted costs that were not paid equally by men and women of different economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, the first four decades following the end of the Civil War might well be seen as the Second U.S. Civil War. In this contest, Americans battled over what kind of democracy the United States would/should be. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Americans struggled to bring into existence a new nation, one that reflected the latest technologies, that was more urban than rural, and that outlined the way of life that would dominate the next century.

Part I

The Second U.S. Civil War, 1865-1900

Part I focuses on what we will be calling the "Second U.S. Civil War." We will explore the ways that the conflicts of the War Between the States were only partially resolved by the time of the South's surrender in 1865 and spawned new differences based on race and class that transcended region. Americans in the last three decades of the nineteenth century saw a social collapse that led to violence and repression, the likes of which they had never seen before. A transforming economy attracted millions of migrants to the U.S. from other parts of the world, and this led to a new powerful source of

social friction. The unresolved conflicts concerning race and equality as well as struggles over women's and workers' rights compounded the tensions and uncertainty of the period. The culmination of Part I is the Crash of 1893 and the ensuing depression—a social and economic calamity of such huge proportions that it forced Americans to consider whether or how the body politic might ever heal.

Week 1 (August 19-23)

M: Introduction to the course/syllabus

W: The Problem of Modernity

F: The “Gilded Age” and “The Gay Nineties”

Read: Begin Hunter, *To 'joy My Freedom*, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 2 (August 26-30)

M: Unresolved Problems of the Civil War

W: The Onset of Industrialization

F: The Captains of Industry and the Capitalist Logic of Industrialization

Read: Hunter, *To 'joy My Freedom*, Chapters 3-5

Week 3 (September 2-6)

M: NO CLASS TODAY – LABOR DAY

W: Clashing Work Values—class discussion of the following two essays

Andrew Carnegie, “Gospel of Wealth,” and Eugene Debs, “What’s Wrong with Chicago?”

Carnegie and Debs offer competing perspectives on work in a capitalist setting, but as two European-American men, they do not speak for all workers. As you read the two essays, think about the basic assumptions each man made about work. What accounts for their differences? If you were one of the women studied by Tera Hunter, how might you respond to these two positions? What if you were a newly arrived immigrant?

F: Impact of Industrialization on Women

Read: Hunter, *To 'joy My Freedom*, Chapters 6-8

Week 4 (September 9-13)

M: The South: From Slave Labor to Debt Peonage

W: White Supremacy, Economic Redemption, and Convict Labor

F: Migration and Social Transformation: “Exodusters” and “Strangers”

Read: Hunter, *To 'joy My Freedom*, Chapters 9-11

Week 5 (September 13-20)

M: The Crash of 1893

W: The Tramp: Homeless in a Depressed Economy

F: A Crisis of Faith

Part II

Looking for Answers

The second part of the course will consider various responses to the social collapse of the late nineteenth century. Many political and economic leaders believed that the best way to repair the nation was to seek new markets and to expand U.S. interests overseas. Their solutions did not offer an immediate remedy to working people and farmers, and the two groups rose up to challenge the legitimacy of those leaders. “Class warfare” became one of the catch phrases of the turn of the century as more and more people saw the interests of workers and farmers as antithetical to those of the

“Captains of Industry.” Social movements arose to challenge inequality and the worst effects of the economic depression. Cultural experimentation flourished. All “solutions” were in play, and many did not work out as their authors imagined. Together, however, they propelled Americans toward a new way of life.

Week 6 (September 23-27)

M: The End of the Frontier: Pacifying Indians and Overseas expansion

TAKE-HOME EXAM IS DUE TODAY IN CLASS

W: The United States in the World

F: Expansion and War

Read: Howard Zinn, “The Empire and the People”; Begin Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Introduction by James Hurt and Chapters 1-4

Week 7 (September 30-October 1)

M: Jacob Coxey’s Appeal for Government Action

W: The People’s Party and the Reorientation of U.S. Politics

F: Discussion: Read *Congressional Record* for May 1894 and People’s Party Platform; Continue reading Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Chapters 5-9

Week 8 (October 7-11)

M: NO CLASS – OCTOBER BREAK

W: Who are “the people”? The Rise of Jim Crow and Lynch Law

F: The Rise of Nativism

Read: Ida B. Wells, “Lynch Law in America”; Continue reading Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Chapters 10-14

Week 9 (October 15-19)

M: The Settlement House Movement

W: Cultural Revolution at the Turn of the Century: Naming the Way We Live

F: Seeking New Ways to Represent the World

Read: Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Chapters 15-18

Week 10 (October 21-25)

M: The Quest for “American” Music

W: American Literature: From Sentiment to Reality

F: Discussion: “The Yellow Wall Paper” and “A Deal in Wheat”

PART III

Modern America

The final part of this course examines how “modern” America emerged from the tumultuous turn-of-the-century decades. We’ll consider how the “costs” of modernity were distributed among men and women, social classes, and racial and ethnic groups. In other words, modernity represented “progress” and an escape from the despair of the 1890s, but not all Americans benefitted from modern conditions. Moreover, the urban industrial economy, international expansion, and loosening of traditional (Victorian) strictures called into being a bloody international conflagration—the Great War—with which we end this course.

Week 11 (October 28-November 1)

M: The U.S. in the Early 1900s

TAKE-HOME EXAM II DUE TODAY IN CLASS

W: Purdue University Grappling with Modernity

F: Discussion: Final Paper and *Little Else than a Memory*

Week 12 (November 4-8)

M: Meeting in Purdue Archives

W: Individual Research

F: Individual Research

Read: *Little Else Than a Memory*

Week 13 (November 11-15)

M: Progressivism as a Modern Political Culture: Business, Society, and Science

Student Proposals are Due Today: Students identify their subjects of study, how they chose them, and what they believe the individual can help reveal about Modern America.

W: Technology and Culture in the Twentieth Century

F: The Modern City, Anonymity, and Sexuality

Week 14 (November 18-22)

M: Mass Production and Advertising

W: "The New Nationalism": American International Relations after 1900

F: World's Fairs and American Culture

Week 15 (November 26-30)

Thanksgiving Break

Continue working on Final Papers

Week 16 (December 3-7)

M: The United States, World War I, and Modernity

Rough Draft of Final is Due in Class

W: Continue working on papers

F: Wrap-up for the course

Final Paper: Due during Finals Week.

Assignments and Grading

1. Take-home Exam I = 1/3 of the final grade

Monday, September 23, in class.

The exam will cover lectures and readings for the first part of the course. Using the assigned readings and lecture materials, you will write an essay in response to a question about the “Second U.S. Civil War” that played out between 1865 and 1900.

2. Take-home Exam II = 1/3 of the final grade

Monday, October 28, take-home essay is due in class.

The take-home essay will center on Jane Addams’s *Twenty Years at Hull House* but will consider as well the readings and lectures of this part of the course. Your essay will respond to a question about how Americans responded to the problems raised by the “Second U.S. Civil War” explored in the first part of the course.

3. Final Paper = 1/3 of the final grade

TBA—Finals Week, in class.

The final paper will involve original research in primary sources related to Purdue University. Using *Little Else than a Memory* as inspiration, you will identify a subject (a person, program, organization, research project conducted at Purdue in the early 20th century, or the like) and discuss how that subject engaged “modernity” in the United States.

Grading Scale:

A- to A+: 90 – 100%

B- to B+: 80 – 89%

C- to C+: 70 – 79%

D- to D+: 60 – 69%

F: 59% and below

Classroom Conduct

Learning takes place most readily in an environment of respect. Comments that are disrespectful or disparaging of others will not be tolerated. Disagreements, based on evidence, are welcome and fully part of the educational experience at the university level.

In order to maintain a respectful learning environment, students arrive on time (let me know if you have a particularly long walk from your previous class or if you have to leave early to make a special appointment) and stay until the end of the class period. Talking during lecture is distracting not only to the professor but also to those around you who are trying to take notes and hear the presentation. So please refrain from conversation during lectures and other class activities.

I do not ban cell phones, i-pads, and laptops from the classroom, because they are important tools for learning about possible emergencies and for taking notes. However, I ask that you do not use them during class for texting, videos, YouTube, FaceBook, etc. etc. If you are more interested in being entertained with material other than the lectures in this class, please do not attend (see Attendance Policy below).

Attendance Policy

I do not take attendance on a regular basis, but I do pay attention to who is in class. There are no points assigned to attendance, but you may well see a deficit in points on exams and papers because of your absence from class; namely, because you may not know the answers to questions based on in-class material. You are university students, paying to get an education. What you get for your tuition dollars is up to you. I will do all that I can, short of forcing you to come to class, to help you succeed in this course.

Academic Honesty

I adhere to the passage sent from the Provost's office regarding academic honesty: "Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern." In short, I expect you to turn in work that is yours and yours alone. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism in class, and it should come as no surprise that cheating in any form will not be tolerated.

Remember, Purdue University has an Honors Pledge that was written by Purdue University students; we quote it below:

"As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue."