

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Spring 2011

History 940  
Seminar–American History 1900-1945  
Wednesday, 1:20-3:20  
George Mosse Humanities Building 5257

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Course Description

This is an advanced seminar on American history from 1900 to 1945, a period of momentous social change and corresponding efforts at social amelioration. Understanding the Progressive Era, the 1920s, and New Deal has challenged historians for decades. We'll read some of the most important interpretations of various aspects of reform, from Richard Hofstadter's *Age of Reform* to David Kennedy's *Freedom from Fear*. Reform movements appeared in various guises in the early decades of the twentieth century, variously representing conservative, liberal, and radical ideologies. From social gospeler to fundamentalist, trust buster to New Dealer, settlement house volunteer to professional altruist, diverse movements arose that promised to bring order and improvement to American life.

The required readings tend to offer sweeping arguments about their respective subjects and will provide the core of weekly seminar discussions. The quality of the course will therefore depend heavily on the quality of weekly preparation. In addition, every student will write one paper, limited to 18-20 pages, due at the end of the semester. Details for this assignment are described later in the syllabus.

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## Required Books

The following books are available in paperback. One copy should also be available on reserve at College Library (Helen C. White). I have also placed an order for these paperbacks at the University Bookstore. In addition to copies found in UW libraries, also check local used bookstores or perhaps book dealers on the Internet. The journal articles can be found on line via MADCAT at JSTOR, History Cooperative, or often in bound form in our library system.

- 1) Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform
  - 2) Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order
  - 3) Robert Crunden, Ministers of Reform
  - 4) Robyn Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform
  - 5) Christopher Capozzola, Uncle Sam Wants You
  - 6) Jackson Lears, Rebirth of a Nation
  - 7) George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture
  - 8) Michael Kazin, Godly Hero
  - 9) Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods
  - 10) David Kennedy, The American People in the Great Depression: Freedom from Fear
  - 11) Lizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal
  - 12) Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest
  - 13) Daniel Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings
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## Student Responsibilities and Course Requirements

The formal course requirements include class attendance, weekly preparation for class discussions, and the completion of one paper. There are no examinations in the course. If you miss a class, on the following week, please hand in a typed and double spaced two to three page, critical review of the book whose discussion you missed.

The quality of your class participation will account for 70% of your final grade. The paper will be worth 30%. A one to two page typed prospectus, which will not be graded, is due no later than March 2. This prospectus will provide a one to two paragraph rationale for the paper, the main question you are trying to answer, and a tentative bibliography of sources. A hard copy of the paper is due on Wednesday, May 11 at noon (History department mailbox, 4<sup>th</sup> floor). The paper is limited to 18-20 double-spaced typed pages, exclusive of end notes and bibliography. Aspire to write a paper that could be published in a scholarly journal.

For the paper assignment, please choose between the following. (1) You can write

an appraisal of a particular reform or topic (prohibition, pacifism, the social gospel, social hygiene, fundamentalism, progressive education, governmental regulation of banking, America and World War I, FDR and the political left, communism in the 1930s, among innumerable choices) that is largely historiographical in nature. That is, your paper will rest upon your mastery of the major secondary sources and offer a sense of how best to interpret the subject. (2) Or, you can write a paper that is principally based on original, primary sources. This would require identifying a clear research question, the relevant archival/primary sources, and either challenge, revise, or reaffirm a dominant thesis in the larger historiography.

Whichever option you choose, please see me early in the semester to discuss your topic. You can also initiate that discussion via email. Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, depth of analysis, elegance of presentation, use of sources, and persuasiveness.

There are many different style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style. Emerson said that a foolish consistency is one of the hallmarks of a petty mind, but documenting sources in a consistent manner remains essential.

Except for illness or other reasons recognized by the UW, extensions will not be granted either for the prospectus or the paper. In fairness to everyone, late papers will lose a half of a grade for every day late.

Deadlines:

March 2	1-2 page prospectus on paper
May 11 (Wednesday)	Hard copy of paper due, noon, History mailbox, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor

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Course Outline and Assignments:

Week # 1     Introduction to the Course  
January 19

Week #2     Hofstadter, Age of Reform  
January 26

Week #3     Wiebe, Search for Order & Samuel P. Hays, "The Social Analysis of  
February 2     American Political History, 1880-1920," Political Science Quarterly

80 (September 1965): 373-394. (JSTOR)

Week #4  
February 9 Crunden, Ministers of Reform. Also, Peter Feline, “An Obituary for the Progressive Movement,” American Quarterly 22 (Spring 1970): 20-34 (JSTOR) & Daniel Rodgers, “In Search of Progressivism,” Reviews in American History 10 (December 1982): 113-32. (JSTOR)

Week #5  
February 16 Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion & Jean H. Baker, “Getting Right with Women’s Suffrage,” Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 5 (January 2006): 7-18. (History Cooperative)

Week #6  
February 23 Library Research

Week #7  
March 2 Capozzola, Uncle Sam Wants You  
\*\*\*1-2 page prospectus due\*\*\*

Week #8  
March 9 Lears, Rebirth of a Nation & Rebecca Edwards, “Politics, Social Movements, and the Periodization of U.S. History,” Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 8 (October 2009): 463-73. (History Cooperative).

Week #9 **Spring Recess**, March 12-20.

Week#10  
March 23 Marsden, Fundamentalism

Week #11  
March 30 Kazin, Godly Hero

Week #12  
April 6 Larson, Summer for the Gods & Jeffrey P. Moran, “Reading Race Into the Scopes Trial: African American Elites, Science, and Fundamentalism,” Journal of American History 90 (December

2003): 891-911. (History Cooperative)

Week #13 Kennedy, American People (Part one of original Freedom from Fear)  
April 13 & Alice Kessler-Harris, "In the Nation's Image: The Gendered  
Limits of Social Citizenship in the Depression Era," Journal of  
American History 86 (December 1999):1251-1279.  
(History Cooperative)

Week #14 Lizbeth Cohen, Making a New Deal  
April 20

Week #15 Brinkley, Voices of Protest  
April 27

Week #16 Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings  
May 4

**\*\*Hard copy of paper Due, Noon, Wednesday, May 11,  
History Dept. Mailbox, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor\*\***