

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Spring 2019

History 940 3 credits  
Seminar–American History 1900-1945  
Monday 1:20-3:15  
George Mosse Humanities Building 5257

William J. Reese  
Professor of History and Educational Policy Studies  
Phone: 263-2319  
Email: [wjreese@wisc.edu](mailto:wjreese@wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Monday, 9:30-11:30, Mosse Humanities Building 5102 & By  
Appointment

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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, 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 17-18 pages, due at the end of the semester. Details for this assignment are described later in the syllabus.

## Required Books

The following books are available in paperback. One copy should also be available on reserve at College Library (Helen C. White). 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 and often in bound form in our library system.

- 1) Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform
  - 2) Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order
  - 3) Charles Postel, The Populist Vision
  - 4) Jackson Lears, Rebirth of a Nation
  - 5) George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture
  - 6) Michael Kazin, Godly Hero
  - 7) Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods
  - 8) Mae M. Ngai, Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America
  - 9) David Kennedy, The American People in the Great Depression: Freedom from Fear
  - 10) Lizabeth Cohen, Making a New Deal
  - 11) Glenda Gilmore, Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights
  - 12) 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, a short presentation at the end of the semester, 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 4. This prospectus will provide a rationale for the paper, the main question you are trying to answer, and a tentative bibliography of sources. A hard copy of the final paper is due on Wednesday, May 8 at noon (History

department mailbox, 5th floor, or EPS mailbox, Education Bldg., 2nd floor). The paper is limited to 17-18 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 (with some attention to primary 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. Students will present a brief (8-10 minute) overview of their paper on May 6, the last formal class meeting.

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.

Important Deadlines & Dates:

March 4	1-2 page prospectus on paper [details later in the syllabus]
May 6	Student Presentations (8-10 minutes)
May 8 (Wednesday)	Hard copy of paper due, noon, History department mailbox, Mosse Humanities, 5th floor, or EPS mailbox, Education Bldg., 2nd floor

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Course Outline and Assignments:

Week #1 Introduction to the Course  
January 28

Week #2 Hofstadter, Age of Reform

February 4

Week #3      Wiebe, Search for Order & “An Obituary for the Progressive Movement,”  
February 11      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 #4      Postel, Populist Vision  
February 18

Week #5      Lears, Rebirth of a Nation & Jean H. Baker, “Getting Right  
February 25      with Women’s Suffrage,” Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive  
                         Era 5 (January 2006): 7-18. (JSTOR)

Week #6      Marsden, Fundamentalism  
March 4

**\*\*\*1-2 page prospectus due\*\*\***

Week #7      Kazin, Godly Hero  
March 11

Week #8      **Spring Recess, March 16-24**  
March 18

Week #9      Larson, Summer for the Gods & Jeffrey P. Moran, “Reading Race  
March 25      Into the Scopes Trial: African American Elites, Science, and  
                         Fundamentalism,” Journal of American History 90 (December  
2003): 891-911. (JSTOR)

Week #10     Ngai, Impossible Subjects  
April 1

Week #11     Kennedy, American People (Part one of original Freedom from Fear)  
April 8             & 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; and “Kim Phillips-Fein, “Conservatism: A State of the Field,” Journal of American History 98 (December 2011): 723-43. (JSTOR)

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Week #12 Lizbeth Cohen, Making a New Deal  
April 15

Week #13 Gilmore, Defying Dixie  
April 22

Week #14 Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings  
April 29

Week #15 Student presentations (8-10 minutes)  
May 6

**\*\*Hard copy of paper Due, Noon, Wednesday, May 8, History Dept. Mailbox, Mosse Humanities Bldg., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, or EPS mailbox, Education Bldg., 2nd floor\*\***

### **Credit Hours and Student Workload**

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

### **Computers and Electronic Devices**

Neither computers nor electronic devices should be used in class, unless you have approval from the McBurney Center. Please let me know privately if this is the case.

Please remember to turn off your cell phones before class time.

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### **Students with Special Needs:**

The University of Wisconsin–Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin Statute (36.12), and UW–Madison policy (Faculty document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, which is confidential and protected under FERPA.

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### **Learning Goals:**

- #1: Students will demonstrate an understanding of diverse historical theories, epistemologies, and methodologies relevant to historical research.
  - #2: Students will be able to develop a researchable question and design a project on some aspect of American history, ca. 1890–1945.
  - #3: Students will gain experience using primary and secondary sources in historical research.
  - #4: Students will know how to write clearly and compellingly for diverse audiences.
  - #5: Students will understand professional standards for conducting scholarship ethically and responsibly.
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### **Class Discussion & Participation:**

To ensure that discussions are well-informed, students are expected to complete all weekly assignments prior to class. We are all bound by the common norms of civility, which ensures that we treat each other respectfully.

Here are some participation grade guidelines.

**A:** This student never misses class, always completes assigned readings, and comes to class prepared to think carefully, making connections between readings and across topics. He or she is willing to take the lead in discussion, posing thoughtful questions or taking risks by answering difficult questions. He or she avoids dominating discussion, instead participating mindfully in discussion with other students, considering their ideas and responding respectfully. An A student recognizes the importance of a shared conversation with the group as a whole. This student ideally is passionate about the subject matter and fully committed to our work while in the classroom

**AB:** This student does most of what an A student does, but may be slightly deficient in one area. For example, he or she may be a conscientious reader and thinker who tends not to listen to other students or otherwise dominates conversation instead of engaging in productive deliberation. Or, he or she may have been late to class a few times, or may have missed completing some reading assignments.

**B:** This student participates often, but not consistently. He or she may attend every class and complete every reading but avoids taking the lead in discussion. He or she only responds to questions or adds periodically to others' ideas. This student may participate in class constructively but may have one unexcused absence.

**BC:** This student may be a frequent but superficial discussion participant. The student may not participate as fully as he or she should. At times the student may seem not to have done the readings, though he or she usually comes prepared.

**C:** This student is intermittently prepared for class, participates well, but has two unexcused absences. She or he may have flashes of brilliance, but rarely participates beyond the occasional superficial comment.

**D:** This student very rarely participates, and only superficially.

**F:** This student has two unexcused absences and/or attends but never participates.

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### **Guidelines for Papers**

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.

Each paper is limited to 17-18 pages, double-spaced, exclusive of endnotes and

bibliography.

There are many different style guides; historians tend to use the University of Chicago's A Manual of Style.

**The Prospectus:** One to two pages double-spaced, due March 4.

Each prospectus (which will not be graded) should be typed and include your name, email address, a tentative title, and a bibliography. You can send me a copy of your prospectus *within* an email message (please do not send as an attachment), or hand in a copy by the due date. Feel free to submit the prospectus earlier. Please provide a **hard copy only** of your actual paper, in either my EPS or History department (5<sup>th</sup> floor, Mosse Bldg.) mailbox, whichever is most convenient.

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

You are strongly encouraged to see me during my office hours to decide upon a topic for your paper. Feel free to correspond on email if that helps jump-start your project. The prospectus is a working document to enable you to move your thinking and research forward.

### **Paper Grading Rubric**

**A:** This paper is exceptionally well written, with almost no mistakes of grammar, usage, or citation. It poses an original research question, engages with existing scholarly literature, and, where appropriate, analyzes primary sources in the context of a persuasive thesis.

**AB:** This paper is like an A paper, but does not meet standards of excellence in either its writing or its argumentation. The research topic may be less sophisticated or original, or the writing may suffer from noticeable flaws in grammar, citation, or structure.

**B:** This paper is well written with a few grammatical mistakes. It adequately synthesizes existing scholarship on a subject, which it illustrates with sufficient evidence. Although it makes few new claims, this paper clearly articulates a thesis and supports it with reasoned, well-organized arguments.

**BC:** This paper is like a B paper, but suffers from numerous flaws in grammar, citation, or structure. It lays out a clear research topic but fails to make a persuasive argument in its support.



**C:** This paper presents an argument but compromises its clarity with numerous flaws of style or evidence. It does not show an understanding of existing scholarship on a subject, does not incorporate original primary sources, or does not arrange them in a coherent fashion.

**D:** This paper shows insufficient effort. It may fulfill basic requirements of length, but is poorly written or researched, incoherent in its arguments, and unconnected to relevant scholarship.

**F:** This paper is unacceptable, either because of insufficient length, poor quality, or plagiarism.