

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Spring 2006

History 940
Seminar–American History 1900-1945
Monday, 3:30-5:30
George Mosse Humanities Building 5255

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& By Appointment

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.

Required Books

The following books are available in paperback. In addition to locating copies in our library system, I have also placed an order for copies with the University Bookstore and Underground Textbook Exchange. 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 in bound form in our library system.

- 1) Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform
 - 2) Gabriel Kolko, The Triumph of Conservatism
 - 3) Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order
 - 4) Robert Crunden, Ministers of Reform
 - 5) Robyn Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform
 - 6) Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization
 - 7) Julie Reuben, The Making of the Modern University
 - 8) George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture
 - 9) Edward Larson, Summer for the Gods
 - 10) David Kennedy, The American People in the Great Depression: Freedom from Fear
(Part 1)
 - 11) Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest
 - 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, 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 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 February 20. This prospectus will provide a one to two paragraph rationale for the paper, the main question you are trying to answer, and a bibliography of sources. The paper is due on Friday, May 5 at noon (either in my EPS or History department mailbox). It is limited to 18-20 double-spaced typed pages, exclusive of notes and bibliography. Aspire to write a paper that could be published in a scholarly journal.

To make the paper assignment as helpful to you as possible, please chose between the following. 1) You can write an appraisal of a particular reform (prohibition, pacifism,

the social gospel, social hygiene, fundamentalism, etc.) that is largely historiographical in nature. That is, your paper will rest upon your mastery of the major secondary sources on one reform and offer a sense of how best to interpret the subject. (2) As an alternative, 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. Each paper will be evaluated on its scholarly strengths: the clarity of the thesis, depth of analysis, 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:

February 20	1-2 page prospectus on paper
May 5 (Friday, noon)	paper due

Course Outline and Assignments:

Week # 1 Introduction to the Course
January 23

Week #2 Hofstadter, Age of Reform
January 30

Week #3 Kolko, Triumph of Conservatism & Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of
February 6 Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," Pacific
Northwest Quarterly 55 (October 1964): 157-69. Historical Society
stacks F886 W28

Week #4 Wiebe, Search for Order & Peter Feline, "An Obituary for the Progressive

February 13 Movement,” American Quarterly 22 (Spring 1970): 20-34. (JSTOR)

Week #5 Crunden, Ministers of Reform & Daniel Rodgers, “In Search of
February 20 Progressivism,” Reviews in American History 10 (December 1982):
113-32. (JSTOR)

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

Week #6 Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion. Also, Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Men
February 27 Are From the Gilded Age: Women Are From the Progressive Era,”
Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 1 (January 2002): 25-48.
(History Cooperative); and Robert D. Johnston, “Re-Democratizing the
Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Political Historiography,”
Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era 1 (January 2002): 68-92.
(History Cooperative)

Week #7 Bederman, Manliness & Civilization
March 6

Week #8 Spring Break, March 11-19.
March 13

Week #9 Reuben, Modern University
March 20

Week #10 Marsden, Fundamentalism
March 27

Week #11 Larsen, Summer for the Gods. Also, “AHR Forum” entitled “The Problem
April 3 of American Conservatism,” Alan Brinkley and responses by Leo P.
Ribuffo and Susan Yohn, American Historical Review 99 (April 1994):
409-52; and Michael Kazin, “New Histories of U.S. Conservatism in the
Twentieth Century,” American Historical Review 97 (February 1992):
136-55. (JSTOR)

Week #12 Kennedy, American People, Part 1.
April 10

Week #13 Research
April 17

Week #14 Brinkley, Voices of Protest
April 24

Week #15 Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings
May 1

****Paper Due, Friday May 5, EPS or History Department Mailbox, 4th Floor, Noon****