

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Spring 2008

History 940
Seminar–American History 1900-1945
Monday, 1:20 to 3:20
George Mosse Humanities Building 5255

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Office Hours: Monday: 11-12:30 and Wednesday: 11-12 & By Appointment
Education Building 215, 1000 Bascom Mall

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. I have requested that College Library have one copy of each book on reserve. I have also placed an order for these paperbacks at 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 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) William Link, Paradox of Southern Progressivism
 - 6) Matthew Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color
 - 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 February 18. 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. The paper is due on Wednesday, May 7 at noon (either in my EPS or History department mailbox). It 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. 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 19

May 7 (Wednesday)

1-2 page prospectus on paper

paper due, noon

Course Outline and Assignments:

Week # 1 Introduction to the Course
January 28

Week #2 Hofstadter, Age of Reform & Nell Irvin Painter, “Bias and Synthesis
February 4 in History,” Journal of American History 74 (June 1987): 109-112
(JSTOR) & August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., “The NAACP as
a Reform Movement, 1909-1965: ‘To Reach the Conscience of
America,’” The Journal of Southern History 59 (Feb. 1993): 3-30.
(JSTOR)

Week #3 Wiebe, Search for Order & Samuel P. Hays, “The Social Analysis of
February 11 American Political History, 1880-1920,” Political Science Quarterly
80 (September 1965): 373-394. (JSTOR)

Week #4 Crunden, Ministers of Reform. Also, Peter Feline, “An Obituary for the
February 18 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 Muncy, Creating a Female Dominion & Jean H. Baker, “Getting Right
February 25 with Women’s Suffrage,” Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive
Era 5 (January 2006): 7-18. (History Cooperative)

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

Week #6 Link, Paradox of Southern Progressivism & “‘Being in the Field of
March 3 Education and Also Being a Negro . . . Seems . . . Tragic’: Black
Teachers in the Jim Crow South,” The Journal of American History
June 2000): 65-91. (JSTOR)

Week#7 Jacobson, Whiteness of a Different Color. Also, Mae M. Ngai, “The
March 10 Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A
Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” Journal of
American History (June 1999): 67-92 (History Cooperative); and
Peter Kolchin, “Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in
America,” Journal of American History 89 (June 2002): 154-73.
(History Cooperative)

Week #8
March 17 **Spring Break, March 15-23**

Week #9 Marsden, Fundamentalism
March 24

Week #10 Kazin, Godly Hero
March 31

Week #11 Larsen, Summer for the Gods & Jeffrey P. Moran, “Reading Race
April 7 Into the Scopes Trial: African American Elites, Science, and
Fundamentalism,” Journal of American History 90 (December
2003): 891-911. (History Cooperative)

Week #12 Kennedy, American People & Alice Kessler-Harris, “In the
April 14 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 #13 Cohen, Making a New Deal
April 21

Week #14 Brinkley, Voices of Protest
April 28

Week #15 Rodgers, Atlantic Crossings
May 5

****Paper Due, Wednesday, May 7, EPS or History Dept. Mailbox, 4th Floor, Noon****