N.B.: This is a draft syllabus. I have not yet separated the required readings from the suggested readings. And the list may change a bit.

History 75300: Topics in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

Thurs. 2:00-4:00

Professor Thomas Kessner

This course focuses on a number of the major themes of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Between 1877 and 1920 the United States was transformed from a largely agricultural and rural nation to one that was industrial and urban. In this era of rising Big Business, Industrial Revolution and the emergence of American’s global influence, its post Civil War racial and immigrant absorption policies are cast; Populist, labor and socialist reformers offer their versions of a Better Way; and the political lineaments for Modern America are forged. We also look at social change and the multifaceted cultural transformations that marked these years.

Readings will include a sample of classic works along with a selection of more recent monographs and interpretive studies.

Course Objectives:
1. Study the history of a pivotal era in American history with its notable transformations.
2. Critically review and analyze key historical studies for the GAPE period.
3. Investigate the role of politics, economics, social forces, culture and technology in shaping GAPE society.
4. Examine essential changes in class, gender and race relations
5. Examine developments in America’s cultural traditions and its expanding diversity.
6. Explore how a unique American capitalism was shaped in this era.
7. Analyze the U.S.’s expanding role in global politics and economics.
8. Write a well defined, carefully researched and cogently argued paper.

Weekly Assignments:

*Required;  S Scan available;  E Electronic version available from Library;  ^Supplementary

1. GAPE: An Overview


2. **An Age of Excess**


3. **Making Business Big**


4. **The Populist Movement**


5. Working Class life and Labor


6. The Rise of the Modern Metropolis


7. Immigration


8. Race


9. Women and Gender


10. Reform

Riis, Jacob. *How the Other Half Lives*. (1890)
   http://depts.washington.edu/envir202/Readings/Reading01.pdf
   http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/addams/hullhouse/hullhouse.html

11. The Historiography of Progressivism


12. **Progressives in the White House**


13. **The Progressives and the War**


**COLLATERAL ASSIGNMENTS:**

The assignments are designed to help train students and to prepare them for research, writing and teaching. Reading, leading class discussions and participating in them are integral for this course. Each session will have a discussion leader who will prepare a short synopsis of the reading to be emailed in advance of class and lead a discussion on the reading.

The discussion should focus on major historical issues and pose interpretive/ analytic questions to promote a discussion of pivotal issues. Avoid the presentation of questions that are really another form of lecture. Questions should be direct and open ended and they should be part of a well thought out
organized presentation. Asking good questions is critical not only for doing good research but also for running good classes.

Each topic will also have an assigned second reader who will offer a critique of the reading based on the review literature and the reader’s own evaluation.

Some sessions may also have a second presentation based on a supplementary reading.

**Writing Assignments:**

Session 3. Submit review of a book dealing with the transforming economy. 1000 words.

Session 5. Submit your topic for a historiographic paper that will be due before session 12.

Session 7. Go back to year 1880 for your birthday and look up the *NY Times* (or other daily) for that day. Read it in its entirety, including reviews and ads. Write a three page description of the day and what you find historically noteworthy. Then select a single theme from the 1880 paper and compare its treatment in 1900 and then in 1918. *Four pages.* You may look at changes in the foreign policy, in ethnic or race relations, in politics or entertainment, or even at the changes in advertising strategy and format. Do not use any sources beyond the paper. Total seven pages.

Session 12. Submit a 12-15 page historiographic paper on one of the following topics: foreign policy; gender, race, labor, immigration, culture. We will discuss the number of books and articles and other relevant issues for this paper in class.

There is a one week grace period. If you hand in your paper late your grade will reflect the tardiness.

Feel free to consult me with any problems or questions. If you want a copy back submit two copies of your paper.

N.B.: Keep copies of everything you submit. Your papers should be your own work and reflect your own research. Where you have relied on outside sources for material make sure that this is noted. Quotes should be marked off to indicate they are not your words and they should be footnoted. Do not use previously submitted papers, purchased material or any other form of work that is not your own. The consequences of plagiarism can be serious. Enough said.