

Conflict and Reform: The United States, 1877–1920

Professor Michael Kazin

Summer 2021

Course Description

This course is about the history of the United States during a period of great social change and conflict. Over these four decades, the US became a predominately urban and industrial nation, a nation of immigrants and wage-earners, an imperial nation, and a nation where progressive reform was the order of the day—though its definition and aims were furiously contested. We will seek to understand how and why these tumultuous changes occurred—and who gained and who lost in the process.

Course Readings

1. Lears, Jackson. *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2010.
2. Addams, Jane. *Twenty Years at Hull-House*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999.
3. Riordon, William. *Honest Graft: The World of George Washington Plunkitt*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

Course Requirements

- Contribute to nine discussion boards
- Complete five short papers (1–2 pages)
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page paper or project of appropriate rigor

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the process of historical change
2. Analyze the meaning and significance of both secondary and primary source documents about the past
3. Explain how this period helped shape contemporary US society and politics

Class Schedule

Week 1: May 27: Introduction: Industrial Capitalism–Achievements and Discontents

Readings

- Lears, introduction and Chapter 1

Assignments

- Discussion Board One
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Week Two: June 3: The Power of Big Business

Readings

- Lears, 51–71
- William Graham Sumner, *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1833), Chapters 1 and 3. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 2 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two
- Short Paper One due June 9
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session One: Wednesday, June 9 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 3: June 10: The Labor Question in the Gilded Age

Readings

- Lears, 71–91
- Samuel Gompers, “What Does Labor Want?” (speech, New York, September, 1893), accessed through The Samuel Gompers Papers. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 3 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three
- Final Paper/Project Question due June 16
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final project or paper will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on

your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing.

Week 4: June 17: The Great Game of Politics

Readings

- Lears, Chapter 4 and 167–195
- 1892 platforms of the Democratic, Republican, and People’s Parties, accessed through the American Presidency Project (Links to these readings can be found in the Week 4 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Four
- Short Paper Two due June 23
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Two: Tuesday, June 23 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 5: June 24: The United States Takes an Empire

Readings

- Lears, 195–221
- Albert Beveridge, “Senator Albert J. Beveridge Defends the Conquest of the Philippines” (speech, Washington DC, January 9, 1900). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 5 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five
 - Revised Question and Proposed Bibliography due June 30
 1. Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor’s feedback, AND
 2. Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
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Week 6: July 1: Jim Crow and Black Resistance

Readings

- Lears, Chapter 3
- Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Compromise" (speech, 1895 Atlantic Exposition, September 18, 1895). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module)
- W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago, 1903). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)
- Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America" (speech, Chicago, January 1900). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 6 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Six
- Short Paper Three due July 7
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Q&A Session Two: Wednesday, July 7 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 7: July 8: Immigrant Work and Politics

Readings

- Riordon, full

Assignments

- Discussion Board Seven
 - Short Paper Four due July 14
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week 8: July 15: A New Urban Culture

Readings

- Lears, Chapter 6
- Watch Charlie Chaplin's 1917 film *The Immigrant* (A link can be found in the Week 8 module.)

Assignments

- Paper/Project Preview due July 21

- Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.
- Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Q&A Session Four: Wednesday, July 21 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 9: July 22: Progressivism from Below

Readings

- Addams, introduction, 41–147, 232–238

Assignments

- Discussion Board Eight
 - Short Paper Five due July 28
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week 10: July 29: Progressives in Power

Readings

- Lears, Chapter 7
- Theodore Roosevelt, "New Nationalism" (speech, Dedication of the John Brown Memorial Park in Osawatomie, KS, August, 31, 1910). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)
- William A. Schambra and Thomas West, "The Progressive Movement and the Transformation of American Politics," The Heritage Foundation, July 18, 2007. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 10 module.)

Assignments

- Rough Draft due August 4
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first ten pages (at minimum) of your final paper.
 - Project: Submissions of the project rough draft will differ from project to project according to type. Determine an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in with your section professor.

Q&A Session Five: Wednesday, August 4 - 8:00-9:30 p.m. ET

Week 11: August 5: The United States and the Great War

Readings

- Lears, conclusion
- William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," *McClure's Magazine* (1910), 463–468. (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
- Michael Kazin and John Milton debate whether the US should have fought in WWI in *The New Republic* (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
 - Michael Kazin, "If the U.S. Had Not Entered World War I, Would There Have Been a World War II?" *The New Republic*, July 6, 2014.
 - John M. Cooper, "Why Woodrow Wilson Was Right to Bet on World War I," *The New Republic*, July 6, 2014.
 - Michael Kazin, "Woodrow Wilson's Only Good Choice in WWI Was to Avoid It Altogether," *The New Republic*, July 7, 2014.
- Woodrow Wilson, "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Germany" (speech, 65th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, DC, April 2, 1917). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)
- George Norris, Speech in Opposition to American Entry into the War (65th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, DC, April 4, 1917). (A link to this reading can be found in the Week 11 module.)

Assignments

- Discussion Board Nine
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Week 12: August 12: The Crises of 1919 and Conclusion

Readings

- No readings

Assignments

- Final Draft due August 18