History 376: The Emergence of Modern America, 1877-1929

Professor Michael Flamm          Ohio Wesleyan University
Elliott Hall: (740) 368-3634     mwflamm@owu.edu
Office Hours: T 1-3 pm / F 2-4 pm (or by appointment)   Spring 2007

Texts:

• E.L. Doctorow, *Ragtime*
• John Chalberg, *Emma Goldman*
• John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*
• Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice*
• William Leuchtenburg, *Perils of Prosperity*
• Course reader [Brinkley, chapters 17, 18, 20, 21, 23]

*All texts are available at the bookstore. The * indicates the text is also on reserve in the library.*

Requirements:

• Class participation       10 percent
• Reading essay (750 words)     15 percent
• Research paper (1500 words)     30 percent
• Mid-term exam
• Final exam
• Final exam

*Class participation will include regular attendance, informed discussion, and the Wilson debate. Significant progress will receive appropriate recognition.*

Deadlines:

• February 2: Reading essay (required)
• February 21: Issue précis
• March 2: Mid-term exam
• March 9: Research paper (required)
• April 4: Research rewrite (optional)
• April 13: Reading essay (optional)
• May ???: Final exam

*Late work will result in substantial penalties (one full letter grade per day). Academic misconduct will lead to severe sanctions in full accordance with university policy.*
Topics and Readings (due that day):

Week One: January 15-19

Course Introduction

The Construction of the “New South”
Due: Boyle, *Arc of Justice*, chapter 2
Discussion: 1) Why were so many whites so determined to hail the rise of a “New South”?
2) How “new” was the “New South”? 3) How and why did the ideas of DuBois and Washington differ? 4) Who had the better approach to African-American advancement at the time? Why?

The Conquest of the “Old West”
Due: Begin Doctorow, *Ragtime*
Discussion: 1) Why were Native Americans unable to defend their lands? 2) Was the U.S. guilty of cultural genocide in relation to American Indians?

Week Two: January 22-26

The Gilded Age: Politics and Patronage
Due: “The Terror Last Time” (packet); continue Doctorow, *Ragtime*
Discussion: 1) Was the tariff a symbolic or substantive issue? 2) Were the secret ballot and direct primary positive or negative reforms? Why?

The American Farmer and the Populist Movement
Due: “Populist Party Platform” (reader); continue Doctorow, *Ragtime*
Discussion: 1) What were the main problems facing American farmers in the late 19th century?
2) What were the main elements of the Populist Platform? 3) Was the Populist Party a success or failure? 4) What was the most important legacy of the election of 1896?

The Rise of Industrial America
Due: Brinkley, chapter 17 (reader); continue Doctorow, *Ragtime*
Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for the emergence of industrial capitalism? 2) Were Rockefeller and Carnegie “robber barons” or “industrial captains”?

Week Three: January 29-February 2

The Battle for Industrial America
Due: Continue Doctorow, *Ragtime*
Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for the failure of labor unions in this period? 2) Was the failure of labor unions in this period inevitable?

The World of Industrial Workers
Due: “Our Daily Life” (packet); finish Doctorow, *Ragtime* (Part III)
Discussion: 1) How were the jobs and lives of blue-collar workers transformed during the era?
2) How did the workers struggle to retain control?
The World of Non-Industrial Workers
Due: Reading essay (required)
Discussion: 1) How were the jobs and lives of white-collar workers transformed during the era? 2) How did the workers struggle to retain control? 3) Why were some characters in Ragtime better able to cope with the changing conditions of American society than others?

The Rise of Urban and Suburban America
Due: Brinkley, chapter 18 (reader); “Boss” Plunkitt (packet)
Discussion: 1) How were American cities and suburbs transformed? 2) Was the emergence of the “political machine” a positive or negative development? Why?

The Immigrant Experience
Due: Anzia Yezierska (reader); begin Chalberg, Emma Goldman
Discussion: 1) What were the main reasons immigrants came to America? 2) Why were the “new” immigrants faced with more hostility than the “old” immigrants? 3) What was new about the “new nativism”?

The Journey to America
Due: Continue Chalberg, Emma Goldman
Discussion: What made the journey so difficult and so memorable for so many?

The Transformation of Urban Leisure
Due: “Drama of the People” and “Athletic Craze” (packet); continue Chalberg, Emma Goldman
Discussion: 1) How were leisure patterns different between middle-class and working-class men, between married and unmarried men? 2) What was the role played by spectator sports in urban-industrial America?

The World of Female Work and Leisure
Due: “A Day’s Work” (reader); “A 1911 Inferno” (packet); continue Chalberg, Emma Goldman
Discussion: 1) How were the goals of women workers similar to and different from those of men? 2) How were leisure patterns different between men and women?

The Battle for the Ballot
Due: Finish Chalberg, Emma Goldman; “Declaration of Principles” (packet)
Discussion: 1) Why were women finally able to win the right to vote? 2) Why were women unable to unite on other issues? 3) Do you admire Goldman? Why or why not?

The Progressive Impulse
Due: Brinkley, chapter 21 (reader) and John Dewey (packet)
Discussion: 1) What was the most important progressive reform? 2) What were the greatest successes and failures of the progressives? Why?
The Progressive Crusade
Due: Issue précis; Jacob Riis (reader)
Discussion: 1) Why were the progressives (to an extent) successful? 2) Was the camera a “mirror of reality”? 3) What was the actual impact of the Meat Inspection Act?

Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power
Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10
Discussion: 1) How “progressive” was Roosevelt? 2) What was his most significant reform? 3) How do you explain his contradictions?

William Howard Taft and the Election of 1912
Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 11-14
Discussion: 1) What was the main reason for Taft’s failure as president? 2) In the election of 1912, who had the most realistic approach for controlling large corporations? 3) Why was the election so critical – and so heated?

Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality
Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 15-16
Discussion: 1) How “progressive” was Wilson? 2) What was his most significant reform? 3) Was it inevitable that he would govern according the principles of the “New Nationalism”?

Mid-Term Exam
Week Eight: March 5-9

American Expansionism (I)
Due: Brinkley, chapter 20 (reader)
Discussion: 1) What was the most important cause of American expansionism? 2) Was American expansionism inevitable?

War with Spain and the Philippines
Due: “In Defense of Imperialism” and “A Criticism of Imperialism” (packet)
Discussion: 1) What was the main cause of the Spanish-American War? 2) What does the outcome of the war suggest about American policy? 3) Was annexation the proper action? 4) Was annexation helpful or harmful for the Philippines?

American Expansionism (II)
Due: Research paper (required)
Discussion: 1) To what extent were the policies of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson in Latin America similar and/or different? 2) What was the main motivation behind the Open Door policy? 3) How and why was U.S. policy different toward developing nations?

Week Nine: March 12-16 (University Holiday)
Week Ten: March 19-23

Woodrow Wilson and the Coming of World War I
Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 17-19; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, prologue and chapter 1
Discussion: 1) What was the main reason the U.S. entered the war? 2) Was U.S. entry inevitable? 3) What was Wilson’s main motivation in issuing the Fourteen Points?

Over There
Due: Brinkley, chapter 23 (reader)
Discussion: 1) Why was World War I so horrific? 2) Why was it so significant?

Over Here
Due: Eugene Debs (reader); Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 2
Discussion: 1) How was American society affected by World War I? 2) What was the most important impact of World War I (short-term or long-term) on American society? Why?

Week Eleven: March 26-30

The “Lost Peace”: Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations
Due: Cooper, The Warrior and the Priest, chapters 20-21; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 3
Discussion: 1) Was Wilson primarily responsible for the failure of the U.S. to ratify the Treaty of Versailles? 2) Was the subsequent failure of the US to join the League of Nations a significant cause of World War II? 3) Was Wilson a man ahead of his time?

The “Bitter Peace” (I): The “New Negro” and “Red Summer” of 1919
Due: Boyle, Arc of Justice, prologue, chapters 1, 3; “The Great Migration” (packet)
Discussion: 1) What was the most important factor in the emergence of the “New Negro”? 2) How new was the “New Negro”?

No Class

Week Twelve: April 2-6

The “Bitter Peace” (II): Labor Unrest and the Red Scare of 1919
Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 4; “Sacco and Vanzetti” (reader)
Discussion: 1) What was the main source of labor unrest? 2) How did labor unrest contribute to the Red Scare? 3) Does war fervor inevitably lead to domestic purges?

The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (I)
Due: Research rewrite (optional)
Discussion: Did the Wilson administration pursue a misguided and ineffective foreign policy toward Europe from August 1914 to April 1917?
The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (II)
Due: Continue Boyle, Arc of Justice
Discussion: Did the Wilson administration violate civil liberties during and after World War I (the Espionage Act, the Sedition Act, and the Palmer Raids)?

Week Thirteen: April 9-13

The Tragedy of Woodrow Wilson (III)
Due: Continue Boyle, Arc of Justice
Discussion: Did the Wilson administration mishandle the negotiations for, and the ratification of, the Treaty of Versailles?

Artistic Life (I): The “Lost Generation”
Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapter 8; continue Boyle, Arc of Justice
Discussion: 1) Why was the decade of the 1920s one of the richest periods in the history of American literature? 2) Do you admire the artists? Why or why not?

Artistic Life (II): The “Harlem Renaissance”
Due: Reading essay (optional); Langston Hughes (packet)
Discussion: 1) What impulses motivated the artists of the Harlem Renaissance? 2) What is the proper role for art to play in a democratic society and consumer culture?

Week Fourteen: April 16-20

The Politics of Reaction
Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapters 5, 7
Discussion: 1) What was the fate of Progressivism in the 1920s? 2) Which scholarly interpretation of the 1920s makes the most sense? Why?

Cultures in Conflict (I): Nativism and Prohibition
Due: Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, chapters 11-12
Discussion: 1) What were the main impulses behind the Nativist and Prohibition movements? 2) To what extent were both reflective of tensions between urban and provincial America?

Cultures in Conflict (II): The New Klan
Due: “The Klansman’s Manual” (reader)
Discussion: 1) How was the New Klan similar to and different from the Old Klan? 2) What were the main factors in the New Klan’s rapid rise and fall?

Week Fifteen: April 23-27

Cultures in Conflict (III): Darwinism and Fundamentalism
Due: William Jennings Bryan (reader); “The Scopes Trial” (packet)
Discussion: 1) To what extent were the Fundamentalists similar to the other oppositional movements of the decade? 2) Why have scholars tended to deemphasize the role played by religion – particularly Fundamentalism – in American life?
**The “New Woman”: Image and Reality**
Due: Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*, chapter 9; Margaret Sanger (packet)
Discussion: 1) How new was the “New Woman”? 2) Why were women in the 1920s unable to form a common political agenda? 3) What does the fate of the Sheppard-Towner Act suggest?

**The “New Consumer”: Identity and Technology in Transition**
Due: “Drinking on Campus” and “Petting on Campus” (packet); Bruce Barton (reader)
Discussion: 1) What was the impact of the “culture of consumption” on personal identity during the 1920s? 2) What was the role of technology in the emergence of a mass consumer culture during the 1920s? 3) How was the “culture of consumption” received by different groups (men and women, blacks and whites, the young and old, the working and middle classes)? 4) Was the emergence of a “culture of consumption” a positive or negative development? Why?

### Week Sixteen: April 30-May 4

**The “New Era”: Prosperity and Poverty**
Due: Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*, chapter 10
Discussion: 1) Why were workers so passive and docile in the face of continuing inequality and mistreatment? 2) How significant were racial and gender tensions among workers? 3) How was welfare capitalism a double-edged sword for employers?

**The Great Crash and the Great Depression**
Due: Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*, chapter 13, epilogue
Discussion: 1) To what extent was the Great Crash the cause of the Great Depression? 2) Which scholarly interpretation of the causes of the Great Depression makes the most sense? Why? 3) In what sense was 1929 the end of an era?

*For changes and updates, please consult the ERes course page. The discussion questions serve as a general guide to reading assignments and class participation.*