

The Making of Modern America
SEMINAR IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH AND WRITING
THUR 6:00-8:50 MHRA 1211
INSTRUCTOR: DR. SUSAN W. THOMAS
EMAIL: swthoma3@uncg.edu
OFFICE HOURS: 2114 MHRA, TH 5:00-6:00 OR BY APPT.

Required Texts Available in Campus Bookstore

- Calhoun, Charles W., ed. *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, Second Edition. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007)
- Fink, Leon, ed. *Major Problems in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era*, Third Edition. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015).
- Perman, Michael. *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South 1888-1908*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Available as an e-book here: <https://login.libproxy.uncg.edu/login?url=https://site.ebrary.com/lib/uncgreen/detail.action?docID=10026307>

Course Purpose

HIS 511 is the capstone course for history majors at UNCG. The course requires students to conduct original primary source research related to a topic of their choosing within the parameters of the chronological framework established by the readings. By the end of the semester, students will complete a 15-18 page research paper and present their findings to the class.

Course Description

This course examines the half-century plus surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, a period that arguably laid the foundation for modern America. Historians have divided these years into the Gilded Age (1877-1900), the Progressive Era (1890-1920), the Roaring Twenties, the Depression (1929-1941), and the New Deal ((1932-1941). Characterized by greed and excess, poverty and despair, reform and retrenchment, these decades saw individuals and the government grapple with the consequences of unbridled industrial growth and unsettling cultural changes. Rapid industrial growth, massive immigration, unprecedented

urbanization, and disturbing racial tensions presented new problems and demanded new solutions. Consumerism and cultural shifts, as well as technological advances, resulted in dramatic changes in American life. Out of this miasma emerged much of what we recognize as Modern America.

This is a reading and speaking intensive course that will require you to submit written drafts for revision, participate in peer reviews, lead discussion, and present your research. Be aware that the course has a heavy reading load. Aside from the required texts, you will be assigned weekly articles and/or book chapters. These readings will be provided as PDF files on Canvas.

Course Goals

Learning Goals for History Majors: Thinking in Time

History Graduates will be able to:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. [Historical Comprehension]
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical Analysis]
3. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. [Historical Research]
4. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. [Historical Interpretation]

More specifically, upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the skills of historical thinking and critical analysis in both written and oral communication
- Understand how to make a historical argument and support it with evidence
- Identify and evaluate relevant points of analysis when reading primary and secondary sources

- Grasp the level of contingency and human agency in the development of historical events

Graded Course Components

1. Five Primary Source Analysis: 10 pts

Using the Primary Sources included in the Major Problems text, students will write a 2-3 page summary/analysis of the documents for 5 weeks (your choosing from the 15 collections).

2. Book Review of *Struggle for Mastery*: 10 pts

3. Research assignments: 15 pts

All undergraduate students will be required to complete a series of research exercises during the course of the semester. Each assignment must be completed by the assigned due date. Detailed descriptions of these assignments will be included on Canvas. Here is a summary list of these assignments:

1. Project Description
2. Preliminary Annotated Bibliography
3. Written Critique of a Peer's Draft Paper

4. Historiographical Essay: 10 pts

A historiographical essay is a critical overview of a variety of historical interpretations of a given topic. All undergraduate students in this class will produce a 5-6 page historiographical essay, in which they will compare the main arguments of the 6-8 secondary sources they have located for their research paper.

5. Leading Discussion: 10 pts

All students will be required to lead discussion (as part of a group) for selected readings once during the semester. On the date you lead discussion, you will be expected to submit a 2-3 page evaluation of the main points of the readings. The discussions will take place in the last half of the class period and will rely on articles posted on Canvas, not the textbook readings.

4. Final Paper: 30 pts (25 for paper, 5 for presentation)

All students will produce a 15-18 pg research paper based on original research in primary sources and contextualized with secondary sources. Paper topics may vary by individual interest within the chronological time frame and based on themes we discuss during the course. Please remember that the quality of your writing, particularly the clarity and persuasiveness of your argument, will factor into the final grading. **No late papers will be accepted.**

All students will supply briefly annotated bibliographies with their final essays. An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, and documents, in which each entry is followed by a brief description of the source itself. These descriptions, or annotations, are provided to advise the reader on the usefulness of the materials you have cited in your bibliography.

For a better sense of what it entails to create an annotated bibliography, see the Cornell University Library's web site at <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>. This page contains a very good overview of the process. The Cornell Library's tutorial page, titled "Skill Guides: How to Find Specific Resources," is filled with other useful information. This page may be found at <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/tutorialsguides.html>.

5. Class Participation/Preparation: 15 pts.

The discussion and exchange of ideas are very important in this seminar class. Everyone will be expected to participate, and you should feel free to ask questions in every class.

Schedule of Assignments

Feb 23: Proposal and Research Questions
Mar 9: Preliminary Annotated Bibliography
Mar 23: Historiographical Essay
Mar 30: Review Struggle for Mastery
Apr 6: Rough Draft
Apr 13: Peer Review
May 4: Final Draft

Schedule of Class Meetings

Jan 19) Introduction to Course

Jan 26) Gilded Age: Rise of Capitalism

Major Problems (MP): Ch 1-2
Gilded Age (GA): Intro and Ch 1

Feb 2) Gilded Age: Industry and Labor

MP: Ch 3-4
GA: Ch 3, Ch 8

*Discussion Group One: Readings on Canvas

Feb 9) Gilded Age: Urbanization and Immigration

MP: Ch 5
GA: Ch 4-5

*Discussion Group 2: Readings on Canvas

Feb 16) Gilded Age: Politics

MP: Ch 6
GA: Ch 11 and 12

***Library Workshop

Feb 23)) Progressive Era

Readings on Canvas: Peter Filene, "An
Obituary for the Progressive Movement"
MP: Ch 12 and 13

***Proposal and Questions Due

*Discussion Group 3: Readings on Canvas

Mar 2) Progressive Era: Empire

MP: Ch 9
GA: Ch 14

*Discussion Group 4: Readings on Canvas

Mar 9) Race

MP: Ch 8
Struggle for Mastery (SM): Intro, Ch 1-2

***Preliminary Annotated Bibliography

*Discussion Group 5: Readings on Canvas

Mar 16) Spring Break

Mar 23) Race

SM: Ch 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, Conclusion

***Historiographical Essay Due

Mar 30) Progressivism and WWI

Readings on Canvas

*Review *Struggle for Mastery* Due

*Discussion Group 6: Readings on Canvas

Apr 6) Depression

Readings on Canvas

***Rough Draft Due

Apr 13) New Deal

Readings on Canvas

*Written Peer Reviews Due

Apr 20: Presentations

Apr 27: Presentations

✓ **Final Paper Due to my office by 6:30 p.m.
May 4**