

**HISTORY 436**  
**THE ORIGINS OF MODERN AMERICA, 1877-1918**  
**SPRING SEMESTER 2009**

Instructor: Matthew Hild

Office: Buckman Hall room 206

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10-11 AM; Wednesday, noon-1 PM; or by appointment

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Required books:

Louis Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt*

Vincent P. De Santis, *The Shaping of Modern America, 1877-1920*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age*

Course description: This seminar deals with the social, economic, political, and constitutional development of the United States from the Reconstruction Era through the end of World War I. Topics include the rise of a corporate capitalist economic order, the creation of a post-Reconstruction southern identity, tensions between black and white Americans, the United States' involvement in Europe's Great War, and the rise of the national regulatory state.

Course objectives: As a 400-level seminar, this course has strong written and oral components. Students will be required to write a major research paper and make an oral presentation about their paper before the class. In addition to gaining a solid understanding of the subjects covered in the course, students should also develop their critical reading skills, analytical skills, writing skills, and speaking and listening skills.

Examinations: There will be two written exams in this course: a midterm exam and a non-cumulative final exam. Each will consist of short answer identification questions and an essay question.

Research paper: Students will be required to write a research paper of fourteen to sixteen pages (not counting endnotes), typed and double-spaced, on any topic dealing with U.S. history during the time period covered by this course. Your topic must be approved by the instructor. Your paper must be based upon primary and secondary sources and must put forth an original thesis or interpretation. The instructor reserves the right to not accept any research papers after the due date.

Oral presentation: After you have turned in your research paper, you will make an oral presentation before the class in which you explain the question(s) that your paper examined, how you went about researching your topic, and what significant findings and conclusions you made in your paper. The oral presentation should take about fifteen minutes.

Class participation and attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly and participate in discussing the assigned readings. More than three absences will adversely affect your class participation grade unless you have a documented excuse for your absences (illness, death in

your family, or court summons). You must also have a documented excuse in order to take a makeup for a missed exam. Student athletes who will miss an exam must inform the instructor of this before the exam date.

Grading:

Components of course grade:

Research paper 30%

Exams 20% each (40% total)

Oral presentation 20%

Class participation 10%

Grade scale: A=92.50 or above; A-=89.50-92.49; B+=86.50-89.49; B=82.50-86.49; B-=79.50-82.49; C+=76.50-79.49; C=72.50-76.49; C-=69.50-72.49; D+=66.50-69.49; D=62.50-66.49; D-=59.50-62.49; F=59.49 or below

Classroom etiquette: All participants in this class (students and instructor alike) will be expected to refrain from rude or disruptive behavior in class, to keep their cell phones turned off in class, and to stay awake in class.

Academic honesty: All assignments and examinations in this course must be done in compliance with the Rhodes College Honor Code.

Disability services: Any student needing accommodations in this course for a disability should consult with the Office of Student Disability Services (901-843-3994).

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. If any deviations are necessary, they will be announced in class.

Reading assignments: You will be responsible for reading the first seven chapters of *The Shaping of Modern America* and the first four chapters of the Theodore Roosevelt biography by the date of the first exam. You should read the first chapter of *The Gilded Age* before class meets on January 20, and after that continue reading the book at the pace of at least one chapter per week. You will also be responsible for reading any handouts that will be distributed in class. By the end of the semester, you will be expected to have finished reading all three books.

Schedule of topics, exam dates, and assignment due dates:

January 15 Course introduction

January 20 The End of Reconstruction and the Emergence of the Gilded Age

January 22 The Rise of Industry and Big Business

January 27 Organized Labor and the Great Upheaval

January 29 Homestead Strike documentary film and discussion

February 3 The New South and the New West  
February 5 The Rise of Urban America

February 10 Mainstream Politics in the Gilded Age  
February 12 The Agrarian Revolt and the Populist Challenge  
**One-to-two page prospectus (typed, double-spaced) for research paper due along with preliminary bibliography, February 12**

February 17 The “Strange Career of Jim Crow” Begins  
February 19 Immigration and Imperialism

February 24 The Spanish-American War  
February 26 **Mid-term exam**

March 3 The Progressive Movement  
March 5 Progressive Presidencies (T. Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson)

March 10 Turn-of-the-Century Technologies (handouts will be provided in class on March 3)  
March 12 Documentary film—*Murder at the Fair: The Assassination of President McKinley*

March 24 The Rise of Industry and Big Business, part II: Scientific Management and Mass Production (handouts will be provided in class on March 12)  
March 26 Early-twentieth-century foreign policy and World War I

March 31 World War I on the homefront  
April 2 The Treaty of Versailles

April 7 Documentary film—*Last Voyage of the Lusitania*

April 14 **Research paper due**; oral presentations begin.  
April 16 Oral presentations

April 21 Oral presentations  
April 23 Oral presentations

April 28 Oral presentations  
April 30 Review for final exam

**Final exam: Friday, May 8, 5:30 PM**