

Hist4110

The Progressive Era

1. Course Number and Title: Hist4110, The Progressive Era

Prerequisites: None

Credits: 3 hours

2. Course Description: The Progressive Era was the beginning of the growth in the role of the U. S. government in the 20th-century. During this era, America saw the beginnings of federal regulation of business through the regulatory commissions and antitrust laws, the income tax, the Federal Reserve Board, federal regulation of alcohol, drafting men to fight overseas, and more. The enactment of these policies in the same period is not an accident. All of them increased the role of government in society and were intended to do so, as the outcome of the rise of statist political philosophies across the Western world. Statist political ideas and movements, especially those of the egalitarian variety, gathered momentum in the period 1870-1900 and became strongest in the period from 1900 to World War I, challenging the Founders' doctrine of limited government.

This course will delve into the era's history. Students will look at various types of Progressives, the growth of Progressive ideology, and its opposition to the philosophy of limited government.

3. Course Goals: The goals of this course are to acquaint students with the major policy changes of this era and to help students to assess the importance of various proposed causes of these changes, especially the major ideologies or political philosophies that supposedly influenced the political actors in this era.

4. Course Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate their understanding of the course subject matter by being able to do the following:

1. Describe and analyze the major changes in policies (legislative and otherwise) and attitudes (moral, legal, economic and political) from the period preceding and those advanced during in the Progressive Era;
2. Discuss and evaluate proposed causal explanations for these changes, especially explanations in terms of ideology (political philosophy);
3. Analyze the extent to which major intellectual movements informed policies and attitudes of the Progressive Era;
4. Differentiate between the various administrations, the domestic and foreign policy shifts in their respective tenures, and significant (lasting or influential) legislation;
5. Characterize and trace predecessors and epigone of activists who resisted change, especially key figures such as LaFollette;
6. Justify as well as criticize Progressive Era-instigated electoral policies in terms of how they undermined Founding principles. These include primaries, direct democracy, voter registration and secret ballots;
7. Trace and compare contemporary U.S. economic policy and institutions to Progressive Era policies such as government regulation of big and small businesses, antitrust, income tax, rural development, labor unions, and the Federal Reserve;
8. Describe the effect of state and local politics on national issues and elections, specifically those

having to do with rural development, labor and social welfare, alcohol and drug control, e.g., Prohibition, and racial and ethnic matters, e.g., the Ku Klux Klan;

9. Correlate and distinguish the ways in which World War I thrust Americans and national politics into a new arena that harkened back to engagement with the rest of the world but also imposed new attitudes and approaches; and

10. Parse the various philosophies, policies, and attitudes that position the Progressive Era as an authentic American revolution.

5. Course Concepts:

1. Political and philosophical 19th precursors to the Progressive era
2. 1st Prelude: 1870—1887 and 2nd Prelude 1887—1901
3. Theodore Roosevelt's administrations and shifts in his attitude to business legislation
4. William Howard Taft's administration and national electoral changes
5. Woodrow Wilson's administration 1912-16: antitrust and the Federal Trade Commission
6. Wilson administration: The Federal Reserve, Underwood Tariff
7. Wilson administration: Drug and alcohol policies, and racial and ethnic policies
8. Wilson administration: federal income tax; rural issues: highways and farm loans; labor and social welfare issues
9. The foreign policies of Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson, and the election of 1916
10. Wilson administration: from World War I to the election of 1920: a repudiation of the Progressive era philosophy

6. Required Texts

Ekirch, Jr., Arthur A. *Progressivism in America*. New York: Viewpoints, a division of Franklin Watts, Inc., 1974. ISBN 0531055647

Kolko, Gabriel. *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History*. New York. The Free Press, a division of McMillan, 1963. ISBN 0029166500

Link, Arthur S. *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era, 1900-1917*. New York. Harper Torchbooks: The University Library, 1954. ISBN 006133023X

Mowry, George E. *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America*. New York. Harper Torchbooks: The University Library, 1958 ISBN 0061330221

7. Recommended Reading

Bittlingmayer, George. "The Stock Market and Early Antitrust Enforcement." *The Journal of Law & Economics* 36: 1-32.

Boudreaux Donald J.; DiLorenzo, Thomas J.; and Parker, Steven. 1995. "Antitrust before the Sherman Act." *In The Causes and Consequences of Antitrust: The Public Choice Perspective*. Edited by Fred S. McChesney and William F. Shughart III. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 255—269. ISBN: 0-226-55634-4 (cloth) 0-226-55635-2 (paper).

Davis, G. Cullom. "The Transformation of the Federal Trade Commission, 1914-1929." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 49, no. 3: 437—455.

German, Jr., James C. "The Taft Administration and the Sherman Antitrust Act." *Mid-America* 54: 172—186.

Gilligan, Thomas W.; Marshall, William J.; and Weingast, Barry R. "The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887." *Journal of Law and Economics* 32: 34—61.

Grandy, Christopher. "Original Intent and the Sherman Antitrust Act: A Re-examination of the Consumer-Welfare Hypothesis," *The Journal of Economic History* 53: 359—376.

Hays, Samuel P. *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890—1920*. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1—47. For new edition: Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburg Press. ISBN-10: 0822957027. ISBN-13: 978-0822957027

Kolko, Gabriel. *Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965. Introduction, pp. 127—195.

Seltzer, Alan, "Woodrow Wilson as a 'Corporate-Liberal': Toward a Reconsideration of Left Revisionist Historiography." *Western Political Quarterly* 30: 183—212.

Wiebe, Robert H. "Business Disunity and the Progressive Movement, 1901—1914." *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44, no. 4: 664—685.