WELCOME to our interdisciplinary study of the history and culture of the American 1890s, the “watershed” decade. A watershed is a landform bounded by a ridge. One one side of the ridge all the rain, rivers, and streams fall off to one main watercourse, and ultimately to the ocean; on the other side, to a different watercourse. On the ridge of the 1890s, persons and events flow into new and different seas from those of the 1880s. As you might guess, this great shift made the nineties a decade of crisis: in race relations, foreign policy, immigration, literature, painting, philosophy, economics, labor, and even sports. Understanding the 1890s is crucial to understanding modern America.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will:

• **DEMONSTRATE** specific knowledge of the critical nature of the decade under review.
• **EXPLAIN** the measures that subordinated groups took to contest their social position.
• **EMPLOY** a variety of methods to analyze contemporary texts and images.
• **IMPROVE** the essential verbal skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

REQUIREMENTS

• Attend every class prepared to discuss that day’s assignment
• Two exams
• One final
• Two short (7-10 page) papers

Grading is based on the requirements listed above by the following percentages:

- Class attendance and discussion: 25 percent
- Two exams: 25 percent (12 percent each)
- Final: 25 percent
- Short papers: 25 percent (12 percent each)

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Meeting three times a week, the course will generally follow a pattern of lecture on Mondays, a combination of lecture and discussion on Wednesdays, and student-generated discussion on Fridays. Each student will arrive in class on Friday with a discussion question based on that week’s lectures and readings.

The topic of one of the short papers will be determined in consultation with me. The other one will be a family history, based on the activities of your family members during the decade.

Most of the readings are available online, but I want you to purchase three books: Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*; W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; and Robert McMath, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898*. These are on sale at the SLU Bookstore.

The final examination will be held from 12:00 to 1:50 on Friday, December 16, a date established by the university and not subject to change. Please be absolutely sure not to make any plans that would interfere with your obligation in this regard.

Integrity: A student who cheats or plagiarizes will flunk that portion of the course in which the violation occurs. However, based on the severity of any violation, I reserve the right to fail the student for the course. Students are expected to be familiar with, and follow, the university’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found at: [http://www.slu.edu/x19062.xml](http://www.slu.edu/x19062.xml). That policy reads, in small part: “in general . . . soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any work submitted toward academic credit is dishonest. It not only violates the mutual trust necessary between faculty and students but also undermines the validity of the University’s evaluation of students and takes unfair advantage of fellow students.”
Academic Accommodations: Students who believe that, due to the presence of a disability, they may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this, or any other, class at Saint Louis University are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or by visiting by the Student Success Center, Suite 331 Busch Student Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. I am only able to support student accommodation requests upon receipt of an approved letter from Disability Services. I will gladly speak with approved students after registration with Disability Services.

Classroom courtesy: Please do not eat or drink during class. Taping or other forms of recording are not permitted. Turn off your cell phones and close your laptops.

Students must complete all requirements to pass the course. This syllabus can be changed at my discretion.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 29  Course introduction

Aug. 31  Crisis of race
          Mississippi Constitution of 1890
          http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/103/index.php?s=extra&id=270
          Note Section 12—Franchise


Sept. 5  Labor Day

Sept. 7  DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, Chapters III-IV

Sept. 9  Discussion

Sept 12  Crisis in Foreign Policy
          The Open Door
          Venezuela; the Caribbean

Sept. 14  The Spanish-American War
          The Philippine Insurrection

Sept. 16  Discussion

Sept. 19  The Ghost Dance

Sept. 21  Frontier’s End – American culture and the 1890s frontier

Sept. 23  Discussion

Sept. 26  The Agrarian crisis

Sept. 28  Agrarian crisis

Sept. 30  First exam

Oct. 3  American literature: romantic, realist, naturalist.

Oct. 5  American literary naturalism

Oct. 7  Discussion

Oct. 10  Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat”
Discussion


Oct. 14  First papers due

Oct. 17  Visit to the Wainwright Building, Chestnut and Seventh, St. Louis.

Oct. 19  American architecture and other visual arts
Oct. 21       Discussion

Oct. 24       Immigrant lives

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), Chapter 1

Oct. 28       Discussion

Oct. 31       Immigrant autobiography
Edith Maude Eaton, “Mrs. Spring Fragrance,” 96-108
O. E. Rølvaag, *The Third Life of Per Snevik*, 144-155
Anzia Yezierska, from “Children of Loneliness,” 156-62

Nov. 2        Same

Nov. 4        Second exam

Nov. 7        The crisis of capitalism

Nov. 9        The Panic of 1893 and the depression of the nineties

Nov. 11       Discussion

Nov. 14       Labor in Crisis: The Haymarket Riot

Nov. 16       The Homestead Strike

Nov. 18       Eugene V. Debs and the Pullman Strike; second paper due: family history

Nov. 21       Revolution in philosophy

Nov. 23       William James, “What Pragmatism Means”

Nov. 25       Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 28       Manners and Morals:
The Trilby Craze; Crisis in College Football
Scott A. McQuilkin and Ronald A. Smith, “The Rise and Fall of the Flying Wedge: Football’s Most Controversial Play,” *Journal of Sport History* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1993), 57-64

Nov. 30       Crusade for purity: Anthony Comstock and the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice

Dec. 2  Discussion

Dec. 5  One woman’s response: Jane Addams
        Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, chapters 1-11

Dec. 12 Last day of class; course review

Dec. 16 Final exam