

STUDY GUIDE: "THE GILDED AGE #2"

Using this study guide

The following document has all of the terms, quotes, lists, and ideas contained in the most recent powerpoint presentation (note: I change these frequently so some variations may exist). As a result, you should not feel that you need to copy any of this information while in class.

The following questions are addressed in this section of the lecture. You should be able to answer these questions by the end of this section. If you can't, see me during my office hours or talk with your seminar leader:

- What are the ideologies of the various groups of Americans (capitalists, middle-class, working-class)? What is Social Darwinism? What is meant by accommodation and resistance? Who is accommodating and why?
- Why is there so much labor unrest in the Gilded Age? (GA) What about the GA makes the relations between capital and labor so contentious? What is producerism and how does it relate to other ideologies of the era?
- What issues divide labor? What unites them? How are these factors critical to understanding the rise and fall of the Knights and AFL during the GA?
- What happens during the Great Upheaval and Counter Offensive? What about after the 1893 depression? Why are the middle class so silent about events until 1896?

The following are sample essay questions used on previous exams dealing with this topic. The essay question used on your upcoming exam will look quite a bit (maybe exactly) like these:

- What is meant by the terms "dependency" and "control" during the Gilded Age? What were some of the factors that caused Americans to become more dependent? How did these factors affect Americans? sense of themselves as independent citizens? In what ways did Americans respond to rising dependency? Discuss one example from the politics of the era that, in your opinion, best exemplifies these tensions (be sure to explain why it is a good example).
- In class I spoke of rising dependency, the search for control, accommodation, and resistance during the Gilded Age. (i) How could the rise of vertically integrated trusts, such as John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Co., be understood as businessmen's effort to seek control? (ii) How could the actions of Samuel Gompers and the AFL be seen as accommodating the rise of big business? (iii) In your opinion, do you think that the Populists had an answer to the social problems caused by industrialization?

Selected Terms:

- 1877 National Railroad Strike
- "The Great Upheaval"
- Knights of Labor (1869)

- Industrial Union
- Terence Powderly
- Producerism
- Counter Offensive
- Haymarket Riot (1886)
- Samuel Gompers
- A.F. of L.
- Craft Union
- Business Unionism
- Homestead Works Strike (1892)
- Coxey's Army
- Pullman Palace Car Co. Strike (1894)
- Eugene Debs

General Lecture Outline:

- I. Ideology and Industrial Capitalism
 - a. Capitalists (Gospel of Wealth)
 - b. Middle-Class (uncertain)
 - c. Organized Labor (Unions)
 - d. Working Poor (none)
- II. Accommodation and Resistance to Industrial Capitalism
 - a. Accommodation: Booker T. Washington
 - b. Resistance: The Knights of Labor
 - c. Accommodation: American Federation of Labor
 - d. Resistance: Pullman Strike
- III. Conclusions

Powerpoint notes:

“Labor Unrest of the GA”

Questions for HIST-1302

What were the leading ideas that helped Americans understand economic change in the Gilded Age?

What organizations were formed to react to the changes?

Basis for organizing?

Positions regarding industrial capitalism?

What were the relative strengths and weaknesses of accommodating or resisting economic change?

What does Industrial Capitalism mean to America?

Twain: Americans want to “Get rich; dishonestly if we can, honestly if we must.”

Social Obligations?

Society

Politics
Economics
Modernizing Society
A lot changing
Old ideas no longer meaningful

(1) What does it mean for Capitalists: Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer
“Survival of the fittest”
William Graham Sumner
“Gospel of Wealth”
Less harsh than Spencer
Andrew Carnegie
Laissez-faire federal policies

(2) What does it mean for the Middle-class: “Confident Individualism”

But Middle-Class has “fear of falling”
Social Darwinism v. Personal Failure
A Fear of the New Urban Immigrants v. Recent Immigrant past
Traditionally very individualistic v. Increasingly seeing their lives caught up with a larger, impersonal society

(3) What does it mean for “Organized Labor”

Church? Ethnic culture? Karl Marx?
American Producerism
George McNeill, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today* (1887)
“[E]xtremes of wealth and poverty are threatening the existence of the government. In the light of these facts, we declare that there is an inevitable and irresistible conflict between the wage system of labor and the republican system of government -- the wage laborer attempting to save the government, and the capitalist class ignorantly attempting to subvert it.”
Republican party forms as labor party

(4) What does it mean for the Working Poor? Very little, they are too busy just staying alive

Accommodation and Resistance

Examples of Accommodation

The Emerging Middle-Class
Skilled Labor and Craft Unions (AFL)
Incumbent Political Parties
Small Entrepreneurs

Examples of Resistance

“Christian Socialism”
Unskilled Labor and Industrial Unions (Knights of Labor, American Railway Union)

Booker T. Washington

Tuskegee Institute (1881)

African-Americans should “cast down your bucket where you are;” do not aspire to higher economic callings.

White should not fear as “in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress;” segregation.

Resistance: The Great Upheaval, 1877 Railroad Strike

The Knights of Labor (1869-1886)

Uriah Stephens, Terence Powderly

“Producerism” for the unskilled; Welcomed all except Chinese, “bankers, speculators, gamblers, lawyers, and liquor dealers”

Critics: Knights are “Communist scoundrels [who] have hoisted the red flag of Agrarianism, Nihilism, Socialism, [and who] revel in robberies, bloodshed, and arson.”

Key demands / tools

8-hour day

Boycotts

Votes

The Haymarket “Riot”

Chicago, 1886

May 1: “May Day” Parade

80,000 participants

Thousands more attend

May 3: McCormick Reaper Strike

~500 Union organizers clash with scabs and private security forces

2 strikers killed

August Spies issues fierce proclamation

May 4: Haymarket

~250 attend, rainy, Chi. Mayor Carter Harrison attends, calls the meeting a “peaceful rally”

Craft Unionism (Skilled)

Accommodationist

American Federation of Labor (1886)

Samuel Gompers

“Business Unionism”

“Bread and Butter Issues”

Key Demands/Tools

No sympathy strikes

Collective Bargaining (no politics)

Wages, safety

Successful Accommodation? No
Homestead, PA (1892)
“Fort Frick”

By 1893...

Pan-Unionism (Knights) dead
Skilled Unions (AFL) accommodate
Will businesses reform themselves?
Sound logic: happy workers = productivity
Conflict is expensive, destructive, and non-productive
But 1893 Economic Depression hits. In first year...
500 banks and 16,000 businesses fail
150 RR & 30 steel companies declare bankruptcy
3,000,000 union members unemployed

Coxey’s Army (1894)

Middle-Class Response to Depression
Demand federal jobs program
Road work
Clear swamps, etc.
Jacob S. Coxey
Organizes a “petition with boots on”
Several hundred camp in D.C.
In DC, the Police outnumber “Coxeyites”

Pullman Strike (1894)

George Pullman’s “Model Town”
Debs and ARU convince ALL RR laborers to strike
Revival of pan-unionism?
260,000 strike
U.S. Army dispatched
7/4/94: Army attack leaves 13 dead, 53 wounded
Debs arrested
ARU officials black-listed
AFL refuses all aid

Conclusions for Labor Unrest of the Gilded Age

- (1) American labor ideology clearly evident through Producerism & Social Darwinism
But Producerism is a pre-modern ideology
Tied to Classical Liberal values that Industrial Capitalism was making obsolete
- (2) Understand the era as one of Accommodation and Resistance
Violence and strike less because people knew each other well (opposite was true) but
because their goals were mutually exclusive
- (3) Skill levels were critical to worker solidarity
Strikes fail because skill levels falling
- (4) Politics were largely ineffective – Laissez-faire in name only