

## STUDY GUIDE: “PROGRESSIVISM”

### 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:

- Why did the Gilded Age end and the Progressive Era begin? What is meant by the words “progress” or a “progressive era?” What other ideas and intellectuals were making Americans think anew?
- Why did we focus on the role of female workers, two key strikes, and the rise of the SPA and IWW as good examples to examine the rise of progressivism? What role did the fact that these were female workers have on the nation?
- What are the three main types of progressivism, examples of each, and how did they differ from each other? What conclusions can we reach about these three groups and Progressivism in general?
- Why did I keep referring to normative/ethical values like “good” and “bad” when discussing the progressives? Do we agree on what is good/bad? Who was in power to make these value judgments and who was left out?

### Sample Exam Questions from Previous Exams:

- Progressivism took many forms both domestically and internationally. (i) Why does the Progressive Era appear (what caused the Gilded Age to end)? (ii) Describe the goals and give examples of three types of Progressive reform, making sure to highlight how each type was a unique interpretation of “Progressivism.” (iii) Which of these three is the strongest today?
- Using examples from 1900-1920, define how America became a “Progressive” country. What were the key areas of disagreement between the various progressives? Did the era differ greatly from that before or after it? Why?
- Women played a key role in the nature of U.S. labor relations, voting rights, and popular culture from 1890 to 1930. (i) Describe, using specific examples from two of these three categories, how women's actions transformed America and their place in society (ii) In your opinion, did modern consumer culture liberate the American woman? Remember to justify your answer.
- (i) Describe the goals and give specific examples of the three main types of Progressive reform groups, making sure to highlight how each was a *unique interpretation* of “Progressivism.” (ii) Which of the three, in your opinion, was the most successful during the era (be sure to justify your answer)? (iii) Looking at either Nativism or U.S. foreign

policy from 1880-1920, how is it possible to argue that these actions were as “progressive” as other reformers of the era?

**Selected Terms:**

- “Progressivism”
- “Progress”
- Lawrence Strike
- Triangle Shirtwaiste Fire
- SPA
- IWW
- Social Gospel Progressives
- “Muckrakers”
- NAACP (1910)
- John Dewey
- Jane Addams
- National Progressives
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Anthracite Coal Strike (1903)
- “Trust busting”
- Pure Food and Drug Act, 1906
- Woodrow Wilson
- Clayton Anti-Trust Act
- Federal Reserve
- Federal Income Tax
- Corporate Liberal Progressives
- Industrial Divide
- Frederick Winslow Taylor
- Welfare Capitalism

**General Lecture Outline:**

- I. Why Does “Progressive Era” begin?
  - a. Who drives it? Why?
  - b. Examples of new perspectives during the Progressive Era: Women Workers
- II. Three Types of Progressives
  - a. “Social Gospel Progressives”
    - i. What is it? Who drives it? Goals?
  - b. National Progressives
    - i. What is it? Who drives it? Goals?
  - c. “Corporate Liberal Progressives”
    - i. Welfare Capitalism
    - ii. What is it? Who drives it? Goals?
- III. Conclusions

## **PowerPoint Notes:**

Why Progressivism?

U.S. Commits to Industrial Capitalism and “modernity”  
Citizens “feel” that tomorrow will be much different than yesterday; a new modern  
“reality” is being accepted  
“Progress” and “Modernity”

What are the assumptions of a “Modern” society (compared to those of the Gilded Age)?

Newer is “Better,” Older is “Worse” (Tradition?)  
Science leads to “Truth,” “Experts” control how science is used in society (Authority &  
Democracy?)  
Influenced by Formal Discovery, the Scientific Method, and new Environmental Realities  
Change leads to reappraisal of basic assumptions about society  
What is a “good” society? What do we owe to ourselves? Who is “qualified” to make  
these decisions? What is “fair”?

Questions for HIST-1302

Why a “Progressive Era”? What is new?  
Who should implement changes?  
New Technical Experts?  
An active and democratically elected Federal Government?  
Established Business Leaders?  
Is this an effort at reform or revolution?  
What is the end result?

Progressives First to “See”: Environmental Cause of Poverty

“See” the Costs of Political Corruption (Spoils System)  
“See” the Real Power of Big Business

An Example of New Progressive Perspectives and Assumptions: Female Industrial Labor

Lawrence, MA  
ILGWU  
Industrial Union  
Unskilled  
Members primarily women  
Changing Cultural View of Women  
“Mothers”  
Weaker  
“In need of protection”  
NOT TRUE of Gilded Age

Triangle Shirtwaiste Co./ Triangle Shirtwaiste Fire

Growing Threat of Inaction: The Socialist Party of America (SPA); Industrial Workers of the  
World

## “Progressivism” Defined

A Response to the conditions of modernity

A “Search for Order”

Shared Certain Traits: All Biased

Optimistic

White, Middle-class

College Educated

Three “types” (Basis for current political groupings in U.S., therefore very influential)

Social Gospel Progressives

National Progressives

Corporate Liberal Progressives

## “Social Gospel” Progressives

See that significant problems exist in the U.S.

Issues of economic growth less important than social equality

Desire to create institutions and organizations that focus the energies of a generally well-meaning public

Interest Groups

The Church

Change the environmental causes of inequality

Problems created by the environmental conditions, not the people themselves (Social Darwinism)

“Teach a man to fish, feed him for life”

## Seeing the Problem:

Journalism and “Muckrakers”

Meatpacking

1906 Pure Food and Drug Act

## Create Organizations to Act:

Interest Group Politics, NAACP

Interest Group Politics: WCTU

## Change the Environment of Inequality: John Dewey

Dewey: “True learning is based on discovery guided by mentoring rather than transmission of knowledge”

Progressive Education

See the child

“Child Saving” Reforms

Jane Addams

Settlement House Movement

## Settlement House firsts:

Day Care

Kindergarten

Regular Nursing

Preventative and Pre-Natal care

Vocational Training for poor women

College-level courses for poor women

English instruction for adults (ESL) and children

In Corpus Christi, Texas

Ella Dickinson Scott

Founder and 1st President of Monday Woman's Club, 1897-1909

Discussed current events (Hawaii, Philippines, politics!!), literature, and the arts

Built "Ladies Pavilion" on Bay Shore as area for women's entertainment

Donated land for Artesian Park

Raised money for school supplies, fire equipment, and civic improvements

#### Conclusions for Social Gospel Progressives

Fundamental problems exist, therefore fundamental change must occur to the way

America treats its social problems

Could no longer ignore (not see) the waste of life and suffering

WHY talk about social programs, public aid policies, etc.? Because new MODERN

America made these problems a reality

Environmental problems could be corrected (optimistic)

No one was "better or worse" than another; only conditions were "better or worse"

Use technology and practical knowledge to solve social injustice

Culturally biased against "bad" behaviors (sex, alcohol, etc.)

Organizations are the key to change

Problems too great for individual "character" to deal with

Action at the "grass roots" level first

Federal intervention certainly welcomed, but ancillary

#### National Progressives & Federal "Experimentation"

"National" Progressives

View the federal branch of government as an under-used resource

Assumes that the federal government is fundamentally a positive good

Enforce the provisions of the Constitution (see questions about "original intent" revived)

Actively promote the formation of regulatory agencies.

Functions once but now no longer provided at the state and local levels

Especially between rival economic interests

Ability to be used by both parties

Republicans to provide order for the marketplace

Democrats to tame the excesses of the marketplace

New Coalitions created that change the parties

#### 1903 Anthracite Coal Strike

TR's "Square Deal"

"Trust Busters"

Unexpected National Progressivism

## National Progressive Politics, 1908-1912

Teddy Roosevelt (R)

Promises not to run for “third term” after landslide victory in 1904

Selects William Howard Taft as successor, goes to Africa to hunt

Taft Administration

Rejects TR’s style, but furthers his political agenda

16th (Income Tax) and 17th (Senators) Amendments

Child Labor, Mine Safety, Tariff reduction laws (free trade)

80 Anti-trust lawsuits (TR had 25 in 6 years)

1912 Election

TR Returns; rejected by Republicans; he forms Progressive (“Bull Moose”) Party

TR calls Taft a “fathead” with no more brains “than those of a guinea pig”

Taft runs as Republican and a solid Progressive

Eugene Debs runs as Socialist (900k votes), the MOST Progressive of the four

Democrats nominate Woodrow Wilson (based on endorsement of William Jennings

Bryan)

## Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)

Personally Energetic

Academic

Highly Moralistic

More Active Agenda than Roosevelt!

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

Child Labor Laws

Reduce tariffs

Income tax

Federal Reserve Act

8-hour day for railroad workers

Clayton Act (de-criminalizes unions)

## Conclusions for National Progressives

Use active central government to blunt the hard edge of capitalism

Also blunts the hard edge of workers’ voting rights

Connection with Social Gospel Progressives creates odd mixture of political coalitions

Coalitions set the stage for the rise of the New Deal

Federal government increasingly the battleground for major problems of the day

The presidency rapidly amasses political power

Real and important issues being debated in Washington and through elections

Remember when we were talking about Civil Service Reform and Gold Standard?

## Corporate Liberalism

“Industrial Divide”

Welfare Capitalism

## “Corporate Liberal” Progressives

Distrust the role of politics in business/economic decisions

Do non-capitalists (W/C, M/C) have the right to interfere with the capital of others (Wealthy)?

Believe the basis for success is defined by “efficiency” and profit rather than “fairness” and equality

Highly individualized

Given that many progressives are white men, college-educated, with better than average economic means, they neglect the head start that they have on other individual “competitors”

#### “Welfare Capitalism”

Capitalists will provide for their workers because it is “efficient” to do so

Failed town of Pullman in Gilded Age

Capitalists will show “ignorant working class” how to become good middle-class Americans (moral, prescriptive, normative, hegemonic)

Savings plans – Control spending

Co. Sporting teams – Follow team rules

Stock purchase plans – Acceptable ownership

Co. Insurance – Individual responsibility

#### Henry Ford

Ford and “Fordism”

Ford Labor

1913 (Charlie Chaplin work load)

416% turnover/year

1914

Ford seeks control by raising wages

\$5-7/day

Profit sharing

Health benefits

Shop Floor

No talking

No smoking

English only

Ford detectives investigate your personal life

Women who marry were expected to quit

Turnover falls to <1%

#### Conclusions to Corporate Liberals

Deep hatred and distrust of federal intervention in business

Largely able to control state/local governments

Here is birth of modern conservatism

CL’s see Labor-Management relationship in terms of efficiency, not in terms of “labor” and “ownership”

Owners much more willing to agree to labor’s demands for wages and working conditions than to agree that labor has a legal right to strike

Not hostile to welfare capitalism

Henry Ford's labor and production methods prove them right  
"Fordism" revolutionizes the U.S. and the world  
More important than Marx to the lives of most workers

#### Conclusions to "Progressivism"

1. Most Progressives want to reform the system from within, not to revolutionize the country

Apply what we know from science and technology

Remove illogical inefficiencies

Free Americans from the worst excesses of industrial capitalism

2. To be progressive, one needs to have a moral vision of what is "right"

Not something everyone agrees to!

Power politics makes this problematic

Blacks & Ethnic minorities

Women

Foreign Policy (especially in "Third World")

Conclusions (cont.)

3. Like it or not, we are today still debating the Progressive agenda

Social Gospel, National, and Corporate Liberal Progressive blocs remain dominant today in American politics

4. Important to recognize what Progressives did not concern themselves with

Race and discrimination (science of the day worked against this)

Mixed record on Women's right to vote

#### Three views of Progressivism by historians (not required for HIST-1302)

1. "Public Interest" Thesis (democratic progressivism)

Ordinary Americans direct government to correct worst abuses of economy

Child Labor, Pure Food & Drug, Trust reform

2. "Capture" Thesis (economic progressivism)

Big Business (not John Q. Public) gains control over government

Directs law (through Lobbies) to aid largest industries

Seen quite easily in the New Deal (NRA, AAA, Wagner)

3. "Pluralist" Thesis (political progressivism)

Expansion of powerful interest groups, most of which compete for influence

Advantage goes to big business, largely because they were better organized than public

Not an over-whelming advantage. Often see public outrage swing the reform in contrary direction