WOODROW WILSON’S AMERICA
THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN UNITED STATES, 1856-1924

History 84o, Tuesday, 1-3 pm, Robinson Lower Library
(http://isites.harvard.edu/k85937)

Course Head
Dr. Trygve Throntveit, Robinson 101
Office Hrs: W, 1-3 (by appt. u.history.fas.harvard.edu)
E-mail: throntv@fas.harvard.edu

Head Teaching Fellow
Holger Drösler
Office Hrs: TBA
E-mail: hdroessl@fas.harvard.edu

Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) was a lawyer, scholar, and statesman who experienced, studied, and shaped many defining moments in America's emergence as a unified nation-state and modern industrial society. In this research seminar, Wilson's responses to his changing nation prompt engagement with multiple narratives of epochal events in his lifetime, including: Civil War, Reconstruction, industrialization, immigration, imperialism, segregation, woman suffrage, progressivism, state centralization, scientific advance, religious fundamentalism, modernism, consumerism, and World War I.

Readings. The seminar is structured around John Milton Cooper’s new biography of the twenty-eight president. Each week from weeks 2 through 10 (excluding spring break), we will read a small chunk of the book together. In addition, each student will choose one among several “satellite readings” on themes important to the period covered—some important to Wilson and examined by Cooper, some not. It is each student’s responsibility to master the shared reading and the satellite reading so that all can teach each other about this complex period, and introduce one another to a wide range of potential research topics not necessarily apparent from Cooper’s book.

Assignments. This course is designed to you students to formulate, prepare, and execute a major research project on a specific topic, while familiarizing you with the broader context of the period. Thus the major assignment in this course is the research paper, which accounts for 45% of the grade. This 45% comprises the paper itself (35% of the final grade), two short proposal assignments (totaling 5%), and an in-class presentation of work in progress (5%). Because mastering the literature and finding your project’s place in it is crucial to a successful research paper, you will also write three short review essays worth 5%, 5%, and 10% of the final grade. A 500-word primary-source analysis will count toward 10% of your grade, and the remaining 25% will be determined by your discussion and exposition of the shared and satellite readings each week (15%) and your participation in the peer-review workshop in week 12 (10%). Thus:


In short, there are many ways to earn credit in this course, but all are geared toward your producing a high-quality work of original historical scholarship that will be by far the largest factor in your grade.
REQUIRED TEXTS

One text is required for purchase (available at the COOP):


The texts on each week’s “satellite themes” are available on the course website. They are listed below, under the appropriate dates. **Satellite readings will be divvied up randomly at the previous week’s seminar**, but feel free to swap readings with other students.

SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

**Week 1** (January 24): Introduction

**Week 2** (January 31): Reconstruction, Redemption, and Expansion
Cooper, Prologue and Chs. 1-3
Satellite Readings


**Week 3** (February 7): The Higher Education of Industrial America
Cooper, Chs. 4-6
Satellite Readings

Week 4 (February 14): The Election of 1912

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS (500 wds.) DUE

(Find a primary source relating both to this week’s selection from Cooper and to the satellite reading you choose. Make a historical argument about its meaning and significance based on close reading of the source itself and careful consideration of its historical context. Consult the History 84o online research guide and the History 84o instructors for help finding a source.)

Cooper, Chs. 7-9

Satellite Readings


IN CLASS SHORT-FILM SCREENING: The Old Way and the New (1912; 8 mins.) [Screen credit: Archival film material from the collections of the Library of Congress]

Week 5 (February 21): The New Freedom

REVIEW ESSAY # 1 (2-3 pp.) DUE

(Critically analyze Cooper’s treatment of a particular event or theme from this week’s chapter selections in light of the arguments and evidence presented in the satellite reading you choose.)

Cooper, Chs. 10-12

Satellite Readings

Week 6 (February 28): Dilemmas of Justice at Home and Abroad

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS (3; 1 paragraph each) DUE
Cooper, Chs. 13-15

Satellite Readings


TBA: WEEK 6 MOVIE SCREENING: *The Birth of a Nation [The Clansman]* (1915), dir. by D.W. Griffith

Week 7 (March 6): Conflict

REVIEW ESSAY # 2 (4-5 pp.) DUE

(After studying your satellite reading, seek out and familiarize yourself with another major work on the theme. Compare and contrast its argument with that of your satellite reading as well as Cooper’s treatment of the same theme, and evaluate all three works individually and as a group. What are the successes and shortcomings of each? What can we learn about the topic by putting these works in dialogue that we would not learn by analyzing them separately?)

Cooper, Chs. 16-18

Satellite Readings


MARCH 10-12: ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH DR. THRONTVEIT
Week 8 (March 13): SPRING RECESS

Week 9 (March 20): Unfated Ironies
FINAL RESEARCH QUESTION (1 paragraph) DUE
Cooper, Chs. 19-22
Satellite Readings

Week 10 (March 27): Conclusions
REVIEW ESSAY # 3 (5-7 pp.) DUE
(Find three major books—or two books and two articles—on your research topic to read and analyze comparatively. These count as your satellite readings for the week.)
Cooper, Chs. 23-25
Satellite Readings
- Selected by student.

TBA: WEEK 10 MOVIE SCREENING: “Wilson” (1944), dir. by Henry King

Week 11 (April 3): NO CLASS
PAPER DRAFT (15-pp. min.) DUE **FRIDAY APRIL 9**, 5 PM (1 copy to Robinson 101; email copies to peer-review partners, cc. Dr. Throntveit)

Week 12 (April 10): Peer-Review Workshop
PEER-REVIEW ASSIGNMENTS DUE (1 copy of each to the author, one to Dr. Throntveit)

Weeks 13-14 (April 17, 24): Works in Progress
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Week 15: Spring Reading Period (Thurs. April 26—Thurs. May 3)
FINAL PAPER DUE **THURS. MAY 3**, 5 PM