

République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire
Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique

Université Larbi Ben M'Hidi, Oum El Bouaghi
Faculté des Lettres & Langues
Department d'Anglais

Master 1, Semestre 2 : Option: Civilisation & Literature
Matière: America's Rise to Globalism (ARG)
Chargée de la Matière: Dr. Fatima Maameri

Course Description:

This course will examine the history of the USA from the Civil War to WWII. The focus of the course will be on a) the various elements that shaped modern America and b) those that set the foundations for a world power. At term, the student should have a general view about the major developments affecting American history during the modern period.

Attendance and Class Participation:

This course is lecture-based but also includes discussions in which students will comment on the required readings and various course topics (students must complete the reading assignments before the class).

Weekly Readings & Oral Presentations

Each week, groups of students (5-6) are expected to read and analyze a substantial quantity of reading material (chapters of books & articles)—each two/three students will be responsible for one reading material. They are expected to present and discuss the material in the TD session. Attendance in TD sessions is compulsory and will be taken into consideration.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam at the end of the semester, which will be a combination of short answer questions (based on lectures) and an essay question (based on assigned readings).

Grading: Students will be graded on the following:

Oral Presentation:	6 pts
Paper:	4 pts
Class Participation:	5 pts
Attendance +:	5 pts

TEXTBOOK:

Fatima Maameri, *A History of the United States: The Rise of Modern America, 1865-1940, Lectures in American Civilization*. Alger: OPU, 2010.

Available at OEB University Library. Cote: 900-350001. Number of copies: 12

COURSE THEMES & ASSIGNMENTS

Theme 1: The Rise of Industrial America

Required Readings: Rise of Industrial America, Chapter 1

Individual Work: Oral Presentation

1. G. Bell & communication revolution
2. Henry Ford & transportation revolution
3. T. E. Edison & the electric age

Theme 2: Organized Labor

Required Readings: Social Movements, Chapter 2, 55-76

Individual Work: Oral Presentation

1. AFL
2. CIO
3. AFL- CIO

Theme 3: Immigration

Required Readings: Social Movements, Chapter 2, 77-118

Individual Work: Oral Presentation

1. Emma Lazarus, 'The New Colossus' (1886)
2. Jacob Riis, *How the other Half Lives* (1890)
3. Social Darwinism

Theme 4: The Gilded Age

Required Readings: Politics in the Gilded Age, Chapter 3

Individual Work: Oral Presentation

1. Rise of American imperialism
2. Mark Twain, *The Gilded Age* (1873)

Theme 5: Populism and Progressivism

Required Readings: Political Movements, Chapter 4

Individual Work: Oral Presentation

1. W. J. Brian & populism
2. Muckraking in the progressive era
3. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906)

Note: the following are Lectures not covered in the classroom. The content can also be found in the textbook as indicated above.

Textbook: Fatima Maameri, *A History of the United States: The Rise of Modern America, 1865-1940, Lectures in American Civilization*. Alger: OPU, 2010.

The Melting Pot

I. Immigration in America History

1. General features

Immigration is the oldest, most significant and most recurring theme in American history. For almost four centuries now, tens of millions of people have headed for the United States and even more hope to do that. The tide of immigration reached its climax in the late 19th century when America's economic opportunities were greatest: a still-open frontier and an ongoing industrial expansion. And although severe restrictions were imposed on immigration, still great numbers of immigrants continue to flood the United States—either legally or illegally.

Although the nature of immigration has been altered since colonial times, the ways it developed remain the same. For centuries, immigrants to America have shared the same experience: uprooted from their home countries, they had to abandon their ways of life and adjust, upon arrival, to the New World's environment and social and political institutions.

The early settlers' process of adjustment was largely physical. They occupied the land but maintained their cultural heritage—language, customs and traditions. For those who came after the pattern of American life was more or less shaped, they had to adjust themselves, not only to a new physical environment, but also to the new cultural, social, economic, and political conditions. The psychological process, however, remains the same.

2. The 'melting pot'

Most Americans, in the past and today, tend to consider immigrants as aliens, therefore a source of problems. Immigrants, for them, are all those who entered the United States after it acquitted its independence from Great Britain in the late eighteenth century. The immigrant is the Italian, Chinese, Muslim, and Hispanic.... They never think about the 'Pilgrim fathers' and other English, Dutch, or French early settlers, and not even Blacks, as immigrants. Yet, all Americans are immigrants or descendants of immigrants except perhaps of Native Americans; even these, they had migrated to the New World from Siberia during pre-historic times. The fact that they were already populating the land when the first European settlers reached the American Continent exempts them from this generalization.

America is a nation of immigrants. They came from all over the world although at different times and under different circumstances. They shared the same experience and had to undergo the same process of adjustment. The result is a giant 'melting pot', for some, or a 'salad bowl', for others, of which various nationalities, races, and cultures are the ingredients.

II. The Growth of Immigration

1. Colonial immigration

The American society has often been referred to a great 'melting pot' in which a variety of people and cultures have mixed together into what are called today 'Americans.' Originally, the United States was settled by tribes who crossed the Bering Strait to North America some 30,000 years ago and whose descendants became known as 'Indians' to later European settlers.

- Voluntary immigration

After discovery of the New Continent, various European nationalities, mainly Spanish, French, and Dutch, started their own settlements during the 16th century. The English and, in a lesser proportion the Scottish-Irish immigrants, however, provided the dominant Anglo-Saxon and Protestant group that shaped the face of 17th and 18th centuries' colonial America.

This early immigration has two major characteristics: It was predominantly voluntary and white, with Europe providing the main race stock. The early emigrants were mostly Protestants—a result of Reformation in Europe (push factor). The main attraction or pull factor for them was the availability of enormous economic opportunities—mainly availability of fertile and cheap land, embodied later in the 'frontier.'

- Forced immigration

Involuntary or forced immigration also occurred; it was chiefly black African. The blacks, introduced forcibly as a slave labor force, provided the next largest race group that originally formed the American society. The Indians, living on the margin of society, were officially considered as alien tribes and therefore excluded from the population counts. At the first census of the U. S. population in 1790, the various groups counted about 4 million people of which about 1/5 was black (3,929,214 whites to 757,000 blacks).

2. Post-independence policy

After independence, the U.S. government not only maintained but also enlarged colonial immigration policy despite some fears and skepticism. Thomas Jefferson, for example, tended to see immigration as a danger for American democracy. According to him, Europe that was ruled by monarchs produced 'mob rule,' a constant threat to political and social stability. Many, however, saw in immigration a solution to America's everlasting shortages in labor.

The Constitution authorized Congress to legislate for 'uniform naturalization,' (Art.1 Sec.8.4). A naturalization law passed in 1790 and revised in 1802 is still in force. The law set a five-year residence requirement for naturalization—a period judged sufficient for immigrants to get familiarized with American life.

To encourage settlement of the always moving frontier, first the Old Northwest Territories and later the Great Plains, the American government made generous grants of land to settlers—first under the different Northwest ordinances later under the different homestead Acts. To immigrants, 'frontiering' was America's most attractive image. For Frederick Jackson Turner, frontier historian and father of American interpretive history, it was the crucible in which a "new race of men" was formed.

Official count of immigration entries did not occur until 1820, but it is estimated that about 10,000 newcomers had been entering the USA every year during the post-revolutionary period. The first statistics indicate 106,508 entries for the period 1821-1830. By the late 1830s, the number increased six-fold—to about 600,000 entries.

3. The 'Old' immigrants

Immigration influx, however, did not occur until the 1840s, time at which Europe was undergoing economic hardships and political turmoil, mainly Ireland and Germany—potato famine and revolutionary upheavals respectively. Meanwhile, poverty-stricken Chinese immigrants began to immigrate to the United States and settled the Pacific Coast—San Francisco mostly.

Between 1820-60, immigration to the USA increased from slightly over ½ a million to about 5 million newcomers of which 9/10 were English, Irish, and German. By the mid-19th century, the predominantly protestant character of the American society started altering as increasing numbers of Catholics made their way to the United States, too. Immigration then became an issue that divided Americans—not as much as slavery did but close. On the eve of the Civil War, the foreign-born Americans made up 13% of the total population.

After the Civil War, however, different nationalities and races joined in the movement of immigration. Greater numbers emigrated from Scandinavia, eastern and southern Europe, in addition to smaller numbers from Asia (Orient and Middle East). Norwegians, Italians, Polish, Russian, and Chinese among many others poured into the United States. The change in the source of immigration altered the ethnic and religious composition of population and had its impact on society.

III. Anti-Immigration Sentiment

1. American attitudes

Since the early days of the Republic and until the late 19th century, immigration figures increased steadily. The immigrants provided a cheap source of labor and contributed to the growth population—an outcome that was viewed positively by the American people and policy makers.

From the 1880s onwards, however, the Americans changed attitudes. As more and more immigrants entered the USA, they started fearing for their culture and institutions. To the growing anti-immigrant sentiment among Americans and problems caused by the massive flow of immigrants, the government moved to regulate immigration.

2. Nativism

For many Americans, the immigrants were a source of troubles. As they competed with the native-born for land and jobs, they were badly seen. To the economic threat, add a religious one. Most of the mid-19th century immigrants came from Ireland and Germany; their Roman Catholic faith stood in sharp contrast to the protestant-dominated American society. Because of that religious difference, they were seen as papal conspirators. Thus, they became an easy target for prejudice and hatred, and discrimination.

Politically, Jacksonian democracy generated a wider move toward universal white-male suffrage. The new political changes affected the power of traditional politicians who

started blaming the immigrants for their plight. As a consequence, a strong nativist movement developed to defend the native-born Americans against the foreign-born. The movement sided with all that was white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant (WASP.) Blatantly racist, it militated against blacks, Catholics, other race groups, and immigrants.

3. The Know-Nothing Party

Mob violence against immigrants was transformed to a political party during the 1850s. Originally, it started as a secret organization, the Order of the Star-Spangled Banner in 1849, which transformed itself to a political party later. The party attempted to channel nativist sentiment into political power. Among its aims were: immigration restrictions, 21-year residency requirement for naturalization or citizenship—instead of the 5-years requirement, and exclusion of the foreign-born and Catholics from voting and holding public office.

By the early 1850's, it took the name American Party and achieved substantial political success in the state and congressional elections of 1852 and 1854. For a brief time, it controlled the state legislatures of New York and Massachusetts and secured the election of 90 of its candidates to the House of Representatives. Its candidate to the presidential election of 1856, former President Millard Fillmore, obtained about one million popular votes representing 21.57% of the total vote but only 8 Electoral College votes.

Despite its political success, the party collapsed after a short time. Its controversial stand over the issue of slavery, however, brought about its downfall—not immigration. In 1854, the American Party split on a regional line to two factions: a Southern faction supporting slavery and a Northern faction opposing it. As a result, it lost its partisans in the North and West to the newly formed Republican Party. By 1860, it disappeared from the political scene.

IV. Character of Immigration

1. General view

In general, to understand the composition of those who immigrated to the United States, let us read Charles A. Beard, one of the most prominent and influential American historians:

With sturdy, able-bodied, industrious, skilled, intelligent, and talented men and women had come criminals, paupers, paralytics, prostitutes, persons suffering from loathsome and contagious diseases, imbeciles utterly unable to take care of themselves, and cripples—all without let or hindrance. European government had swept up paupers from their poorhouses and paid their way to America so that their taxpayers could escape the burden of supporting the unfortunates of their own lower orders. Furthermore, they has expelled from the countries under their control—often to America—liberals, democrats, labor leaders, reformers and socialist in efforts to evade social problems and agitations in their own societies.

Extract from The Beards, *New Basic History of the United States*, p. 385.

2. Statistics

Between 1880 and 1924, time at which restrictions on immigration were imposed and the Americans slammed the door at the face of the "huddled masses of Europe," 32 million immigrants entered the United States of which 25 million emigrated after 1880.

Statistics show that the Germans formed the largest group of immigrants with nearly 6 million immigrants (5,900,000), the next were the Italians and Irish with about 4.5 million each followed by the Poles (3 million), English (2.5 million), Swedes (1.2 million), and Scots-Irish (1 million.) Together these seven groups represent about 80% of the total number of immigrants.

Other nationalities contributed smaller but substantial numbers: Norwegians (770,000), Slavs (750,000), French (580,000), Hungarians, (500,000), Greeks (400,000), Danes (300,000), Finns (275,000), Chinese (250,000), Turkish (210,000), and Middle Easterners (200,000) in addition to many other minorities. By the turn of the 20th century, the United States was too far from the small and homogeneous thirteen colonies that provided the nucleus of the new nation.

3. A variety of origins

More important than numbers is the 'unusual' character of immigration. The percentage of foreign-born peoples in the American society since the early days of the Republic had never exceeded 15% of the total population—compared to Argentina's record of 30% for example. The most significant element about immigration to the USA is its diversity: all world nationalities are represented in the American society! The United States is a 'nation of nation'.

Such an unbelievably heterogeneous society, doubled with incredible intermarriages of races and nationalities offers the most complex demographic picture in the whole world. Needless to say then that the variety of immigrant groups contributed an extremely rich cultural heritage to the history of the United States.

Today, and despite their common American identity, the different groups maintain a sense of ethnic origin, itself a source of pride or grievance: the day after Pearl Harbor, a Japanese-American boy told his schoolmates: "Well, we sure beat the hell out of you guys yesterday;" or Afro-Americans' hostility toward apartheid, or else Arab-Americans' sympathy with the Palestinians and Jews with the Israelites....

IV. Immigration: Myth vs. Reality

Economic opportunities and political freedom stood high in the imagination of immigrants and hopes for a better life pushed millions out of their homelands. A concert of politicians, land speculators, transportation companies, and expatriated relatives glorified life in America and acted as a magnet that attracted more and more immigrants. It is not that the image they gave about America was not true; it was indeed. The problem was that the image was partly true and not faithfully painted.

1. The 'midpassage'

Conditions for a better life existed indeed, but the bright life itself was not at immediate reach and the immigrants had to go through numerous hardships to achieve it. Passage of the Atlantic was in itself an ordeal. The living conditions aboard ships had not improved much since the days of slave ships.

For up to one month, a thousand human beings lived in exiguity and complete loss of dignity. The space allotted to each passenger, called steerage, was so limited that the slighted free movement was impossible—often they had as much space as sheep in a

flock or fish in a fish-can! The transit ships lacked sufficient supplies of food and water; and deaths from epidemics or malnutrition were not unusual.

2. Process of adjustment

- Settlement in the West

Upon arrival, the immigrants had to face adjustment problems. Although they landed at Ellis Island, New York, many of the mid-19th century immigrants moved to the frontier where opportunities were still greatest and started new farming communities.

The Norwegians and Swedish settled as far as Minnesota and Nebraska and founded their 'Little Scandinavia,' and the Germans populated the upper Midwest. Those were the pioneers who pushed settlement to the wilderness and on Indians lands—with all the entailing problems: harsh environment, Indian attacks, insecurity—due to the lawless character of the western territories, conflicts with nearby ranchers, isolation on farms....

- Overcrowding in the eastern cities

Others spread all over the country or conglomered the eastern cities. The Irish, for example, worked in the heavy construction industries—mainly railroads and were a source of cheap labor; the Italian community crowded the northeastern coast and started their many 'Little Italy' neighborhoods in the slums of New York. Poor housing, food, schooling, and sanitation conditions, in addition to crime and violence, were the daily lot of immigrants in the eastern cities.

- Hard conditions

All immigrants, however, suffered discrimination, deprivation, fraud, and disillusionment. It is estimated that within the first three years after arrival, 1/3 of the immigrants died. On landing, scores were robbed, defrauded, and dispossessed through fictitious promises of land, employment, housing or the like—the scandal was unveiled in 1854.

Exploitation was common practice: the immigrants occupied the most dangerous and lowliest-paid jobs with no perspective of advancement. It is then easy to understand that even the most enthusiastic and motivated among them became disillusioned by their new American experience.

Even so, there was still hope. The land they left behind was by no means better, and when comparing their past with their present, the balance was definitely positive. The expanding country and economy were providing room and jobs for all—regardless of quality. After all there was much freedom to enjoy.

New Immigration, 1880-1924

I. Immigration: 'Old' and 'New'

In 1880, the population of the United States counted slightly more than 50 million people; in 1900 it was about 76 million. The 50% population increase was mainly due to the masses of immigrants who entered the country during the last two decades of the 19th century (about 10 million new immigrants). It was the era of massive immigration.

1. 'Old' Immigration

Since colonial times and until 1895, statistics show that the majority of immigrants had always originated from northern and Western Europe. Between 1860 and 1890, approximately 10 million immigrants entered the United States and 85% of them were from the 'old immigration' stock: 3 million Germans, 1.6 million British, 1.5 million Irish, and a million Scandinavians.

The old immigration had its load of illiterates and unskilled who provided much of the labor needed for America's early industrialization. But it also included large numbers of farmers, skilled artisans, professionals and businessmen who scattered throughout the country and relatively managed to move up the social ladder without much difficulty.

2. 'New' immigration

In 1895, however, the balance was reversed: the majority of the immigrants were 'new.' They originated from southern and Eastern Europe—mainly Italy, Russia, Greece, and the Balkans. Non-European races also were part of the 'new immigration': Japanese, Chinese, and Middle-easterners.... This immigration was overwhelmingly made up of poor, illiterate, and unskilled people most of whom remained in the port cities and nearby manufacturing areas.

In many ways, the new immigrants altered the character of the American society. Between 1880 and 1924, date at which Congress placed restrictions on open immigration, greater numbers joined the already colorful American population: 4.5 million Italians, 3.4 Poles, 2.5 Russians... and many more. More than numbers, the racial and religious groups were extremely varied. The new immigration included Serbs and Slovaks, Neapolitans and Sicilians, Magyars and Croats, Orientals and near-Orientals, Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox, as well as Muslims and Jews.

II. Motives for Immigration

1. Economic motives

Like their predecessors, the new immigrants were seeking better conditions of life in the New World. Industrialization in western and northern Europe generated cycles of unemployment and low wages for the masses of factory workers. Enclosure, mainly in

Great Britain, and the growth of population reduced the access of rural populations to land, source of their livelihood.

In eastern and southern Europe, industrialization was still to come and the economic system failed to absorb the masses of job seekers. Predominately agricultural, were close to a feudal system of landownership than to a modern one. Remnants of serfdom, mainly in Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Italian agricultural estates, and Greece chained millions to the will of their landlords in a life of poverty and degradation.

Compared to Europe, the United States seemed to offer a paradise-like image. Life was better in all aspects: food, clothing, housing.... The land was fertile and available and wages were higher. Immigrant writings of the period are eulogizing: 'soil is unequalled in fertility,' America was 'rich in opportunities for people not afraid of hard work,' or simply 'in America you can get pie and pudding.'

2. Social incentives

Despite the growing gap between classes in the United States, for immigrants, America was the land of social equality. Alexis De Tocqueville, the French political scientist and historian, made it evident in his *Democracy in America* (4 volumes, 1835-40) decades ago. De Tocqueville's message that "a society, properly organized, could hope to retain liberty in a democratic social order," was not lost to the immigrants.

In social relations, the contrast was sharp: whereas in Europe, the masses had no access to their 'masters' or leaders, in the United States they could meet the mayor and even shake hands with the President! In 1891 a German immigrant wrote home: "...this is a free land. No one can give orders to anybody here, one is as good as another. No one takes off his hat to another..."

They also could aspire to social respectability. Those who shortly returned home or sent pictures astonished the rest with their physical appearance and material success: a nice suit, a picture taken in a car, money sent back home were all signs of affluence, opportunity and social equality.

3. The role of Americans

The Americans themselves had interest in promoting a good image of America among the masses in Europe. Business interests organized and supported The American Emigrant Company in order to secure cheap labor. Their agents met the immigrants at Ellis Island, main immigrants' entrance port in New York, and took them to mining regions and industrial towns.

The railroad companies benefited from large land grants along their railways and sought settlers to increase their volume of transportation. The shipping companies had interest in filling up their ships with passengers for the return trip after they unloaded their cargoes in Europe. Most immigrants took a one-way ticket on board of those ships. Some states, especially in those of the Great Plains, offered land facilities to encourage settlement in their own boundaries.

Others

To all these, add a number of others motives, certainly not as strong as the first two, but nonetheless important: compulsory military service, religious persecutions—especially the Russian Jews, and technological improvements—transition from sail to

steamships in 1870, which made the crossing of the Atlantic quicker (reduced crossing-time by four to less than a month), and linked to it reduction in fares (result of competition between the shipping companies).

As a result, millions poured from Europe and settled in the Northeastern industrial cities of the United States (lack of capital and skills predestined them to unskilled jobs—available only there). In 1910, immigrant families dominated American urban life by 2 to 3 (with their children, the foreign-born made up 35% of the American society.) The lower East Side of New York, for example, had more Italians than Naples, more Germans than Hamburg, and twice as many Irish as Dublin, and even more Jews than all the countries of Western Europe. The impact of immigration on American life was enormous.

III. The Impact of Immigration

1. Social Impact

A) Social heterogeneity

- Settlement in the Midwest

Adaptation to American life varied according to the ethnic groups. The British scattered throughout the country and assimilated quickly; their culture pattern enabled them to do so. They engaged in farming as well as skilled industrial work (48% in 1890 were skilled workers).

The Germans and Scandinavians, traditionally favoring land, settled the Great Lakes states and the Upper Mississippi Valley. Substantial capital allowed them to establish themselves on farms but many also settled in cities and manufacturing towns. These groups were, more or less, the most successful among the various immigrants groups.

- Settlement in the Northeastern cities

The overwhelming majority of the remaining ethnic groups, however, settled where they were sure to find work: the industrial and urban centers of the Northeast. In 1900, two-thirds of the foreign-born were living in cities. They occupied jobs at the bottom of the economic scale. They accepted to do the heavy, dirty, dangerous, and cheap work—usually refused by the native-born.

The Irish

The Irish, religious difference outstanding, crowded the slums of the eastern cities. Up to 80% of the Irish lived in the states of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Unskilled, they occupied the low-paid jobs—mainly in railroad construction.

Southeastern Europeans

The Italians, having only their labor to sell, conglomered the Mid-Atlantic States and were mostly engaged in the building industries. The Poles illustrated themselves by crowding and working in the mining areas and heavy industries; and so it goes for the remaining Slavic and other race groups. The economic condition of these second-class immigrants determined their social position. All belonged to the lowest grade of the social scale.

- Settlement on the West Coast

The condition of the Chinese and Japanese on the West Coast was by no means better. The Chinese were allowed in to satisfy America's growing need for cheap labor. About ½ a million entered the United States between 1850-1900 and worked mostly in the mining and transcontinental railroads' construction businesses. Racial prejudice and discrimination, however, resulted in legislation that halted Chinese immigration in 1882 and Japanese in 1907.

B) The immigrant experience

For all those immigrants life was hard. Cut from their native environment—physical as well as cultural, and pitted in a world which values and institutions were strange to them, they tended to find consolation in their ethnicity. Poverty gathered them in ethnic neighborhoods and a desire to maintain their identity pushed them to develop their own institutions.

- Ethnic neighborhoods

In cities, they lived on the fringes of society. They crowded in slums and went through the experience of a horrible life with chronic problems of housing, sanitation—lack of running water and sewage, schooling, health problems and epidemics, crime and vice, degradation in morality, and many others.

The American cities developed their own ghettos: 'Little Italy' and 'Chinatown' were but examples. In 1890, two-thirds of New York's population lived in slums. The muckraker Jacob Riis, himself an immigrant, described it well in his work *How the Other Half Lives* (1890)—a solid blow that shocked American conscience. The conditions of their life made them bitter and critical of the American institutions.

- Hyphenated-Americans

To maintain unity and cultural identity, the immigrants developed their own institutions. Outstanding were the religious institutions—churches and prayer places to preserve faith. The immigrants founded their own educational and social institutions: schools, associations and clubs, and newspapers. All these served one purpose: preservation of their national and cultural identity.

The variety of ethnic groups contributed a new race of men to the American society: the hyphenated-American or what Theodore Roosevelt called 'hyphenated Americanism.' The Irish-American, German-American, Polish-American, Italian-American, Arab-American, Chinese-American, and scores of others form the mosaic of the American population.

2. Economic Impact

The impact of immigration on American society was undoubtedly immense. The impact on economic life was equally great. It is true that most immigrants, except for immigrants from northwestern Europe, originated from backward agricultural societies, therefore they did not bring with them the know-how that was indispensable for industrialization. But without them industrialization could not have materialized either. The labor of immigrants was a crucial condition that made such an achievement possible as much as were raw materials and capital, for example.

- A productive labor force

Industrial studies show that during 1900s immigrants dominated the labor force of the 21 major industries in the United States. In the heavy industries—steel, mining, and construction, the immigrants formed more than 60% of the labor force. The cheap wages paid to immigrants allowed the industrialists to make huge profits that were used for aggrandizing and consolidating their companies.

The composition of the new immigrants was also advantageous to the American economy. Though whole families migrated to the United States, the proportion of the young and able-bodied males, aged 15-45, was greater. Most of them were single and many of the married did not take their families with them; they outnumbered women, children, and old men by about 2 to 1. This in itself was a positive ingredient in the crucible of America's industrial society. John R. Commons, American economist, noted it eloquently: "thus, immigration brings to us a population of working ages unhampered by unproductive mouths to feed."

- Exploitation

The new immigrant profited to American industrialization more than industrialization profited to him. The unskilled, ignorant, and poor immigrant was an easy target for exploitation. For the 'unwanted' jobs he worked long hours and was paid misery wages. The wealth generated by his labor went mostly to enrich a handful of capitalists. Thus, the gap widened between rich and poor and the immigrant worker was left at the bottom of the economic scale.

More, their conditions made them easy targets of nativist antagonisms. While public opinion at large saw them as degrading the pure Anglo-Saxon race of the native-born, labor unions saw them as a danger for American labor. Ready to accept any job, the employers used them as strikebreakers, which in itself weakened labor unions and arose animosity against them.

3. Political Impact

- Hyphenated-vote

In consequence of urban concentration, the various ethnic groups consolidated their group loyalty. By acting as a group, rather than individuals, they reinforced the tradition of interest groups in American politics. Very early, the leaders of the ethnic groups realized the importance of bloc voting on American politicians and did not hesitate to use it to their own advantage—vote against concrete gains for their communities. Even today, American political scientists speak about an 'Irish vote,' a 'Polish vote,' a 'Jewish vote,' and more recently, an 'Arab-American vote.'

- Boss-politics

Because of political organization among the ethnic groups, the political parties that competed for power more often played on the immigrants' sense of nationality to obtain their vote. Tammany Hall, organization of the Democratic Party in New York City, dominated by Irish local-politicians since the mid-19th century, built a vote loyalty among the Irish immigrants by providing favors such as jobs or housing....

The Irish talent for politics made them the first and most-lasting ethnic group in American politics. Since the mid-19th century, their control over local government in New York was absolute and conquest of New England, mainly Massachusetts, was also

complete. In 1960 they managed to elect the first and so far the unique, catholic president of the United States—doubled with Irish origins, John F. Kennedy (1961-63).

4. Others

- Religion

On religion too, the new immigrants left their imprint. In the United States today, there are more than 1,200 separate religious bodies of which about 60 at least were introduced by the new immigrants, e. g.: the Eastern Orthodox Church. More important than the variety of the introduced Protestant sects was the introduction of other religions on a large scale, mainly Catholicism and Islam.

The result is that what had been a Protestant-dominated country became a country of many religion: Today, Protestants make up about 53 % of the American population, about 26 % are Roman Catholics, 2 % Eastern Orthodox, and 2 % Muslims, and 2 % Jews, 7% nonreligious.

- Individual contributions

In addition to these, individual immigrants made prominent contributions to American life in general: Carl Schurz in politics, Jacob Riis in social reform, Joseph Pulitzer in journalism, Andrew Carnegie and James J. Hill in business, Samuel Gompers in labor, Alexander Graham Bell in the field of inventions and many other foreign-born Americans contributed to science, education, arts, music....

American culture was further enriched by the customs and traditions the immigrants brought with them, languages, music and songs, food and costumes. Cultural diversity makes the United States an extremely rich country.

Closing the Gates: Immigration Restrictions, 1882-1929

I. Rise of Anti-Immigration Sentiment

1. Historical background

- The Founding Fathers

Despite valuable contributions to American life in general, the immigrants had to undergo natives' assault, vilification, and denigration. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries crusade against immigrants was not new and one may easily trace deep in American history. Prejudice and unfriendly attitudes, when not hostile, have always existed although with varying degrees of intensity.

While Thomas Jefferson was skeptical about immigrants, George Washington and John Adams warned against free immigration from countries without experience in self-government, and Benjamin Franklin always complained about the presence of the Germans in Pennsylvania. These are just examples emanating from the most notorious of the Americans, the Founding Fathers.

- Nativism

Anti-immigrant feelings increased during the mid-the 19th century as a result of the massive immigration from Ireland and Germany. The Protestants were alarmed by the influx of Catholics from those countries and feared that they might attempt to undermine America's Protestant institutions and even talked about a 'popish conspiracy'—it is true that the Catholic Church did not support the prohibitionist movement of the time.

According to Samuel F. B. Morse, the prominent inventor of the telegraph and Morse code, but also an energetic nativist, "the conspirators against our liberties" were putting "THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE...we must awake, or we are lost."

- Immigrant vote and boss-politics

Old-stock Americans objected giving vote to the foreign-born because they feared that the latter might influence local government politics. Tammany Hall was already under the influence of Irish-bosses, and starting from the mid-19th century, their control over it was complete. In boss-politics, the deal was simple: vote against favors (contract work, housing...), a fact that made boss-ist politics synonymous with urban political corruption.

Opposition to immigrant vote took the form of mob violence that swept the streets of the major eastern cities during the 1830s and 1840s and resulted in the introduction of nativism into American politics. The Know-Nothing Party was the legitimate child of the movement. It ran its candidates for all elections, municipal, state, as well as national on an anti-immigration platform and sought to introduce legislation curbing the entrance of immigrants and toughening the procedure of naturalization of aliens.

2. Spirit of liberty

Yet, immigrants continued to flood unhampered into the United States. More than a precious source of cheap labor, the immigrants consolidated America's image of a democratic country and boosted its ego of superiority. America was the land of liberty which welcomed all the oppressed of earth and saved them from tyranny and dictatorships.

To this end, they erected a colossal monument, the Statue of Liberty, which became a worldwide symbol of liberty. The monument was opened in 1886. The inscription at the pedestal of the statue, a sonnet, "The New Colossus" (1883) by Emma Lazarus, is quite indicative of Americans' pride about their institutions and spirit of liberty:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

II. Arguments for Immigration Restrictions

1. The racial argument

Strange as it may seem, the Americans feared an 'annihilation of the native American stock' for as they said "there is now being injected into the veins of the nation a large amount of inferior blood every day of every year," or as warned Reverent Josiah Strong in 1893.

For the powerful Republican senator, Henry Cabot Lodge, 1893-1924, a brilliant advocator of the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race, the danger brought about by the new immigrants was even greater: "when you begin to pour in in unlimited numbers people of lower or alien races or less social efficiency and less moral force, you are running the most frightful risk that any people can run. The lowering of a great race means not only its own decline but that of human civilization."

- Social Darwinism

To sum up these two views, this is the theory of Social Darwinism. The theory is based of the concept of 'natural selection,' which was launched by Charles Darwin 1809-1882, in his work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). Social Darwinism subjects societies and races to the same laws of natural selection as animals and plants. It views the life of human beings as a struggle for existence ruled by the natural law of 'survival of the fittest'—a phrase coined by the philosopher Herbert Spencer.

In the United States, the theory was developed by the sociologist William Graham Sumner who applied the concept of 'natural selection' the American society. At the social level, Social Darwinism was used as a justification for racism and perpetuation of the belief of cultural and biological supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race—notice, the same argument was used by the Nazis to sustain belief in superiority of the Aryan race!

Politically, Social Darwinism was used as a defensive argument for imperialism and political conservatism—control of the strong over the weak and rejection of social reform for example. Conservatives believed that the poor would be eliminated naturally, hence their opposition to welfare programs.

- American Eugenics Society

The idea of white race superiority was so attractive that in 1926 it culminated in the foundation of American Eugenics Society. The American eugenists also supported restrictions on immigration that originated in countries with 'inferior' race stocks, such as countries of Eastern Europe.

Under the influence of such ideas, American public opinion started to see the 'new' immigrants as biologically inferior to the Anglo-Saxon stock. Believing in the inherent inferiorities of the other races—outside their own, the native-born Americans called for 'closing the gates,' i.e.: stopping immigration, and even excluding the 'unfit' to thwart the danger and preserve the racial purity and cultural strength of the Anglo-Saxon race before it were too late.

Not all Americans accepted such views, of course. The lawyer Clarence S. Darrow, best known for his defense of labor, remarked: "Purity of the Anglo-Saxon race! The greatest race of sons of bitches that ever infested the earth. Mind you, if there is such a race, I am one of them... But I do not brag about it; I apologize for it."

- The Second Ku Klux Klan

Deeply rooted in the American tradition of nativism, a reorganized Ku Klux Klan reemerged in 1915. It intensified its nativist-racist appeals and called for a '100% Americanism.' More dangerous than the Reconstruction Klan, it enlarged its action to non-Protestants, immigrants, Bolshevik communists, labor unions, as well as the traditionally targeted Afro-Americans. By widening the list of its enemies, the Klan extended its activities to the North and Midwest. During the 1920s, the Klan's membership reached the historic climax of over 4 million adherents.

Like the social Darwinists, the Klan believed in the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race (WASP)—argument already used for justification of slavery and then for perpetuation of racial discrimination against blacks in the South. Ironically, despite their common plight, blacks and immigrants fought against each other. Blacks, particularly, took an anti-immigrants' stand—not because the former belonged to the native-born category but because the immigrants were competing with them for jobs.

2. The economic argument

- Labor Unions

The economic argument was less complicated. Labor unions asked for restricting immigration because it was degrading and endangering American labor: First, the immigrants accepted any kind of work at any prices and under whatever conditions and second; the industrialists were using them as strikebreakers.

As such, they were seen as jeopardizing potential advances and gains for American workers. The Knights of Labor were relatively successful because Congress, in 1885, forbade the importation of contract labor—previously contract workers were brought in to replace American workers on strike.

- The industrialists and anarchism

For the moment, American industrialists were making enormous profits thanks to immigrants' cheap labor, but in the long run they feared for capitalism—the system itself was under threat. They made immigrants responsible for industrial violence and imputed

the Haymarket Square riots of 1886 to anarchism, which they believed was introduced from Europe by radical immigrants who infiltrated the American labor movement.

Anarchism

Traditionally, anarchism—Greek word meaning ‘without rule’—argued that government, in general, had destroyed the natural social order and that it was not necessary; therefore it had to be overthrown. By the mid-19th century anarchical thought was transformed to revolutionary syndicalism. More than the traditional function of labor unions, struggle for better wages and working conditions, the anarchist argued that labor unions should aim at the destruction of capitalism and takeover of the means of production.

Such a radical stand was not to the taste of industrialists who flourished under laissez faire capitalism. Believing that immigrants were infested by harmful ideas such as radicalism, communism, socialism, and anarchism, they called for restrictions on immigration to safeguard the democratic institutions of America. A national association, the Immigration Restriction League was founded for the purpose in 1894. It campaigned for a literacy-test but with no immediate success. Indeed, a literacy-test bill passed Congress in 1897 but it was vetoed by President Cleveland because the test would not have barred anarchist—after all, even anarchist can read and write!

3. Religious argument

Greater and greater numbers of Catholic immigrants were entering the United States and there was evidence that America was losing its original Protestant character. Catholic Churches and schools were increasing and Americans were alarmed by the rising influence of Irish Catholic politicians. As a consequence, anti-Catholicism spread among the Protestant Americans.

American Protective Association, 1887: Anti-Catholicism was channeled through the American Protective Association, founded in 1887. Much like the Know-Nothing Party in character, spirit, and aims, the association was powerful during the 1890s. Secret, anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant in general, it called for restrictions on immigration and stricter naturalization laws. At the height of its activity, it counted a membership of over 2 million.

Hostility also mounted against Jews and anti-Semitism spread to schools, clubs, and work.... All these views and attitudes strengthened the belief that there was a growing popular demand for restrictions on immigration.

All these factors contributed to the rise anti-immigration hostility and brought about a series of legislative restrictions that put an end to open immigration to the United States.

III. Restrictions on Immigration

1. Early restrictions

- State legislation

The account for immigration restrictions may be done briefly. Constitutionally, the regulation of immigration is a task of the Federal Government, a task that was not exercised until the 1880s despite the growing demands for legislation limiting the number of immigrants entering the United States. After independence, however, different states

had attempted to exclude the 'undesirables.' South Carolina passed a law in 1788 'preventing the transportation of malefactors' followed by Pennsylvania. Massachusetts in 1820, New York in 1824, and Maryland in 1833 had also attempted to close their ports to criminals, paupers, and diseased immigrants but all to no avail. The 'undesirables' could still land in other ports in other states. Equally, New York State imposed a head tax on immigrants but it was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court because it violated the constitutional right of Congress of control of commerce.

- Federal legislation

Traditionally, the official federal policy remained that of unrestricted immigration. Until the late 19th century, the Federal Government did little to restrain immigration. Only an act passed in 1875 restricted the importation of prostitutes and alien convicts and another in 1882 excluded convicts, lunatics, and paupers. Even those two acts did not slow down immigration.

Congress passed a third act in 1907 excluding anarchists—after the assassination of President William McKinley by an anarchist—the immoral, and immigrants with contagious diseases. In all three acts, limitations on immigration were of a selective-qualitative nature rather than quantitative. Under the new conditions, only 2% of the immigrants were refused entrance. Because of that, total numbers entering the United States were not affected at all; instead they increased.

2. Federal government restrictions

Significant and long-lasting restrictions on immigration did not occur until 1920s. By 1924, important changes in American policy brought about the end of open immigration policy. It was replaced by a new system of quotas that favored immigrants from northern and western Europe.

- The Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882

Until 1924, the most important restriction against immigration was the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882. The act was a result of the anti-Chinese disturbances on the West Coast that asked for the exclusion of the Chinese. It suspended Chinese laborers immigration for a period of 10 years—a prohibition that was extended in 1892 and again in 1902 to become indefinite.

As a result of this discriminatory policy of exclusion against the Chinese, their numbers declined by 8 to 1 (from 123,000 immigrants for the period 1881-90 to 15,000 for the period 1901-1910.) The Chinese Exclusion Act inaugurated a new phase in American immigration policy: despite Emma Lazarus words inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty four years later, the United States cut with its tradition of open immigration and instituted a new policy regulating immigration.

- The Japanese: 'Gentlemen's Agreement', 1907

The approach to Japanese immigration on the West Coast was by no means different. The Japanese workers, brought in to replace the Chinese on farms, met the same suspicions of the 'yellow peril.' Anti-Japanese agitation was transformed into discriminatory legislation—California enacted an alien land law that prevented landownership by Japanese and excluded them from the gold mines. Because of that, relations between the United States and Japan deteriorated.

To avoid an international crisis, President Roosevelt reached a 'Gentlemen's Agreement' with the Japanese government in 1907 whereby Japan accepted "the existing policy of discouraging emigration of its subjects of the laboring classes to continental United States." In 1913, anti-Japanese action reached its peak when Congress passed the Webb Alien Land Law, a law that confirmed California's land legislation.

IV. Closing the Gates: End of Open Immigration

1. The Immigration Act, 1917

After the convicts, paupers, diseased, polygamists, prostitutes, anarchists, alcoholics, lunatics, and 'persons with constitutional inferiority complexes!' came the turn of the illiterates. The struggle for a literacy test was long and hard. Between 1897 and 1917, 32 immigration bills incorporating a literacy test passed at least one of the two houses of Congress, and 4 bills passed both houses and went to the president.

On the four occasions the bills were vetoed. President Cleveland in 1897 saw it as "a radical departure from our national policy." William H. Taft vetoed it in 1913 on the ground that it violated a principle which he believed should be maintained. Woodrow Wilson rejected it twice, in 1915 and 1917, and denounced it as a test of opportunity rather than of ability. In 1917, however, the bill passed over the President's veto and became law—overriding.

The literacy test

For further reduction of immigrants' numbers, the criterion of selection was extended to literacy. Statistics showed that the illiterate originated from eastern and southern Europe, origin also of massive immigration. The act of 1917 barred illiterate persons from entering the United States; it excluded "all aliens over sixteen years of age, physically capable of reading, who can nor read the English language, or some other language or dialect." Selective in appearance, the act was restrictive in purpose: By selection, Congress also aimed at reducing numbers.

The act illustrates another turning point in American immigration regulation policy. This time, the shift was from selection to restriction.

2. Immigration quotas acts

- Immigration Quotas Act, 1921

At the end of WWI, massive immigration from Europe was resumed. Congress moved rapidly to put numerical restrictions on immigration. In 1921, an emergency immigration act fixed the number of aliens from any country, to be admitted annually to the United States, at 3% of the number of foreign-born persons of such nationality actually resident in the United States in 1910 (based on the census of that year); thus, an annual quota was retained for each country.

- National Origins Act, 1924

The 1921 act was criticized for not being able to reduce immigration from eastern and southern Europe. Consequently, a more severe law was passed in 1924. The National Origins Act of 1924, also Immigration Act, permanently restrained the influx of immigrants by reducing the annual quota from 3 to 2%. Furthermore, it took the census of 1890 as a basis, date at which immigration from western and northern Europe was

greatest. Thus, the act favored the Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavian immigrants and discriminated against immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.

- National Origins Act, 1929

Finally, the National Origins Act of 1929 fixed the annual quota to 150,000; quotas for each country were based on the number of persons of that country living in the USA in 1920. The national-origins system established by the act remained in force until 1968. By this act, the USA reached its objective: immigration from southern and eastern Europe was reduced drastically, that from northern and western Europe maintained at a much higher level—indeed, it was given 70% of the quotas system.

The establishment of the quotas system in 1921 ended the era of massive immigration. Yet, the Statue of Liberty still stands at New York Harbor with the same inscription as in 1886—may be a relic from the past, may be not.

Closing the Gates: Summary

Years	Nature	Legislation	Exclusion Provisions
1788-1850s	Prelude	Diverse states' legislations	Criminals, paupers, and the diseased
1875		Federal law	Criminals and prostitutes
1880-onwards	Massive immigration		
1882	Selective-qualitative	Chinese Exclusion Act	Chinese, criminals, lunatics, and paupers
1907		Gentlemen's Agreement	Japanese
		Immigration Act	Persons with contagious-diseases, immoral persons, and anarchists
1917		Literacy test	Southeastern Europeans (Italians, Russians, Poles...), and Barred Zone (India, Siam, Indo-China...)
1921	Quantitative	Immigration Quotas Act	Annual quotas limited to 154,000/year based on 3% of foreign-born resident in USA in 1910
1924		National Origins Act	Annual quotas limited to 154,000/year based on 2% of foreign-born resident in USA in 1890
1929		National Origins Act	Annual quotas limited to 150,000/year based on 2% of foreign-born resident in USA in 1920
1930	End of open immigration		

The Gilded Age, 1865-1914

In American politics, the period that followed the Civil War is tagged 'Gilded Age.' It was a period of low political principles, corruption, and political ineffectiveness. Politics became a business of low morality: politicians fought for holding offices instead of political issues of importance. Corruption and fraud during elections were common practice

I. Post-Civil War Politics

1. General Features

The presidency exhibited naked weaknesses. The different administrations, between that of Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt (1901), were weak and tarnished with economic and political scandals. The presidential campaigns featured colorful parades but no principles and issues. The presidential candidates were chosen for their personality (ability to win the election) rather than for their leadership capacities and competence. No president of the Gilded Age period, except for Grover Cleveland, was a true leader of his own party.

The presidency lost power and prestige. Since the Johnson administration, Congress increased its power and made public policy. Consequently, public policy was a result of compromises among corrupt congressional leaders. Legislative bribery and pressure groups, especially big business, controlled congressional policy

State and local governments were also corrupt. Local politicians, in the absence of a national policy, were bribed by big business, especially the railroad companies. The Supreme Court was no exception. Its decisions favored the industrial interests against labor and caused great discontent among the Americans.

The political parties lacked the ideological commitments that characterized American politics so far. The two major political parties, Republican and Democratic, were not much different. The only divisive issue was the protective tariff—and even then, it was only about the rate to be fixed. Political power was rather balanced between Democrats and Republicans. Between 1876-92, there were five presidential elections in which the winning margin was very small (about 1%).

Elections were stained with fraud and corruption. The diversity of the electorate and its mobility facilitated corrupt voting. The new immigrants, in quest of economic opportunities, were absorbed by the electoral machinery (job for vote)

In all aspects, the Gilded Age was a shameful period in American politics

2. Critics of the Gilded Age

That period of political corruption and repulsive materialism in American history gave rise to a new type of literary writing that expressed social revolt and political criticism. The writers attacked the growing power of big business and corrupt politics.

- Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner's book *The Gilded Age* (1873), gave that period its name. The novel is a satire that described the financial and political rotteness in the federal capital Washington, D.C., featuring caricatures of voracious industrialists and corrupt politicians of the day
- Henry Adams' political novel *Democracy* (1880) was published anonymously. It portrayed a dishonest Midwestern senator and attacked political corruption and incompetence. The novel attributes the origins of corruption to the lawlessness of the West.
- Francis Marion Crawford's *An American Politician* (1884) related the doubtful election of President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 and the immoral deals that were involved in the election
- Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 1887-2000* (1888) condemned and attacked the capitalistic system. Boston, in the year 2000, looked backward into a utopian United States living under a humane and ideal socialist system
- William Vaughn Moody's *On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines* (1901) denounced American politics and the growing American imperialism

In addition, a new kind of journalism emerged: investigative journalism. Those journalists, nicknamed the 'muckrakers', wrote detailed articles about the dominant political and economic corruption that aroused public opinion. They investigated the scandalous methods of big business, alliance with corrupt politicians, and exploitation of labor that resulted in social deprivation and distress.

- Upton Sinclair's work *The Jungle* (1906) criticized the American economic and political systems. Originally investigating the poor immigrant workers' conditions of work in the stockyards, *The Jungle* revealed the absence of sanitation in the meatpacking industry and caused wide public anger against the trusts.
- Ida M. Tarbell's *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904) unveiled the ugly face of big business. Accounting for the rise of Rockefeller's oil company, the work described the unethical practices used by industrialists to form trusts.
- Thomas W. Lawson provided an accurate description of abuses and fraud in the stock market and insurance companies in his work *Everybody's*, 1905 or 'Frenzied Finance'

The political writings of the Gilded Age reflected the condition of the era and inaugurated a new trend in American literature: that of social and political protest

II. Gilded Age Politics, 1865-1876

1. Presidential negativism

A. Andrew Johnson, 1865-69

Johnson's administration was characterized by strong tensions with Congress. The struggle over reconstruction policies caused a loss in the power of the presidency to Congress.

In 1866, Johnson vetoed a measure to extend the life of the Freedmen's Bureau along with a Civil Rights bill. By doing so, he antagonized the radical Republicans who controlled Congress. Congress overrode Johnson's veto and passed those measures. In addition, it introduced the 14th Amendment to the Constitution—giving the right to vote to blacks—which Johnson opposed.

Always suspicious about Johnson, who showed pro-southern policies, Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act, 1867 over his veto. The executive branch lost the power to remove appointed federal officials without the consent of the Senate.

The major blow inflicted by Congress to the presidency was the impeachment process against Johnson. The House of Representatives voted for impeachment, the first of its kind in American history, but Johnson escaped trial in the Senate for 'treason', which could have cost him removal from office. The loss of those presidential powers persisted during the Gilded Age period.

B. Ulysses S. Grant, 1869-77

A military leader, Grant had no political experience and adhered to no political party. His popularity as a Civil War hero secured him nomination and election to the presidency

The widespread corruption that dominated politics and business stained the reputation of his two administrations. Although Grant was not personally involved, his presidency became synonymous of economic scandals

During his first term, he appointed a Civil Service Commission to investigate corruption in federal government, but in face of congressional opposition he backed away. In the 1872 presidential election, The Republican Party split between traditional republicans, supporting Grant and reformist republicans called 'mugwumps' who sought to put an end to corruption in federal government. Nevertheless, Grant defeated the candidate of the newly formed Liberal Republican Party, Horace Greeley.

During his second term, major scandals that involved leading Republicans politicians were brought to light:

- The Crédit Mobilier, 1873

The Republican Party associated itself closely with the big financial and industrial interests. Consequently, federal government policy under Republicans since the Civil War showed great favoritism toward big business interests. Those interests manipulated and influenced government policy-making.

In 1862, Congress planned and assisted transcontinental railway building by granting huge amounts of money, in loans and subsidies, and vast tracts of western land to the railways companies.

The Crédit Mobilier, a railway construction company, illegally manipulated the stock and contracts for the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. Thus, through

fraud, it made huge profits. To prevent a congressional investigation, Oakes Ames, head of Crédit Mobilier and congressional representative, bribed members of Congress with stock to vote in favor of the Railroad (they purchased long-term stock for which they paid with the interests of the stock itself); this way, they made enormous profits

In 1873, the newspapers unveiled the deal, which involved, among others, Vice President Schuyler Colfax, House Speaker James G. Blaine, and Representative James A. Garfield, future president of the USA. Many federal judges were also involved.

The scandal became a symbol of political corruption and unscrupulous business deals; it urged demands for political reforms

- Whiskey Ring, 1875

The Whiskey Ring is another scandal that involved a large group of liquor distillers and high Internal Revenue Service officials. The operation consisted of non-payment or rebates of tax revenues on whiskey to be paid to the federal treasury—instead they were shared between distillers, tax collectors, and many other civil servants (estimated at \$2 m. for the fiscal year 1875 alone)

Those involved were highly influential in the Grant administration. His private secretary, Orville E. Babcock, was indicted but acquitted thanks to Grant's influence. A major political scandal exploded at the trial: the defrauded taxes were to be used as campaign funds for the reelection of Grant. His Secretary of the Treasury, William A. Richardson, resigned in the middle of the scandal in 1874 to escape censure by Congress. He became Chief Justice in 1885.

William W. Belknap, brigadier general in Union Army and Secretary of War in Grant's administration, 1869-76, was impeached by the House of Representatives on charges of accepting bribes and forced to resignation.

Grant left office with a heavy record of political and economic scandals that he qualified as "errors of judgment, not of intent."

- Homestead policy

During the 19th century, western farmers, eastern laborers, and reformers pressed for distribution of public land in the west free of charge to settlers willing to work it. In that, they were opposed by eastern landowners (feared fall in land value), employers (loss low-paying labor to western farming), and southerners (seen as anti-slavery crusade)

A Homestead Act was passed in 1862. It provided free land (65 hectares) in the west for farmers subject to a period of 5 years of land cultivation and improvement. The act was intended to encourage the settlement of the West. The homestead policy, however, deviated from its aims. Through fraud and corruption, large tracts of land fall in the hands of land speculators and dealers (land sharks)

2. Political Parties

The two major political parties that dominated government during the Gilded Age—the Republican and Democratic parties—lacked ideological commitment. In his classic work, 'The American Commonwealth', a study on American government, James Bryce, British ambassador to the United States, wrote in 1888: "neither party has any principles, any distinctive tenets..." The parties differed only in their affiliations and memberships.

A. Political power

The Republican Party, or GOP (Grand Old Party) emerged from the Civil War as the party of Union and gained greater political strength; the Democratic Party as the party of slavery and disunion, therefore disgrace and loss of political power.

From 1865 to 1912, the Republican Party controlled the presidency. It won all presidential elections—except for the two terms of the Democrat Grover Cleveland.

In Congress, the Republicans dominated the Senate during that same period but the Democrats dominated the House of Representatives between 1876 and 1896—except for two sessions. Thus, the Republican Party became a leading party and controlled government until 1912.

B. Political weaknesses:

Both parties were plagued with internal problems and suffered divisions:

- Within the Republican Party, two factions—the ‘Stalwarts’ and ‘half-breeds’—fought for power and patronage. Furthermore, the ‘Mugwumps,’ a group of republican reformists opposed to the corruption of the two former groups, split and formed their own party, the Liberal Republican Party in 1872.
- In 1896, the Democratic Party split over the silver issue. The ‘Silverites’ supported the Populist program. With the populists, they took control of the Democratic convention and nominated William Jennings Brian who lost the presidential election of that year

C) Electoral support

Republican Party

The Republicans credited themselves with Civil War achievements (saving the Union and emancipating slaves). They also did not hesitate to use the assassination of Lincoln as their ‘riding horse’ to the White House: ‘Waving the Bloody Shirt’ strategy to defeat the Democrats in elections.

The party was strong in the Northeastern, Midwestern, and Western states.

- Civil War memories secured the votes of war veterans and newly enfranchised blacks—before the last lost vote under Jim Crow legislation
- The Midwestern and western farmers gained in land policy and supported it
- The party’s support of protective tariffs and alliance with big business brought it the strong backing of industrialists and financiers and the urban areas
- It was also supported by non-southern native-born voters (those who traced their origins back to the revolutionary period, prohibitionists (anti-alcoholic stand), and Protestants (Quakers, Congregationalists...))

Democratic Party

Strongly negrophobic, the southerners remained solidly loyal to the Democratic Party so that the South was referred to as the ‘solid South.’ The party’s dominance in the South lasted until 1952. The party was supported by:

- The white Southerners blamed the Republican Party for the war destruction and radical reconstruction that affected the South; subsequently they voted for the Democratic Party
- Conservative and agrarian-oriented, the party was opposed to big business and protective tariffs; therefore, it gained support in the rural areas

- In the North, it was supported by the immigrants and laborers of the big cities. Tammany Hall, NY, headquarters of the party, became a symbol of urban political corruption.
- Support also came from Roman Catholics and Lutherans

III. Reform Movements

1. Congress and political parties

Congress had also its foes of corruption. Senators like Carl Schurz, Charles Sumner, and Horace Greeley stood in sharp contrast to corruption in government and moved to end it. In 1872, they opposed the candidature of Grant to the presidency and formed their own party, the Liberal Republican Party. The party called for civil service reform, reduction of protective tariffs, and a more conciliatory reconstruction policy toward the South. Its candidate, Horace Greeley was supported by the Democratic Party too but was defeated.

2. Rise of third parties

a) The Granger movement

A strong protest agrarian movement among western farmers, which sought to improve the social, economic, and political status of farmers. Among the reasons that caused the rise of the movement were declining prices of agricultural products, the high and discriminatory transportation rates imposed by the railway companies and acquisition by those companies of western farming lands, and increasing debts to the eastern banks.

The movement started in 1867 on a local or state basis and was strong in the Midwest and West where local government introduced policy regulating the railroads. It also managed to elect 3 senators to Congress

During the 1870s, the movement became national and culminated in the rise of different reform parties like Farmers' Alliances, the Greenback party, and the Populist Party.

b) The Greenback Party, 1875

Was organized by Midwestern and southern farmers. It asked for a new monetary policy that would put more paper money, or greenbacks, in circulation (to pay back their debts to the banks)

In 1876, the party nominated a candidate to the presidential election (won little popular vote). In 1878, the Greenbackers joined with different labor organizations and formed the Greenback-Labor Party. In addition to the previous demands, the party sought a reduction in the hours of work, limitations on immigration, and a bureau of labor in the federal government. It got substantial votes in the congressional election of 1878 and managed to elect 14 of its candidates to Congress.

During the 1890s, the different reform movements were absorbed by the newly formed Populist Party.

Gilded Age Politics, 1877-92

Post-Civil War politics were dominated by the Republican Party. It controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress for most of the period. That period was also a period of industrial growth. As a result, the Republican were closely identified with big business and financial interests

The pro-slavery and secession stands weakened the Democratic Party and resulted in electoral defeats and loss of government—except for the administrations of Grover Cleveland and control of the House of Representatives after 1876.

I. Republican politics

1. Rutherford B. Hayes administration, 1877-81

The election of 1876 was highly contested. To secure election to the presidency, Hayes made a deal with Southern Democratic congressmen. He promised withdrawal of the remaining federal troops from the South, federal subsidies for the building of railroads, and sharing patronage with the Southern Democrats against southern votes. He lost the popular vote but won by one electoral vote (185 to 184 for the Dem. Candidate Samuel J. Tilden)

- Electoral support: His conciliatory policies aimed at winning Southern support for the Republican Party; but failed. The Southerners supported the Democratic Party to maintain 'white supremacy' in the South. The South became solidly Democratic—'Solid South'

- Partisan problems

Patronage, consisting of distribution of offices and other favors to party members, was another challenge to his administration. He attempted to prohibit political activities in the federal administration. Opponents in his own party defied him and worked to defeat his reforming policies of the 'spoils system' by refusing him nomination for the presidency of 1880.

- Sectional problems over inflation

The agricultural South and silver-mining West opposed the industrial and financial Northeast—favored by Hayes—over currency issues (they wanted more currency in circulation). Congress passed over Hayes's veto the Bland-Allison Act, 1878, which answered those demands and put more paper dollars on the market (backed by silver).

In the election of 1880 none of the political parties excelled: the Republicans were divided between two factions, 'Stalwart' and 'Half-Breed', and the democrats nominated an ex-federal general with poor political knowledge (declared that the tariff issue, or protectionism, was of little national interest)

2. James A. Garfield administration, 1881-85

The Electoral College vote secured the election of Garfield but the popular vote was insignificant (less than 10,000 votes difference)—all the former slave states voted for the Democratic Party's candidate.

His different Cabinet appointments alienated the leading Republican factions and led to his assassination shortly after taking office (by a disappointed office-seeker). His assassination precipitated reform in the federal Civil Service.

Since the 1830s, a 'spoils system' was established. Recruitment to federal offices was done on a partisan basis (job for service rendered to a political party: allegiance, contribution with funds...

Pendleton Civil Service Act, 1883

Vice-President Chester A. Arthur, who succeeded him to the presidency, approved legislation that aimed at reforming the Civil Service. The major achievement of his administration was the Pendleton Civil Service Act, 1883. The act created the Civil Service Commission, a federal independent agency consisting of three members, to regulate appointments to the federal Civil Service.

The act provided for recruitment on a merit and competitive basis—not partisan appurtenance; it:

- Introduced examinations to test the aptitude of the candidates, based on occupation of the different levels of offices on grades obtained in the exam, and set a period of probation/trial before final appointment. (Competitiveness and merit)
- Made political contribution with funds and services to political parties not necessary for recruitment. (Civil servants can keep their jobs regardless of political commitments)
- Outlawed power abuses (use of position in office to exercise political pressure)
- Set a board of examiners in each state/territory to supervise examination (to end fraud and corruption)
- No recommendations accepted (from congressmen); barred alcoholics from Civil Service...

Impact:

In the 1880s, appointments based on merit and competitiveness and merit covered 10% of the 130,000 civil servants. In the 1990s, the percentage increased to more than 90% of the 2.7 million employees in the federal bureaucracy.

The reformist policies of Chester A. Arthur alienated the Republican leaders; following which he lost nomination for the presidency in 1884. Instead, the Republicans nominated former House Speaker James G. Blaine who was corruption stained (involved in the Crédit Mobilier scandal).

The democrat George Hunt Pendleton, father of the act, was not reelected for elections to the Senate. He served one term (1889-1885)

II. Re-emergence of the Democratic Party

By 1884, public opinion's dissatisfaction about republican partisan policies grew to such a point that for the first time since 1856 the Democrats managed to elect a president, Grover Cleveland—who won reputation for his honesty and political independence (even important Republican leaders supported him). Although moral issues—hired a substitute to fight in his place during the Civil War and illegitimate child—were revealed during the presidential campaign, he was elected by a narrow popular vote margin (less than 1,100 votes)

The Southern and Border States gave him more than 2/3 of the electoral vote. It was the beginning of a new era in which the South in general, and the Democratic Party particularly, was to play a new role in American politics.

1. Grover Cleveland's first term, 1885-89

Cleveland's first administration was confronted with a divided Congress—a Republican Senate and a Democratic House—that split government complicated his presidency. His administration was faced with different internal problems:

- Civil service: though he believed in appointments based on merit, he was under pressure to replace Republican officers with Democrats (in 2 years, he operated partisan removals in 2/3 of the federal offices subject to his control); he also persuaded Congress to repeal the Tenure of Office Act of 1867
- Pensions: Congress passed hundreds of private pension bills that favored Civil War veterans. Opposed to wasteful expenditure of public money, he widely used his veto to block such legislation
- Treasury surplus and the tariff: result of high revenues and protective tariffs imposed by Congress since the Civil War. The surplus in the federal treasury was a handicap as it reduced the circulation of money. Being a Democrat, he sought to reduce the tariffs. The House of Representatives, dominated by the Democratic party, passed a bill reducing the tariff but the Senate rejected it. The tariff problem became a major issue in the presidential election of 1888
- Labor unrest: A labor movement emerged as an organized economic and political force. Trade unions such as the National Labor Union, 1866 and the Knights of Labor, 1869 were formed on a national scale. That labor movement sought legislation to improve the economic conditions of the working class. The Cleveland administration faced bloody industrial unrest that confronted labor to capital, with the police intervening on the side of the industrialists (Haymarket Square Riot, 1886—a bomb, gunfire, and many dead)
- Public land: the different Homestead Acts opened the west for agricultural settlers who clashed fiercely with different interests. Large tracts of land were acquired by questionable means for pure speculative purposes. Furthermore, more land was obtained by the railroads fraudulently. Faced with tremendous irregularities in the acquisition and use of land, Cleveland acted, through executive orders, and restored much of that land to the federal government

- Railroads abusive methods: the railroad companies monopolized rail transportation and imposed high and discriminatory fees for the transportation of goods. Pressure groups organized and sought federal legislation to prohibit abuses.

Interstate Commerce Act, 1887

Congress passed the Interstate Commerce Act, 1887 to regulate railroads. The act prohibited discrimination in charges and monopolization of traffic, and imposed clarity in prices. It also established the Interstate Commerce Commission, an independent federal agency, to enforce the law and regulate the transportation system. The act inaugurated federal government intervention in the regulation of other interstate big businesses

2. The tariff issue and the election of 1888

Cleveland defended a policy of tariff reduction, thus he reduced his chances for reelection—though he was re-nominated candidate for the presidency. The Republicans denounced that policy as a free trade policy that would open the American market to cheap British manufactured goods, consequently a threat to American industrial products

By doing so, the Republicans managed to elect their candidate Benjamin Harrison to the presidency. A Civil War veteran, Harrison had no strong political support. In the presidential campaign, big business money was used to influence the electoral result (clear alliance between the financial and industrial magnates and politicians). Though Cleveland won a majority of the popular votes, Harrison was elected president by Electoral College vote (233 to 168 for Cleveland)

III. Benjamin Harrison administration, 1889-93

The Republicans' control of both houses in Congress—though by a small margin in the House of Representatives—allowed them to pass three significant pieces of legislation. Legislation relating to monopolies, currency, and tariffs was passed in 1890:

- The Sherman Anti-Trust Act: was set to break up industrial monopolies. It declared illegal "every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade." It outlawed the combinations of big businesses that aimed at monopolizing interstate commerce; thus, it encouraged industrial competition. This law was only possible because the national labor unions were also legally considered in 'restraint of trade'. The act proved that only the federal government could regulate the giant industrial combinations—or trusts
- Currency: to appease and win the support of the Western silver mine-owners and farmers, Congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. The act allowed the federal government to buy western silver and convert its value into paper money. It replaced the Bland-Allison Act of 1878
- McKinley Tariff Act: It raised the already high protective tariffs and resulted in an increase of consumer goods' prices—items of general consumption like sugar.

Impact of Republican policy

Public opinion reacted negatively against the new tariffs. In addition, discontent spread widely among the southern and western farmers who were severely hurt by the fall in the prices of their farms' products.

The Congressional election of 1890 was a major defeat for the Republicans who lost the House of Representatives, once more, to the Democratic Party (this time with a strong Democratic majority); and in 1892, the Democrats regained the presidency with Grover Cleveland winning a second term

The presidential campaign of 1892 saw the emergence of a new political party—the People's Party, which nominated its own candidate to the presidency (James B. Weaver won more than a million popular votes and received 22 electoral college votes)

IV. East vs. West

1. Cleveland's second term, 1893-97

In 1893, problems accumulated: depression in the West (result of blizzard and drought), decline of foreign trade and raising prices (result of the McKinley tariff), and finally a financial panic (caused by low gold reserve in the federal Treasury)

- Economic Depression, 1893

The financial panic resulted in bankruptcies of many businesses and financial institutions and led to jobs losses. This economic depression was caused by the extensive purchase of silver by the federal government; therefore, the solution was the repeal of the Sherman Silver purchase Act

The purchase of silver was defended by the West and the Populists. The Democrats also favored an increased coinage of silver; this created difficulty for Cleveland when he attempted to repeal the Sherman Silver purchase Act (both houses were controlled by Democratic majorities). Instead, the Democrats wanted to repeal the McKinley tariffs (eventually reviewed and passed by Congress but Cleveland refused to sign the bill, which became law)

- West and Labor Antagonism

An iron-hand policy was engaged between Cleveland and Congress. Cleveland won the battle against Congress but divided his party and lost control of it; furthermore, he antagonized the West

In addition to legislation that antagonized the West, the Cleveland administration was unfavorable to the working class demands. In 1894, Cleveland sent the federal troops to end a devastating strike in the Pullman railroad company, Chicago

The discontent among the Westerners and the working class was expressed at the Democratic convention of 1896 when the Populists and Democrats, hostile to Cleveland's economic policies, nominated William Jennings Bryan for the presidency

2. McKinley's Administration, 1897-1901

The Republican candidate was William McKinley, a Civil War veteran and governor of Ohio. The main issue of the campaign was the silver question, which opposed the Western economic interests to the Eastern ones

William Jennings Bryan defended the agrarian and Western interests. The eastern industrialists feared for their economic interests and raised tremendous campaign funds to secure the election of McKinley

- Domestic policy

McKinley's domestic policy favored higher tariffs and big businesses. The Dingley Tariff Act, 1897 increased tariffs and despite the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, the big businesses combined and formed trusts

The economic depression, caused by the low federal reserves of gold, lessened starting from 1896—not a result of a new currency policy—but because of increased production of gold in the United States and discovery of important deposits of gold—the Klondike—in 1896. A great gold rush began; by 1900, it provided the USA with more than \$22 million worth of gold

By 1898, depression was over and prosperity was in progress. Great banking houses, such as J.P. Morgan, were created and contributed to that prosperity by providing the needed capital

In 1900, Congress passed the Gold Standard Act, which maintained a minimum gold reserve at the Treasury; by that time, the financial crises was already over

- Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, however, dominated the McKinley administration, which featured the Spanish-American War, 1898. The United States won the war against Spain and acquired the former Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands. It annexed Hawaii and engaged in the building of the Panama Canal. In China, it defended the Open-door policy. Thus, within a very short time, it became a great world power

A new age began in American history: the age of imperialism. The Democratic Party denounced Republican foreign policy as imperialism, which became a major issue in the presidential campaign of 1900

McKinley won again by a popular as well as electoral majority votes, but he was assassinated at the beginning of his second term by a Polish anarchist, Leon Czolgosz (In 1903, Congress passed a law banning entrance of alien anarchists and their deportation from the USA). Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt became president

Populism

Originally, populism developed as a belief in the rights of the ordinary people. It found early expression in demands for individual rights and popular sovereignty during the French Revolution. Later, it evolved to become a political movement expressing itself under diverse forms of revolutionary changes that affected different countries. In the USA, it found political expression in the People's Party, commonly known as the Populist Party, which was formed in the early 1890s from an alliance of western and southern farmers' interests, on one hand, and labor and poor people's interests, on the other. America's populists believed in democracy as a counterbalance to privilege and wealth. Populism was also attributed a pejorative connotation as it has often been associated with demagogic maneuvers, especially in politics. Today, different political trends asserting representation of the interests and views of the ordinary people are downlooked as populism.

Culturally, populism is reflected in a plain and simple way of life. Truth and sincerity are its major moral aspects. These values found an early outlet in the French Revolution too. The sophistication of the aristocracy was revolutionized by emphasis on a populist and simplified style: natural hair instead of wigs and plain people's clothes instead of silk outfits, for example. In the United States, populism was expressed through a renewed interest in popular culture. Thus, folk or ordinary people's music, dance, songs, stories, and traditional ways of life were revived. In sum, cultural populism emphasized and glorified the simplified way of life of American folks.

I. Rise of Populism

1. Farmers' Discontent

Populism or the populist movement was the result of a growing discontent among agrarian interests, mainly southern and western farmers, who suffered from many hardships: high and abusive railroad transportation charges, raising consumer prices (because of the heavy taxes and tariffs), falling farm prices, and high interest rates on bank loans. All those burdens seemed to confirm the farmers' view that there was a vast eastern financial conspiracy that aimed at squeezing them of their meager land returns. In that matter, it was said that farmers "produced 3 principal crops: corn, freight rates, and interest, and that the last 2 were harvested by those who farmed the farmer!"

2. Origins of Populism

- Shays' Rebellion

The origins of populism are deeply rooted in American history going back at least to Shays's Rebellion of the last quarter of the 18th century. The rebellion was a short-lived protest movement that took place in Massachusetts. It opposed the high taxes and harsh economic conditions. Since, protest movements gained strength steadily until they reached a climax during the closing decade of the 19th century.

- Jacksonian democracy

During the 1830s, populism found an ally in Jacksonian democracy. Andrew Jackson's war against the second Bank of the United States coincided with a growing agrarian populism that objected to the bank's restraints on credit. Hence, the bank was seen as a "monster" that sided with the wealthy and stood against the interests of the common people.

- The Grangers

The decade following the end of the Civil War saw the emergence of various farmers' protest groups. Deeply hurt by depression, they asked for social and political reforms. The Grange movement, led by Midwestern and western farmers, paved the way for the rise of third political parties, such as the Greenback and Greenback-labor parties, and many Farmers' Alliances.

All shared common grievances against the railroads, financial institutions, industrialists, and government. By the 1890s, they joined with labor organizations and formed their own political party, the People's Party, with the aim of electing their own representatives and introducing reforms favorable to themselves.

II. Birth of the People's Party

The party was formed in 1891 from an alliance of a variety of local political groups such as the Farmers' Alliances, Greenbackers, Silverists, and laborers. By including the industrial workers, mainly the Knights of Labor, the party aimed at becoming a major party, but remained entirely a regional western and agrarian-oriented political party. The party advocated a wide-range of political and economic reforms.

1. Electoral Support

The Western farmers and silver-miners essentially provided electoral support for the party. The Southern farmers—white supremacists, fearing a return of Blacks to political power, remained solidly faithful to the Democratic Party.

Furthermore, despite its appeal to industrial workers, the party was not successful in the great industrial areas. Thus, the Populist Party proved to be mainly agrarian in character, and western-based in locality.

- The 1892 presidential election

In 1892, the Populists nominated James B. Weaver, a Civil War veteran, lawyer, and congressional representative for the presidential election of that year. The Populist presidential candidate polled 22 electoral votes and more than 1,000,000 popular votes (8.5% of the total vote,) signs of an upheaval in party politics.

By fusing with the Democrats in certain states, the party elected several members to Congress, three governors, and hundreds of minor officials and legislators, nearly all in the northern Middle West.

In the South, however, most farmers refused to endanger white supremacy by voting against the Democratic Party. The Democratic candidate carried all the southern states' vote while the Populists' candidate won votes in the western states only.

2. The Omaha Platform, 1892

A) The platform

- General picture

The populists' first convention, held at Omaha, NE adopted a platform, which painted an apocalyptic picture of a nation "brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin" by a conspiracy of greedy private interests. The platform went on:

Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized... The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated; our homes covered with mortgages; labor impoverished; and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few... and the possessors of these in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires.

- The Blame

The Populists blamed both Republicans and Democrats for the wrongs inflicted on them:

We have witnessed for more than a quarter century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform; they have agreed together to ignore in the coming campaign every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff.... They propose to sacrifice homes, lives, and children on the altar of mammon; to destroy the multitude in order to secure corruption funds from the millionaires.

- The Alternative

The Populist Party presented itself a better alternative to the existing political parties. It promised to "restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the 'plain people,' with whose class it originated..." They pledged themselves, if elected, to correct evils "by wise and reasonable legislation." They also promised to expand the power of government "as rapidly and as far as the good sense of an intelligent people and the teachings of experience shall justify, to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in this land."

B) Demands of the populists

The platform also included demands for radical changes that are today considered as the most far-reaching demands for reform in all American political history. The populists asked for:

- increase in the circulation of currency to be achieved by “free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold;”
- graduated income tax so that “the burden of taxation” would be equally apportioned and the wealthy would be forced to pay their share in taxes.
- Government ownership and operation of railroads, telephone and telegraph “in the interest of people;”
- protection of American labor through control of immigration and reduction of hours of work to eight hours;
- abolition of the army as they saw it “a menace to our liberties;”
- limitation of the office of the president to one term and election of senators by direct popular vote (so far Senators were chosen by states’ legislatures).

In addition, they asked for other measures designed to strengthen political democracy, like referendum and initiative, and give farmers economic parity with business and industry.

III. Decline of the Populists

1. Alliance with Democrats

The People’s Party 1896 program reaffirmed that of 1892. It maintained “the fundamental principles of just government as enunciated in the platform of the party in 1892.”

The Populist Party reached its peak in 1896 when it took control of the Democratic convention. During the convention it prevailed and managed to nominate William Jennings Bryan, a Democrat who endorsed the Populist program, as candidate for the presidency. By doing so, the Populists sacrificed their own independent identity, which they were soon to regret.

The coming together of Populists and Democrats was caused by their mutual preoccupation with the Free Silver Movement. That movement strengthened in the late 19th century and asked for an unlimited coinage of silver. The movement was prompted by a congressional legislation that withdrew the silver dollar from circulation—they call it the ‘Crime of ‘73.’ The movement was supported by the western silverminers, farmers, and debtors who saw in silver a solution to their problems. In the late 19th century silver stood for social justice.

2. The Election of 1896

The silver vs. gold issue was the decisive element in the 1896 election. While the Republican candidate William McKinley, who was backed by business interests, defended a solid and sound currency—backed by gold, William Jennings Bryan, backed by the common people, defended the silverists’ stand.

- The 'Cross of Gold Speech'

Bryan's defiance and attack on pro-gold eastern interests is legend. His eloquent 'Cross of Gold' speech, delivered at the Democratic convention of 1896, stands out as a classic in American political oratory:

We beg no longer, we entreat no more; we petition no more; We defy them! (banks, railroads, big business). He concluded magnificently: "You shall not press down on the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold.

Bryan lost the election by only ½ a million popular votes, but the big business-backed Republican campaign machinery, architected by the powerful industrialist Mark Hanna, secured the election of McKinley by 271 electoral votes to 176 for Bryan.

3. Collapse of the Populists

For most historians, the Populists' strategy of merger with the Democrats for the election of 1896 was the beginning of the end of the short life of their party. The defeat of the Democratic Party presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan signaled the collapse of one of the most challenging protest movements in United States' history.

The party survived for a while and participated in the next three presidential elections but with no much success. Its successive candidates scored insignificant popular votes in the elections of 1900, 1904, and 1908. After the defeat of its candidate in the election of 1908, it split and disappeared completely. Its supporters fused for the most part into the Democratic Party and the growing progressive movement.

IV. Populism and 20th Century Reforms

Populism remains one of the most important political protest movements that emerged in the United States after the Civil War. Despite its brief existence, the Populist movement deeply influenced subsequent American domestic policy. Almost all its demands, which at its own time were considered too much radical and contrary to the American spirit of free enterprise, were ultimately endorsed and written into law (congressional laws or amendments to the Constitution.)

The importance of Populist Party lies in the fact that the two major political parties later on absorbed its platform. The Republican and Democratic progressives embraced its demands: Theodore Roosevelt's Republican administration and the two administrations of the Democratic progressive Woodrow Wilson introduced reforms, which originally were planks or points of the Populists' platforms—mainly those of 1892 and 1896.

1. Achievements

Some of the populist demands, such as the income tax, popular election of senators, and the poll tax were ultimately adopted and included in the American system of government through amendment of the Constitution.

- Income tax (1913)

In 1894, Congress adopted an amendment to the Constitution that imposed a 2% tax on income for both individuals and businesses. The Supreme Court, however, declared it unconstitutional. Indeed Article 1, Section 9 prohibited the federal government from imposing direct taxes.

In 1909 another amendment was introduced; ratified in 1913 as the 16th Amendment, it specified that "The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes." This amendment changed the tax requirements that were previously set in the Constitution and imposed a graduated income tax. The Underwood Tariff Act of 1913, passed by the Wilson provided for a graduated income tax. Today, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a federal agency originally established in 1862, is responsible for collecting taxes.

- Election of senators (1913)

The 17th Amendment of 1913 modified Article 1, Section 3 of the Constitution. The Senators, used to be "chosen by the Legislature," were submitted to direct popular vote: "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof for six years." Vacancies also were subjected to direct popular vote. The Amendment made senators responsible before all the voters of the state, not just the state legislature.

- Poll tax (1964)

The Poll tax subjected individuals to the payment of a tax as a condition for voting, regardless of the amount of their income or property. Since colonial times voting had been conditioned by the payment of property taxes; and after the Civil War the southern states adopted the poll tax as a means for disenfranchising Blacks—the 15th Amendment had previously guaranteed them the right to vote. The tax disenfranchised not only Blacks by also denied persons without means—poor whites—the right to vote.

It was not until 1964 that the poll taxes were prohibited in federal elections. The 24th Amendment stipulated that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote [in federal elections] shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax."

In 1966, the poll tax that was still required for state and local elections was also prohibited. The Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional under the "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment (section 1).

- Referendum and initiative

The populists asked for a wider participation of people in government policy-making. Their demands included the introduction of referendum and initiative. Under 'referendum,' the government should submit important legislative decisions to direct popular vote—the people's vote approves or rejects a proposed legislation. Through the 'initiative,' the people could petition government to propose legislation or an amendment to a constitution, which passage is submitted to popular vote.

These reforms are today major features in many states' governments. Although the Populists failed to obtain them during their own time, the progressives succeeded in introducing them gradually.

Others, such as a postal savings system, government financing of farm credit, laws against imported contract labor, and eight-hour day for industrial workers, were achieved gradually through congressional legislation but none was accomplished under populist leadership.

2. Failures

The populist's most important demand, the free and unlimited coinage of silver at a ratio of 16 to one to gold never became a reality, as well as government ownership of railroad, telegraph and telephone companies. In railroads, however, the federal government stepped in during the 1870s and took control of the bankrupt companies. Consequently, two major publicly owned companies were established: the National Railway Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), created in 1970 and the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail), created in 1972.

The one-term presidency never materialized too. In 1951, however, the 22nd Amendment of the Constitution limited the office of the president to two terms. Indeed, the Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected for office four consecutive times; he served three full terms but died at the beginning of the fourth term. This long presidency prompted the amendment: "No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once."

In a way, the Populist Platform provided a reform agenda for the United States at a time changes caused by industrialization necessitated reconsideration of American politics and system of government.

Like the Chartists and their People's Charter of the 1830s in Great Britain, the Populist platform of the late 19th century in the United States was the outcome of a movement that was born prematurely ahead of its time.

Progressivism

I. The Context of Progressivism

Progressivism flourished in an environment of evils and dangers, which the progressives countered by political activism and actual reforms. The complexity of the problems of the late 19th century necessitated urgent reforms, which they did not hesitate to undertake. Those problems may be summed up as follows: problems caused by rapid industrialization, unequal distribution of wealth, urban problems, corrupt and inefficient government, and confusion in ethics.

1. Rapid Industrialization Problems

In the process of Industrialization big businesses were created, then grew to become trusts. The growth was wild and unregulated. Despite the efforts made by the federal government to bring combinations of capital and industry under control, monopoly and trust building kept growing. The two laws that attempted to curb the power of monopolies remained un-enforced, therefore ineffective.

Industrial problems grew too. Periodic depressions shook the economy; labor unrest, child labor, and inadequate working conditions unveiled exploitation and degradation of the workers. The farmers were affected too. Plagued by debt and falling in farm prices, they pressed for regulatory legislation. Reckless exploitation extended to natural resources too. Everywhere there were evils and dangers that necessitated rapid remedies.

The progressive reforms were concerned with those problems: put an end to child labor, introduce factory sanitary inspection, deal with industrial violence, regulate exploitation of natural resources, and the list was long. 'Trust-busting,' railroad regulation, conservation, social welfare, competition upholding, regulation of industry and finance, and preservation of the 'spirit of democracy' formed the reform agenda of the progressives.

2. Distribution of Wealth

- The old millionaires

No less important than the problems created by industrialization was the problem of the unequal distribution of wealth. During the early decades of the Republic, the Americans considered that they have achieved political as well economic democracy: there was little wealth and little poverty.

The first half of the 19th century saw the rise of very few big fortunes—about 19 millionaires. The richest among them, John Jacob Astor (1763-1848), the fur magnate who founded the powerful American Fur Company (1808), amassed a fortune of \$6 million—nothing if compared to the \$1 billion fortunes of the late 19th century. Morally, then, money meant 'responsibility.' (By the way, Astor's company is considered as the first monopoly in the United States.)

- The new millionaires

The industrial revolution inaugurated an age of 'captains of industry' who became wealthy by speculation, unfair practices, and exploitation. Money came to mean 'power' and the social gap widened between rich and poor. Statistics show that the greatest wealth was concentrated in the hands of the few. In 1896, general surveys showed that 1% of the population owned more than 50% of wealth and that 12% owned more than 90% of wealth.

On the other hand was a majority of people who suffered deprivation and poverty. Studies of the nineteenth century cities confirmed that reality. In Philadelphia, for example, statistics show that 1% of the population held 50% of the city's wealth while the lowest 80% held only 3%. That disparity between rich and poor kept growing.

To protect their interests, the wealthy did not hesitate to buy politicians and legislators. Wealth became a danger to democracy. It was against the power of wealth that the progressives directed their work. They engaged in a battle for an income tax, an achievement secured by the 16th amendment of 1913.

3. Urban Problems

- Population growth

Between 1860 and 1900, the urban population more than doubled—from 19.8 to 39.7% of the total population. The number of cities having a population of 100,000 increased too from 19 to 36 cities between 1880 and 1890. Many of the industrial cities—New York, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis—more than doubled in size. Urbanization resulted from a double-stream of immigration: domestic and foreign. The rapid growth of the cities had its consequent problems.

- The growth of cities

It was not the increase in urban population as much as it was the growth of the size of the cities that created problems. The rapid and unregulated growth of cities brought about new and complex problems: housing, inadequate water supply and sewage, filth, congestion, poverty, crime, vice, public security (great fires destroyed the entire Chicago and Boston in 1871 and '72 respectively), public lighting, pavement of the streets, transportation... and many others.

- Local government policies

All those tasks fell to the city governments. Traditional city-mayors and councils collapsed completely under the new demands and a new form of local government had to be found. Nowhere were the progressives quite active and innovative as in municipal reform. Experts, commissioners, engineers, social workers...were needed and used to solve the problems of the city, but the administrative machinery was overloaded with corruption, therefore inefficient.

- Corrupt and Inefficient Government

Business interests controlled politics through corruption; and reform was handicapped by corrupt politics. The progressives realized that cleansing politics was necessary; so, they had to struggle against corruption. Corruption is a threat to democratic government; yet, it found fertile soil in the American system of government of the day.

The spread of corruption in the United States may be partly explained by the 'tradition of lawlessness' in American history. That tradition was inherited from the revolutionary era and the constantly moving frontier. Social mobility—involving westward migration, movement from rural to urban areas, immigration from Europe to New World—implied continuous social disintegrations; therefore the Americans developed a Machiavellian philosophy: what mattered, in fact, were results not methods. Thus, corruption is an integral part of the American experience.

Moreover, the inefficiency of government is partly attributed to its old-fashioned character which could not deal with the new and complex problems and partly to the spirit of democracy inherited from Jacksonian times: 'anyone can be the president of the United States.' Incompetent politicians were returned to government providing thus a battleground of choice for the progressives.

- Disruption in Ethics

Old codes: The problem of ethics resulted from the changes that affected the American society. The agrarian, rural, and individualistic society of the pre-Civil War period was by no means comparable to the industrial, urban, and highly integrated society of the late 19th century. Yet, the Americans continued to act according to the same simplistic laws and moral code.

New order: The society grew in complexity and interdependence and fell to the domination of corporations. Under that corporate system, personal responsibility was no more evident. Crimes that were condemned under the Ten Commandments in the agrarian society, like murder for example, were no more recognizable in the new industrial society. The old codes had become irrelevant for the new social order; but the new society had not yet developed a moral code and laws of its own. Confusion started at this point: the American society was at the crossroads.

Manufacture and sale of defective products like unhealthy foods, for example, might cause disease or death; yet, none of those involved in the process—manufacturer, wholesaler, grocer, corporation directors, or stockholders considered themselves guilty of murder. The new social sin was faceless; consequently, it "produced no sense of guilt."

Need for new codes: This was the most dangerous problem that faced the progressives. They had to formulate a new moral code and laws and built a new administrative machinery to deal with problems. Therefore, they had to struggle over trusts, labor, sanitation, housing, and a number of other problems.

4. Nature of the Progressive Movement

- Diversity

We cannot speak about a single or uniform Progressive movement. During the 1890s, an array of movements mushroomed throughout the United States. Their character, concerns, and demands were as varied as their numbers.

All, however, were motivated by the same grievances and goals: industrialization generated numerous social, economic, and political problems and the different movements pressed governments—local, state, and federal—for reforms.

- Motivations and Goals

Progressivism, or the progressive movement, developed as a response to problems created by industrialization and urbanization. The problems included the spread of poverty—at an age of wealth, slums and diseases, exploitation of labor, trust and corrupt-governments' alliance, concentration of wealth and political power, and jeopardy of America's democratic principles —among many other.

The progressives asked for a variety of social, industrial, and political reforms. They sought fair policies that would put an end to slums and poverty, big business exploitation of labor and natural resources, industrial and financial combinations. Demands for reform included also women's suffrage, prohibition, graduated income tax, and a wider popular participation in the political process; i.e.: 'direct primary' and vote by referendum, initiative, and recall.

II. Leadership

1. Leaders

The progressive movement flourished under the leadership of prominent figures such as the Republican president Theodore Roosevelt and the Democratic president Woodrow Wilson. Progressives per excellence, both used their executive power to contribute outstanding reform policies.

William Jennings Bryan and Robert M. La Follette were also leading reformists who embraced the aspirations of the masses and battled for the ideals of democracy during a number of presidential election campaigns.

- William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925)

Bryan was a fervent defender of the common people. As a Midwesterner (born in Tennessee and reared in Illinois,) he defended the agrarian interests as opposed to the eastern interests. Between 1891 and 1895 he was House Representative for the State of Nebraska. He opposed the high tariffs and defended the silver issue.

In 1896, 1900, 1908 he was the Democratic Party candidate for the presidency. He adopted the populists and free silverists' program and supported progressive reforms such as the popular election of senators and the graduated income tax. As a presidential candidate, he campaigned on a program of social and reforms; that made many consider him as a dangerous socialist and radical and cost him the presidency. As a Secretary of State (1913-1915), he played an important role in the Wilson administration and was influential in the ultimate adoption of important reforms.

- Robert M. La Follette (1855-1925)

Like Bryan, La Follette was a Midwesterner who stood for the same values. He is considered as the pioneering progressive. As Governor of the State of Wisconsin (1900-1906), he introduced tax reforms, regulated railroads, and expanded political democracy—via the 'direct primary.'

Innovator, he contributed the 'roll-call', a method that consisted of making public (reading publicly) the list of legislators who had opposed his reform proposals; that way, he succeeded in passing many reforms—a method he took to the Senate. As Senator (1907-1925), he fought 'the interests' and supported antitrust legislation and consumer and labor-protecting legislation. By 1910, he was the progressive leader in Congress,

2. Parties

- The Progressive Party or 'Bull Moose' (1912)

In 1911, La Follette organized the Republican Progressive League, an ephemeral political party that gathered the progressive Republicans who sought to liberalize their own party. The progressive movement peaked in 1912 when the League was transformed into the Progressive Party, or Bull Moose, after La Follette's supporters deserted him for Roosevelt. Ruffling 27.4% of the popular vote, the Progressive Party largely influenced the presidential election of the same year.

- The Progressive Party (1924)

The progressives also, under the League for Progressive Political Action, gathered momentum and joined with liberals, agrarians, Republican progressives, socialists, and labor representatives to form the short-lived Progressive Party of 1924. The party's candidate to the presidential election of the same year, La Follette, scored 16.6% of the popular vote but failed in the race to the presidency. The movement declined thereafter but found continuation under a new form of progressive reforms: the New Deal.

III. The Origins of Progressivism

The origins of progressivism are numerous and complex, therefore difficult to account for. At first, the different movements asking for reform were locally and state-based. Though extremely diverse in their nature and demands, they all showed concern about the conditions of the under-dogged, the increasing immoral capitalistic practices—rapacious individualism and monopolies, and the alliance of corrupt politicians with big business.

1. Agrarian Origins

It has origins in the various agrarian political movements like the Grange movement (1867), the Greenback Party (1875), and the Populist Party (1891) that sought to improve the social, economic, and political conditions of the farmers as well as federal control of railroads and banks. As those parties lost strength, the progressive movement absorbed their remaining supporters.

2. Ideological Origins

Moderate intellectuals developed a new thought that is often referred to as 'democratic socialism or collectivism.' They challenged the philosophical foundations of 'laissez-faire' and capitalism. Others that were more radical found in socialism—modeled on the Soviet Union's communism—an alternative to the American economic system and a solution to its problems.

3. Social and Religious Origins

Social workers unveiled the ugliness of slums and poverty. In that, they were joined by religious men who preached a new kind of Gospel, the 'Social Gospel', which brought the church into the arena of social reform. Its influential preachers argued that the industrial system was contrary to the fundamental principles of Christianity and asked for reforms.

4. 'Muckraking'

A new kind of investigative journalists, called the 'muckrakers,' reported about the widespread human degradation and abuses. They engaged in a crusade against corruption and asked for reforms. Their widely circulated newspapers had an enormous impact on American public opinion. Outstanding muckraking included: Lincoln Steffens' *Shame of the Cities* (1904), Gustavus Myers' *History of the Great American Fortunes*, and David Graham Philips' *Treason of the Senate* (1906). In addition to journalists, the muckrakers included literary critics, historians, economists, sociologists....

IV. Progressive Urban Reforms

1. Local Governments

Most successful was the National Municipal League, 1894, which united different progressive groups and managed to drive out corrupt politicians and generated more-democratic forms of local government. The old mayor-council form of government, for example, was replaced by a group of commissioners—each having in charge a single department to limit corruption—or city professional experts. Both were subjected to popular vote.

The progressives militated for better housing conditions, schools, and social services for the poor, and against railroads and monopolies. Subsequently, even the big-city political machines were affected by that reformist drive. Tammany Hall, the executive committee of the Democratic Party, for example, was synonymous with urban political corruption (the Tweed ring was notorious for the matter). Formed in 1805, it exercised tremendous political influence during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Subjected to constant reforms, it gradually lost influence and died out.

2. State Governments

In the late 19th century, most state governments were controlled by political organizations that were financed by industrial corporations. Young idealistic politicians emerged to challenge the corrupt political machineries.

Woodrow Wilson, governor of New Jersey and later U.S. President, was one of them. Others included Wisconsin governor and later senator Robert M. La Follette; New York governor Charles Evans Hughes, later Republican candidate for the presidential election of 1916, Secretary of State, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1930-41); and California governor Hiram W. Johnson (1911-17), later senator (1911-45).

A) Political reforms

Those new politicians revolutionized American politics. They introduced political reforms to reactivate political democracy. New devices, such as the direct primary, referendum, initiative, and recall were developed to insure a larger public participation in government.

- Direct primary

The 'direct primary' allowed the people, not the political party, to choose their candidates for the different offices (governors, representatives, judges, sheriffs...). By doing so, the reformers aimed at selecting able and honest candidates, independent from the influence of corrupt party machines. By 1916, almost all states adopted the direct primary.

- Referendum

The introduction of 'referendum' enabled the people to vote directly to approve or reject certain measures passed by legislatures. For constitutional amendments, referendum is compulsory. The people may also petition for referendum on a law passed by a legislature—this is optional or facultative referendum. Today referendum is a feature of most American states' governments.

- Initiative

Through 'initiative,' the people could petition government for the introduction of a legislative proposal or proposed amendment; i.e.: the people could submit a petition containing a proposed legislation to the government; and the government submits it to popular vote (through referendum). Today almost half the American states have included the right of initiative in their system of government.

- Recall

'Recall' is another device that permitted the people to call back, through popular vote, their representatives and elected officeholders, if disappointing, before the end of their term—in other words, removing them from office if they do not act according to the will of their electors.

This technique aimed at minimizing the influence of political parties and private interests on representatives and was used against those who obstructed social reform—mainly judges who ruled against reform. Few states adopted recall, especially midwestern states; today only 11 states have included recall in their system of government.

Theodore Roosevelt, a vigorous progressive, even went further: in 1912, he suggested recall of judicial decisions—a suggestion that made many believe that he was ready for psychiatric asylum! (Indeed, only the State of Colorado adopted such a measure; and then the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1921.)

A) Social and economic reforms

In state governments, the progressives also introduced social reforms: insurance system for the workers covering industrial accidents, legislation preventing child and regulating women labor, and social services for the poor (public institutions for aged persons, financial assistance for mothers, pensions for the old...)

Between 1902 and 1914, new child-labor laws, for example, were adopted. Most of them prohibited the employment of children under 14 in factories, at night, and in dangerous jobs. Furthermore, in the landmark decision *Muller vs. State of Oregon*, 1908, the Supreme Court reversed its former negative stand about women labor and authorized an Oregon ten-hour law for women laborers. The decision was applauded by the progressives and led to more legislation that improved the working conditions of women (even though the feminists consider it a hard blow to the principle of equal economic opportunities in the workplace.)

The progressives introduced state reforms regulating the railroads and industry too. Certain problems, however, were not limited to the boundaries of the individual states. Regulation of interstate railroads and industrial monopolies needed the intervention of the federal government. Such a task was taken in charge by the two progressive presidents: Roosevelt and Wilson.