

History 340
Critical Periods in American History the 1890s
Roger Williams University
CAS 228
M, W, F, 12:00 - 12:50
Fall Semester, 2007

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Week of September 3, 2007

For *Monday, September 3*

Are you going to be here? I'm not. It's Labor Day. I'll be winging my way back from Minneapolis, where I've been wishing my Aunt Gladys a happy 100th birthday. Good looks run in the family, right?

For *Wednesday, September 5*

Read,

in **Fink**,

#1, <i>Andrew Carnegie Hails the Triumph of Capitalism</i>	18-20
#2, <i>Henry George Dissects the Paradox of Economic Growth</i>	20-22
#3, <i>The Reverend Alexander Lewis Offers an Ode to Upward Mobility</i>	23

[Andrew Carnegie](#) and [Henry George](#) look at the economic machine from widely differing perspectives. Interestingly, both men rose from very humble origins to positions of fame and prominence. In Carnegie's case, one can add wealth to the list of his triumphs. George, on the other hand became a public icon for those who greeted the new economy with suspicion. Alexander Lewis's short poem is the kind of thing which teachers at the turn of the century might encourage their students to memorize. (I won't force that on any of you... but if you have invented an appropriate character you may want to learn this "by heart." How does one become rich? Lewis provides what becomes the standard American answer for a century or more.

For *Friday, September 7*

Read, in **Fink**,

<i>The Machine as Deity and Demon</i> (Trachtenberg)	27 - 34
<i>Class Consciousness, American Style</i> (Fink)	34 - 45

As Trachtenberg's title suggests, some Americans worshipped the machine age while others saw it as threatening core values. I'm sure there were some Americans which held both of these views simultaneously. Trachtenberg looks at the way intellectuals (including Henry George, whom you met on Wednesday) analyzed the emerging machine culture. Some of them, like [Frederick Taylor](#), created a "cult of efficiency," while others pondered the human costs.

As capital became more concentrated and as fortunes reached ever greater sums, the social distance between rich and poor became greater and greater. Carnegie and Lewis espoused a belief that anyone could better himself or herself through diligence, sacrifice, and hard work. The growing power of the "Captains of Industry" seemed likely to overwhelm individual working men and women, however. How could any of them compete successfully with Carnegie and his like? One possible response was labor organization, and this one of the themes of Fink's essay. American Labor behaves differently from European Labor, however, and Fink wants us to consider why American "working classes" respond to industrial change and social crisis in a way different from their European counterparts.

Always remember to consider how your 1890s alter-ego would react to the events, persons, and ideas described