

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 October 22, 2007

You've noticed, no doubt that our two principal texts extend well beyond the 1890s. We're going to finish Schlereth (one more chapter after this one) and we're just about finished with Chambers--just a smidgen over one more chapter there, too. The rest of the semester, as I've suggested, will be to return to a number of themes we've investigated previously, and attend to them in greater detail.

For *Tuesday, October 22*

Read, in *Schlereth*
Chapter 7, *Striving*

pp. 243 - 269

There is always a way to rise, my boy
Always a way to advance
Yet the road that leads to Mount Success
Does not pass by the way of Chance
But goes through the stations of Work and Strive
through the valley of Persevere
And the man that succeeds while others fail,
Must be willing to pay most dear.

Alexander Lewis

Some of you will remember the little poem quoted above. Schlereth's chapter looks at the relationship between religion and education and the effects that religious ideas prevalent in the period acted as a stimulus for self improvement. We'll follow this through formal institutions like schools and colleges and into informal institutions like the Chautauqua Circuit and various schemes of self-education.

For *Wednesday, October 24*

Internet Assignment:

Visit <http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/traveling-culture/essay.htm> which is an essay on the Chautauqua Movement. After you've read about the movement and its history, go to the home page of this collection at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/iauhtml/tccchome.html> and browse through the materials there, choosing ONE of the pre 1910 lecturers or performers which stikes your fancy. Record your character's reactions to the event.

For *Friday, March 26*

Read, in *Fink*,

8.2, "*William Graham Sumner Elaborates the Principles of Social Darwinism 1882*" pp. 229-231

8.3, "*Lester Frank Ward Attacks Laissez Faire in the Name of Reform, 1885*" pp. 229-231

12.5, "*Baptist Clergyman Walter Rauschenbusch Seeks a Social Christianity*" pp. 363-364

We begin by looking at a debate between two academics who were largely responsible for creating the modern discipline of Sociology. As we have already become aware, Darwinism inspired thinkers in disciplines far removed from biology. As one might also expect, a person's basic political and social beliefs greatly influenced the "spin" put on the use of Darwin's theories. Conservatives such as Sumner looked upon intervention to protect the unfortunate as ultimately harmful to the species, no matter what the motivation. (Remember that Carnegie doted on Sumner). Liberals like Ward saw intervention as a way to use intelligence to manage and direct the evolution of the human species.

The liberal application of Darwinist principles had a profound effect upon the direction that benevolence or organized charity took in the last part of the nineteenth century. One of changes most noted was the growing interest of Protestantism to meet and influence emerging social problems associated with city life. The Social Gospel, as this movement came to be called, put the influence of portions of American churches behind attacks on urban conditions. [Walter Rauschenbusch](#) was perhaps the most influential spokesmen for the Social Gospel of his era.

All of this relates, directly and indirectly to the idea of *striving* which we looked at on Tuesday. Clearly striving was the method by which one struggled in this new Darwinian world. The question was did one strive alone, or was the community to help, using both public and private means? We'll continue this investigation next week as we encounter some more seminal thinkers, including Jane Addams and John Dewey.