

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

Michael R. H. Swanson, Ph. D.
Office CAS 110
Hours: T: 9:30 - 11:00
M, W, F, 1:00 - 2:00
Phone: 254 3230
e-mail: Swanson1890s@msn.com

Week of **November 5, 2007**

For *Monday, November 5*

The Stages of Life

Read, in *Schlereth*,
Chapter 8, Living and Dying. pp. 271 - 293

This concludes our work in Schlereth. (Well, nearly: there is still a short epilogue). It is appropriate that this chapter reviews the life cycle as experienced by Americans at the turn of the century. Note that some of the "stages" of life are as much cultural and psychological as they are biological. Adolescence, for example is an invention of the late nineteenth century. Be aware, too, that changes in medicine, nutrition, and public health are changing American's sense of what the expectations and limitations of any given age were.

For *Wednesday, November 7*

Sampling the Stages

While it would be useful to pursue additional insights into all the stages of life represented in the concluding chapter of Schlereth, it would hardly be practical. Following up on Monday's assignment, I'd like you to download and look at these as representative samples, recognizing that the experiences represented are quite distant from the direct experiences of many Americans of our era. Obviously I've chosen the stage for today partly because of the stage of life which preoccupies you now. The number of Americans who experience this stage in the 1890s was directly was minuscule. However, then, as now, Americans experienced many things vicariously.

Internet Exercise

[Festivals at American Colleges for Women](#) . (various authors, 1895, New Century Magazine)
NOTE: There is an error in the bookmark for this essay. It actually begins on page 429, not page 424.

[His College Life](#), (William De Witt Hyde, Scribner's magazine, 1895)

These two together will give you some idea about the differences between college life and college expectations for men and women. In both instances the emphasis is a bit

more on the “lighter side” of college life, and you may want to compare the experiences of these students of about one hundred years ago with experiences of your own.

For *Friday, November 9*

Sampling the Stages: Mortality

[*The National Government and the Public Health*](#) (John H. Girdner, MD) from the North American Review, December 1897.

[**Memento Mori: Photographs of Death in 19th Century America**](#), by Dan Meinwald.

The first of these looks at the recurrent problems of epidemics and a beginning consciousness of the role in government in fighting them. The last of this week's readings provides a brief overview of 19th century attitudes toward death and dying. Give yourself some time with the last of these. Nineteenth Century attitudes toward death were very different from our own, and mourning practices were far more ritualized.