

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 December 3, 2007

Dear Students and Friends:

I'm afraid this week may wind up a bit of a muddle, for which I apologize in advance. You may remember at the beginning of the semester I winged my way out to Minneapolis for the 100th Birthday of my Aunt Gladys. If things had gone well, I would have repeated the trip this weekend for my mother's 100th birthday.

But it looks like this may not happen as planned. She has grown very frail since the summer, and the decline in her health has accelerated since Thanksgiving. Last night I received a call from the Nursing Home where she lives, suggesting that her passing is only a matter of time. Family obligations may require that I miss one or both of the remaining classes this week. I deeply regret this, as you may imagine, as I've grown very fond of you as a class over the past 13 weeks. I will e-mail you on a regular basis as I learn what's what. If I'm not going to be here for part of Final Exam week I will make arrangements for you to drop your papers off in a secure place, should you not wish to trust them to the tender mercies of Blackboard. I will also have a computer with me so we can keep in touch. Below is the tentative Schedule for the week.

For *Monday, December 3*

I plan to show the second half of the video *America in 1900*

For **Wednesday, December 5**

Read, in *Chambers*,

Chapter I. pp. 44 - 49 (from *The Taste of Empire*, to
The Challenge of Change)

in *Fink*,

1898: The Meaning of the Maine 279 - 286

9.1 *Alfred T. Mahan Proclaims the Importance of*
Sea Power, 1890 254-265

- 9.2 *Theodore Roosevelt Links War in the Philippines to the Ideal of the Strenuous Life*, 1899, 165 - 267
- 9.3 *William Jennings Bryan Opposes U. S. Occupation of the Philippines*, 1900.267-270
- 9.4 *Albert Beveridge Defends U. S. Imperialism*, 1900 270-272
- Theodore Roosevelt and the Strenuous Life* (Bederman) 286 - 294

To this point, the course has been more or less inward looking. This is appropriate, because, excepting always the immigrant's abiding interest in news from home, Americans had little interest in the world beyond the nation's borders. This was to change as the United States caught the Imperialism Bug. Today's readings will explore the conflict which added Puerto Rico to the American Nation (as commonwealth, not at state), and confirmed our interests in the Pacific, as well. Through this conflict, Theodore Roosevelt became a national figure.

Not all Americans were convinced that foreign adventures were in the country's interests, however, as the debate between Bryan and Beveridge shows. Note, too that there is a significant element of racism involved in the American argument, both for, and against the annexation of the islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

The two bracketing essays are interesting examples of interpretive history. I'd like to spend a little time considering them as such, if possible.

For *Friday, December 7*

Should all this be a false alarm and mom rallies, I'll be here and conduct a round-table discussion on the class as an experience. I'm very much interested in your feedback, as I teach this course differently than the others I teach. Should I be away, I'll let you know by e-mail whether or not I plan to hold the class with a substitute.

BTW, if you haven't done the online assessment for this course, I urge you to do so.

Thank you all for your patience as I juggle my way through all this. It is deeply appreciated.

Mike Swanson