

Master of American History and Government  
Ashland University

**AHG 505:  
THE PROGRESSIVE ERA**

Instructors: Ronald J. Pestritto and William Atto  
*Sunday, July 8, 2007 to Friday, July 13, 2007*

**Course Description:**

American government underwent major changes in the twentieth century as a result of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. These changes, in many ways, continue to define American politics and society today. But the political principles that drove the New Deal and the Great Society did not originate with FDR or Johnson; they were introduced into America by the Progressives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This course will examine the political principles of the Progressive movement in America and will address both the historical developments that gave rise to Progressivism and the consequences of the Progressive movement for the course of American history. The course will concentrate on prominent national Progressives such as Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, John Dewey, and Herbert Croly. It will also seek to understand the way in which Progressivism has influenced not only American domestic policy, but foreign policy as well; and particular attention will be paid to World War I and its relevance today for thinking about America's relationship to the rest of the world.

**Learning Objectives:**

- 1) Students will learn who the Progressives were, and will learn the nature of the circumstances of their day. They will develop an understanding of the major issues faced by the nation during the Progressive era.
- 2) Students will learn about the Progressive conception of government – of its scope and ends. Students will also learn about the Progressive conception of society, and the relationship between government and society.
- 3) Students will learn about the political theory of Progressivism, and will understand how this political theory shaped and informed the Progressive view of government.
- 4) Students will learn how the principles of Progressivism related to the original principles of American constitutionalism. They will learn what Progressives thought about the political ideas of the American founders.
- 5) Students will learn the principles and the facts of the important social movements shaped by the Progressive movement.

- 6) Students will learn how Progressives sought to implement their principles in the reform of national political institutions, such as Congress, the presidency, and the judiciary. They will also learn about the Progressive vision for the reform of political parties, and the implementation of mechanisms of direct democracy.
- 7) Students will learn that Progressives occasionally differed among themselves in terms of their visions for reforming national, state, and local politics, and will come to an understanding of these differences and the reasons for them.
- 8) Students will learn about the Progressive presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and will learn what these presidencies tell us about both the broad principles of Progressivism and the application of Progressive principles to the circumstances of the day.
- 9) Students will learn about the relationship of Progressive ideas to the foreign- policy controversies and international conflicts of the Progressive Era.
- 10) Students will learn about the influence of Progressivism today, both in terms of the shape of contemporary domestic politics and the nature of American foreign policy.

**Course Requirements:**

Completion of all assigned readings

Participation in all course sessions

Final Examination, including both essay and multiple-choice questions

**Required Reading:**

Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (Transaction Books, 1998 [1914])

Ronald J. Pestritto, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings* (Lexington Books, 2005)

Course Pack (CP) assembled by the Ashbrook Center

**Schedule:**

*For readings where a specific book & page range are not given, selections can be found in the Reader compiled by the Ashbrook Center*

## Schedule

### SUNDAY, JULY 8

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#### 4:30 – 6:00 Session 1 (Professors Pestrutto & Atto)

**Topic:** Introduction to the Course; Introduction to the Progressive Era

**Focus:** Who were the Progressives? Where and when did the Progressive Movement originate? What were the circumstances of the Progressive Era, both domestically and internationally? How did these circumstances bear on the Progressive Movement? What, if anything, did the Progressives inherit from Populism?

**Reading:** TR, “Who is a Progressive?” (CP 5)  
 Andrew Carnegie on the Triumph of America, 1885 (CP 13)  
 Henry George and the Paradox of Capitalist Growth, 1879 (CP 15)  
 The Sherman Anti-Trust Act, 1890 (CP 17)  
 WJ Bryan, Cross of Gold Speech, 1896 (CP 19)  
 Populist Party, The Omaha Platform, 1892 (CP 23)  
 Albert Beveridge, “The Command of the Pacific” (CP 27)

#### 7:00 – 8:30 Session 2: Institute Lecture (*required*)

### MONDAY, JULY 9

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#### 9:00 – 10:30 Session 3 (Professor Pestrutto)

**Topic:** Progressivism & the American Founding

**Focus:** What was it that the Progressives were reacting to? What principles did the Progressives think were outdated, or inadequate to deal with the circumstances of their day? What did they think about the principles that informed the Constitution, and the individuals who wrote it?

**Reading:** Declaration of Independence  
*Federalist* 6, 10 (CP 31)  
 Lincoln, Letter to Henry L. Pierce and Others, April 6, 1859 (CP 41)

#### 10:50 – 12:20 Session 4 (Professor Pestrutto)

**Topic:** The Political Theory of Progressivism

**Focus:** What are the broad ideas that gave rise to the particular political arguments of Progressivism? How did Progressivism relate to the idea of natural law or natural rights? How did it relate to the philosophy of

## MONDAY, JULY 9, cont'd

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history, which was an emerging mode of thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? How did the political theory of Progressivism relate to the “living” or organic conception of the Constitution?

**Reading:** Wilson, *The State*, ch. 1 (Pestritto, pp. 31-41)  
 Wilson, “Socialism and Democracy” (Pestritto, pp. 77-79)  
 Dewey, *Liberalism & Social Action*, ch. 1 (CP 45)  
 Wilson, *The New Freedom*, chs. 1-2 (Pestritto, pp. 107-23)

### 4:30 – 6:00 Session 5 (Professor Atto)

**Topic:** Progressive Interpretations of History

**Focus:** What criteria might define an historian as a Progressive? Do Turner and Beard differ in their Progressive assessments of America? How has Turner’s understanding of history changed from the first essay to the second?

**Reading:** Turner, “The Significance of History” (CP 57)  
 Turner, “Significance of the Frontier in American History”(CP 66)  
 Beard, *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*,  
 Selections (CP 83)  
 Beard, “That Noble Dream”(CP 86)

## TUESDAY, JULY 10

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### 9:00 – 10:30 Session 6 (Professors Pestritto & Atto)

**Topic:** Social Gospel & Social Justice

**Focus:** What was the relationship between Progressivism and the theological disputes of the day? How did the Progressive vision for reform combine politics and theology? What was the relationship between Progressivism and the theological challenges posed by Darwinism? What political principles might adherents of the social justice movement support? Is the description “gas and water socialism” applicable to Jane Addams?

**Reading:** Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, selections (CP 97)  
 Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements” (CP 119)  
 Addams, *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets*, selections (CP 127)

## TUESDAY, JULY 10, cont'd

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### 10:50 – 12:20 Session 7 (Professor Atto)

**Topic:** Progressivism & Education

**Focus:** Did Dewey posit a purely utilitarian approach to education? What place, if any, did the past have in his view? Is there room for religious faith in Dewey's social and/or educational views? Why or why not?

**Reading:** Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed" (CP 159)  
*The New Republic*, "Catholicism Contra Mundum" (CP 169)  
*The New Republic*, "Father Blakely States the Issue" (CP 173)  
*The New Republic*, "Can Christianity Tolerate the Church?" (CP 175)

### 4:30 – 6:00 Session 8 (Professors Pestritto & Atto)

**Topic:** Questions and Discussion

**Reading:** No additional reading

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 11

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### 9:00 – 10:30 Session 9 (Professor Pestritto)

**Topic:** Progressivism & National Political Institutions

**Focus:** How were Progressive ideas translated into proposals for reforming national political institutions? What did Progressives think of Congress, the Presidency, the judiciary, and the party system? What was the Progressive conception of leadership, and how did it affect the Progressive argument on national political institutions?

**Reading:** TR, *Autobiography*, ch. 10 - "The Presidency" (CP 179)  
 Wilson, *Constitutional Government*, ch. 3 (Pestritto, pp.175-190)  
 Wilson, "Leaders of Men" (Pestritto, pp. 211-29)

### 10:50 – 12:20 Session 10 (Professors Pestritto & Atto)

**Topic:** Parties, Direct Democracy, & the Politics of Reform

**Focus:** How directly should public opinion affect the government's policy decisions? In the view of Progressives, did the Constitution place too much distance between the people and the government? If so, what did Progressives

want to do about it? What were their proposals for more direct forms of democracy – at the national, state, and local level? How

### **WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, cont'd**

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did the call for reform of the party system relate to this Progressive idea of direct democracy? Were the Progressives united in their views of direct democracy and party reform?

**Reading:** Wilson, *Constitutional Government*, ch. 8 (Pestritto, pp. 190-203)  
 Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (pp. 330-48)  
 TR, “The Right of the People to Rule” (CP 191)  
 Lincoln Steffens Exposes the Corruption of Municipal Politics, 1904 (CP 204)  
 New York City’s Boss Plunkitt Defends “Honest” Graft, 1905 (CP 205)  
 Thomas Mahon on Labor Reform as Human Conservation, 1911 (CP 207)  
 Robert LaFollette, *Autobiography*, selections (CP 211)

#### **4:30 – 6:00 Session 11 (Professor Pestritto)**

**Topic:** National Administrative Power & the Progressive Legacy for Today’s Domestic Politics

**Focus:** How much power and independence did Progressives want to give to bureaucratic agencies? What role did Progressives think such agencies ought to play in our system of government? How did the Progressive vision for administration help to shape the modern administrative state? In general, what elements of today’s domestic politics reflect the influence of the Progressive Movement?

**Reading:** Wilson, “The Study of Administration” (Pestritto, 231-48)  
 TR, “The New Nationalism” (CP 225)

### **THURSDAY, JULY 12**

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#### **9:00 – 10:30 Session 12 (Professor Pestritto)**

**Topic:** The 1912 Campaign & Election

**Focus:** What were the circumstances and the issues of the 1912 campaign and election? How did the issues in the 1912 campaign reflect the major principles of the Progressive Movement, and how do they help to teach us about the similarities and differences among Progressives? What were the principles of The New Freedom and The New Nationalism, and what is the relationship between these two programs?

**Reading:** Theodore Roosevelt, "Limitation of Government Power" (CP 237)

### **THURSDAY, JULY 12, cont'd**

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Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 1-28

#### **10:50 – 12:20 Session 13 (Professor Atto)**

**Topic:** The Progressive Presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt & Woodrow Wilson

**Focus:** What similarities in the Progressive presidencies of Roosevelt and Wilson do you detect? Were the differences between the two merely differences in degree or in kind?

**Reading:** TR, Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (CP 245)  
 TR, Inaugural Address, 1905 (CP 249)  
 TR, Letter to Robert Bacon, October 5, 1902 (CP 251)  
 TR, Letter to Upton Sinclair, March 15, 1906 (CP 255)  
 TR, Letter to Lincoln Steffens, June 5, 1908 (CP 257)  
 Wilson, First Inaugural Address, March, 1913 (CP 261)  
 Wilson, The Tampico Affair (CP 265)  
 Clayton Anti-Trust Act, 1914 (CP 267)

#### **4:30 – 6:00 Session 14 (Professors Pestrutto & Atto)**

**Topic:** Questions and Discussion

**Reading:** No additional reading

### **FRIDAY, JULY 13**

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#### **9:00 – 10:30 Session 15 (Professor Atto)**

**Topic:** Progressivism, War, & Peace

**Focus:** What overall philosophy supported Wilson's Fourteen Points? How might Wilson's plan be expected to play at Versailles? Why was it rejected in the United States?

**Reading:** Wilson, "War Message to Congress" 1917 (Pestrutto, pp. 251-58)  
 Wilson, "Fourteen Points" 1918 (Pestrutto, pp. 259-64)  
 Robert Lafollette, Opposition to Wilson's War Message (CP 279)  
 Republican Senators, Reservations to the Treaty of Peace with Germany (CP 287)

**FRIDAY, JULY 13, cont'd**

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**10:50 – 12:20 Session 16 (Professors Pestritto & Atto)**

**Topic:** Progressivism & Today's Foreign Policy

**Focus:** There is no question that the most well known influence of Progressivism today is in the area of foreign policy. What is it about our foreign policy that reflects the tenets of Progressivism? What is the relationship between Progressivism and the War on Terrorism? Is the Bush foreign policy Progressive?

**Reading:** George W. Bush, "Global Message," London, November 19, 2003 (CP 291)  
George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address (CP 297)

**1:30 – 3:00 Session 17: FINAL EXAMINATION**