

TAKING SIDES



Clashing Views in
**United States History,
Volume 2, Reconstruction
to the Present**

FOURTEENTH EDITION

Selected, Edited, and with Introductions by

Larry Madaras
Howard Community College

and

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TAKING SIDES: CLASHING VIEWS IN UNITED STATES HISTORY, VOLUME 2:
RECONSTRUCTION TO THE PRESENT, FOURTEENTH EDITION

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Members of the Academic Advisory Board are instrumental in the final selection of articles for each edition of *TAKING SIDES*. Their review of articles for content, level, and appropriateness provides critical direction to the editors and staff. We think that you will find their careful consideration well reflected in this volume.

TAKING SIDES: Clashing Views in

UNITED STATES HISTORY, VOLUME 2, RECONSTRUCTION TO THE PRESENT

Fourteenth Edition

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Preface

The success of the past thirteen editions of *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History* has encouraged us to remain faithful to its original objectives, methods, and format. Our aim has been to create an effective instrument to enhance classroom learning and to foster critical thinking. Historical facts presented in a vacuum are of little value to the educational process. For students, whose search for historical truth often concentrate on *when* something happened rather than on *why*, and on specific events rather than on the *significance* of those events, *Taking Sides* is designed to offer an interesting and valuable departure. The understanding that the reader arrives at based on the evidence that emerges from the clash of views encourages the reader to view history as an *interpretive* discipline, not one of rote memorization.

As in previous editions, the issues are arranged in chronological order and can be easily incorporated into any American history survey course. Each issue has an issue *introduction*, which sets the stage for the debate that follows in the pro and con selections and provides historical and methodological background to the problem that the issue examines. Each issue concludes with a *postscript*, which ties the readings together, briefly mentions alternative interpretations, and supplies detailed *suggestions for further reading* for the student who wishes to pursue the topics raised in the issue. Also, Internet site addresses (URLs), which should prove useful as starting points for further research, have been provided on the *Internet References* page that accompanies each unit opener. At the back of the book is a listing of all the *contributors to this volume* with a brief biographical sketch of each of the prominent figures whose views are debated here.

Changes to This Edition

In this edition, we have continued our efforts to maintain a balance between the traditional political, diplomatic, and cultural issues and the new social history, which depicts a society that benefited from the presence of African Americans, women, and workers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. With this in mind, we present six new issues, some at the request of teachers who wanted some of the earlier issues revisited. These include: "Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?" (Issue 1); "Were the Nineteenth-Century Big Businessmen 'Robber Barons'?" (Issue 3); "Were the Populists Irrational Reactionaries?" (Issue 6); "Did President Roosevelt Deliberately Withhold Information About the Attack on Pearl Harbor from the American Commanders?" (Issue 12). Other issues were reconceptualized. These include: "Was the American Labor Movement Radical?" (Issue 4) and "Did the New Deal Prolong the Great Depression?" (Issue 11). Two issues remained the same with new articles. See "Was Woodrow Wilson Responsible for the Failure of the United States to Join the League of Nations?" (Issue 9) and "Was Rock and Roll Responsible for Dismantling America's Traditional Family, Sexual, and Racial Customs in the 1950s and 1960s?" (Issue 14). The last issue is new and asks a basic question: "Is the United States a Declining Power?" (Issue 18).

A word to the instructor *An Instructor's Resource Guide With Test Questions* (multiple-choice and essay) is available through the publisher for the instructor using *Taking Sides* in the classroom. A general guidebook, *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom*, which discusses methods and techniques for integrating the pro-con approach into any classroom setting, is also available. An online version of *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom* and a correspondence service for *Taking Sides* adopters can be found at <http://www.mhcls.com/usings/>.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History is only one title in the *Taking Sides* series. If you are interested in seeing the table of contents for any other titles, please visit the *Taking Sides* Web site at www.mhhe.com/cls.

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UNIT 1 THE GILDED AGE 1

Issue 1. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism? 2

YES: George M. Fredrickson, from *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Harper & Row, 1971) 4

NO: Heather Cox Richardson, from *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post–Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Harvard University Press, 2001) 12

George M. Fredrickson concludes that racism, in the form of the doctrine of white supremacy, colored the thinking not only of southern whites but of most white northerners as well and produced only halfhearted efforts by the Radical Republicans in the postwar period to sustain a commitment to black equality. Heather Cox Richardson argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free-labor ideology that opposed an expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens had acquired through hard work.

Issue 2. Was the Wild West More Violent Than the Rest of the United States? 23

YES: David T. Courtright, from “Frontiers,” in Ronald Gottesman and Richard Maxwell Brown, eds., *Violence in America: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1999) 25

NO: Robert R. Dykstra, from “To Live and Die in Dodge City: Body Counts, Law and Order and the Case of Kansas v. Gill,” in Michael A. Bellesiles, ed., *Lethal Imagination, Violence and Brutality in American History* (New York University Press, 1999) 35

Professor of history David T. Courtright argues that the cattle, mining, and lumbering Western frontiers were extremely violent because these regions were populated by young, single, and transient males who frequented saloons and prostitutes, and engaged in fights. Professor Robert R. Dykstra argues that Dodge City had a low crime rate in the decade 1876–1885, and in the murder case of *Kansas v. Gill*, it conducted a jury trial “according to conventions nurtured through a thousand years of Anglo-American judicial traditions.”

Issue 3. Were the Nineteenth-Century Big Businessmen “Robber Barons”? 51

YES: Howard Zinn, from “Robber Barons and Rebels,” in *A People’s History of the United States* (HarperCollins, 1999) 53

NO: John S. Gordon, from "Was There Ever Such a Business!" in *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power* (Harper Perennial, 2004) 63

According to Howard Zinn, the new industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J. P. Morgan adopted business practices that encouraged monopolies and used the powers of the government to control the masses from rebellion. John S. Gordon argues that the nineteenth-century men of big business such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie developed through the oil and steel industries consumer products that improved the lifestyle of average Americans.

Issue 4. Was the American Labor Movement Radical? 78

YES: Leon Fink, from *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (University of Illinois Press, 1983) 80

NO: Carl N. Degler, from *Out of Our Past: The Forces That Shaped Modern America*, 3rd ed. (Harper & Row, 1984) 92

Although stopping short of a frontal attack on capitalism, Professor Leon Fink argues that the Knights of Labor envisioned a kind of workingman's democracy that would ensure minimal standards of health and safety at the industrial workplace. Historian Carl N. Degler maintains that the American labor movement accepted capitalism and reacted conservatively to the radical organizational changes brought about in the economic system by big business.

Issue 5. Were Late Nineteenth-Century Immigrants "Uprooted"? 103

YES: Oscar Handlin, from *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*, 2nd ed. (Little, Brown and Company, 1973) 105

NO: Mark Wyman, from *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880–1930* (Cornell University Press, 1993) 114

Oscar Handlin asserts that immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century were alienated from the cultural traditions of the homeland they had left as well as from those of their adopted country. Mark Wyman argues that as many as four million immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1930 viewed their trip as temporary and remained tied psychologically to their homeland to which they returned once they had accumulated enough wealth to enable them to improve their status back home.

Issue 6. Were the Populists Irrational Reactionaries? 125

YES: Richard Hofstadter, from *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1955 and 1972) 127

NO: Charles Postel, from *The Populist Vision* (Oxford University Press, 2007) 135

According to Richard Hofstadter the Populists created a conspiracy theory around the issues of industrialism that activated a virulent strain of nativism and anti-Semitism, and revealed their desire to return to a rural utopia that they associated with the early nineteenth century. Charles Postel characterizes the Populists as forward-thinking reformers who

hoped to use the government to manage an increasingly modern, technologically sophisticated, and globally connected society for the benefit of ordinary citizens.

UNIT 2 THE RESPONSE TO INDUSTRIALISM AND REFORM, WAR, AND DEPRESSION 145

Issue 7. Did Booker T. Washington's Philosophy and Actions Betray the Interests of African Americans? 146

YES: **Donald Spivey**, from *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868–1915* (Greenwood Press, 1978) 148

NO: **Robert J. Norrell**, from "Understanding the Wizard: Another Look at the Age of Booker T. Washington," in W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Booker T. Washington and Black Progress: Up From Slavery 100 Years Later* (University of Florida Press, 2003) 157

Donald Spivey contends that Booker T. Washington alienated both students and faculty at Tuskegee Institute by establishing an authoritarian system that failed to provide an adequate academic curriculum to prepare students for the industrial workplace. Robert J. Norrell insists that Booker T. Washington, while limited by the racial climate of the day in what he could accomplish, nevertheless spoke up for political and civil rights, decried mob violence, and defended black education as a means of promoting a more positive image for African Americans in an era dominated by the doctrine of white supremacy.

Issue 8. Did the Progressives Fail? 168

YES: **Richard M. Abrams**, from "The Failure of Progressivism," in Richard Abrams and Lawrence Levine, eds., *The Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Little, Brown, 1971) 170

NO: **Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick**, from *Progressivism* (Harlan Davidson, 1983) 180

Professor of history Richard M. Abrams maintains that progressivism was a failure because it tried to impose a uniform set of values upon a culturally diverse people and never seriously confronted the inequalities that still exist in American society. Professors of history Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick argue that the Progressives were a diverse group of reformers who confronted and ameliorated the worst abuses that emerged in urban industrial America during the early 1900s.

Issue 9. Was Woodrow Wilson Responsible for the Failure of the United States to Join the League of Nations? 192

YES: **John M. Cooper, Jr.**, from *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) 194

NO: **William G. Carleton**, from "A New Look at Woodrow Wilson," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn 1962) 205

Professor John M. Cooper argues that the stroke that partially paralyzed Woodrow Wilson during his speaking tour in 1919 hampered the president's ability to compromise with the Republicans over the terms of America's membership in the League of Nations if the Senate ratified the Treaty of Versailles. William G. Carleton believed that Woodrow Wilson understood the role that the United States would play in world affairs.

Issue 10. Was Prohibition a Failure? 215

YES: David E. Kyvig, from *Repealing National Prohibition*, 2nd ed. (The University of Chicago Press, 1979, 2000) 217

NO: J. C. Burnham, from "New Perspectives on the Prohibition 'Experiment' of the 1920s," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 2 (Fall 1968) 227

David E. Kyvig admits that alcohol consumption declined sharply in the prohibition era but that federal actions failed to impose abstinence among an increasingly urban and heterogeneous populace that resented and resisted restraints on their individual behavior. J. C. Burnham states that the prohibition experiment was more a success than a failure and contributed to a substantial decrease in liquor consumption, reduced arrests for alcoholism, fewer alcohol-related diseases and hospitalizations, and destroyed the old-fashioned saloon that was a major target of the law's proponents.

Issue 11. Did the New Deal Prolong the Great Depression? 238

YES: Burton W. Folsom, Jr., from *New Deal or Raw Deal? How FDR's Economic Legacy Has Damaged America* (Simon & Schuster, 2008) 240

NO: Roger Biles, from *A New Deal for the American People* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1991) 251

Professor Burton W. Folsom, Jr., argues the New Deal prolonged the Great Depression because its antifree market program of high taxes and special-interest spending to certain banks, railroads, farmers, and veterans created an antibusiness environment of regime uncertainty. Professor of history Roger Biles contends that, in spite of its minimal reforms and nonrevolutionary programs, the New Deal created a limited welfare state that implemented economic stabilizers to avert another depression.

Issue 12. Did President Roosevelt Deliberately Withhold Information About the Attack on Pearl Harbor from the American Commanders? 261

YES: Robert A. Theobald, from *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor: The Washington Contribution to the Japanese Attack* (Devin-Adair, 1954) 263

NO: Roberta Wohlstetter, from *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford University Press, 1967) 273

Retired rear admiral Robert A. Theobald argues that President Franklin D. Roosevelt deliberately withheld information from the commanders at Pearl Harbor in order to encourage the Japanese to make a surprise attack on the weak U.S. Pacific Fleet. Historian Roberta Wohlstetter contends that even

though naval intelligence broke the Japanese code, conflicting signals and the lack of a central agency coordinating U.S. intelligence information made it impossible to predict the Pearl Harbor attack.

UNIT 3 THE COLD WAR AND BEYOND 287

Issue 13. Was President Truman Responsible for the Cold War? 288

YES: Arnold A. Offner, from "Another Such Victory": President Truman, American Foreign Policy, and the Cold War, *Diplomatic History* (Spring 1999) 290

NO: John Lewis Gaddis, from *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford University Press, 1997) 302

Arnold A. Offner argues that President Harry S. Truman was a parochial nationalist whose limited vision of foreign affairs precluded negotiations with the Russians over cold war issues. John Lewis Gaddis argues that after a half century of scholarship, Joseph Stalin was uncompromising and primarily responsible for the cold war.

Issue 14. Was Rock and Roll Responsible for Dismantling America's Traditional Family, Sexual, and Racial Customs in the 1950s and 1960s? 312

YES: Jody Pennington, from "Don't Knock the Rock: Race, Business, and Society in the Rise of Rock and Roll," in Dale Carter, ed., *Cracking the Ike Age: Aspects of Fifties America* (Aarhus University Press, 1992) 314

NO: J. Ronald Oakley, from *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (Dembner Books, 1986, 1990) 328

Professor Jody Pennington believes that the emergence of rock and roll in the 1950s along with new forms of consumerism expressed "the inner conflict between conservative and rebellious forces for high school teenagers who wanted to rebel against their parents yet still grow up to be them." Writer J. Ronald Oakley argues that although the lifestyles of youth departed from their parents, their basic ideas and attitudes were still the conservative ones that mirrored the conservatism of the affluent age in which they grew up.

Issue 15. Did President John F. Kennedy Demonstrate a Strong Commitment to Civil Rights? 346

YES: Carl M. Brauer, from *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction* (Columbia University Press, 1977) 348

NO: Nick Bryant, from *The Bystander: John F. Kennedy and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Basic Books, 2006) 354

Carl M. Brauer asserts that President John F. Kennedy carried out an unambiguous commitment to civil rights that far exceeded anything his immediate predecessors had done and which included efforts to end discrimination in voting, education, hiring practices, public facilities, and housing. Nick Bryant claims that President Kennedy took an overly cautious approach to civil rights matters to avoid a confrontation with

white southern Democrats in Congress and relied too heavily on symbolic, largely cosmetic changes that left him with a meager legacy of civil rights accomplishments.

Issue 16. Did President Nixon Negotiate a “Peace with Honor” in Vietnam in 1973? 365

YES: Richard Nixon, from *The Real War* (Warner Books, 1980) 367

NO: Larry Berman, from *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (The Free Press, 2001) 378

Former president Richard Nixon believes that the South Vietnamese government would not have lost the war to North Vietnam in 1975 if Congress had not cut off aid. According to Professor Larry Berman, President Nixon knew that the Paris Peace Accords of January 1973 were flawed, but he intended to bomb North Vietnamese troops to prevent the collapse of South Vietnam until he left office.

Issue 17. Has the Women’s Movement of the 1970s Failed to Liberate American Women? 392

YES: F. Carolyn Graglia, from *Domestic Tranquility: A Brief Against Feminism* (Spence, 1998) 394

NO: Sara M. Evans, from “American Women in the Twentieth Century,” in Harvard Sitkoff, ed., *Perspectives on Modern America: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2001) 404

Writer and lecturer F. Carolyn Graglia argues that women should stay at home and practice the values of “true motherhood” because contemporary feminists have discredited marriage, devalued traditional homemaking, and encouraged sexual promiscuity. According to Professor Sara M. Evans, despite class, racial, religious, ethnic, and regional differences, women in America experienced major transformations in their private and public lives in the twentieth century.

Issue 18. Is the United States a Declining Power? 422

YES: Andrew J. Bacevich, from *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (Metropolitan Books: Henry Holt and Company, 2008) 424

NO: Fareed Zakaria, from *The Post-American World* (W.W. Norton, 2009) 435

Professor Andrew J. Bacevich, a West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran, believes that the United States has major problems because it has enlarged the power of the presidency and abuses its military power to create an informal empire in the energy-rich Persian Gulf in its pursuit of a consumer-dominated good life. Dr. Fareed Zakaria, a political commentator for CNN, believes the United States is still a great power in the post-industrial world because of its tremendous advantages in education, immigration, and scientific innovation.





Correlation Guide

The *Taking Sides* series presents current issues in a debate-style format designed to stimulate student interest and develop critical thinking skills. Each issue is thoughtfully framed with an issue summary, an issue introduction, and a post-script. The pro and con essays—selected for their liveliness and substance—represent the arguments of leading scholars and commentators in their fields.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views in United States History, Volume 2: Reconstruction to the Present, 14/e is an easy-to-use reader that presents issues on important topics such as *immigration, racial equality, the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War*. For more information on *Taking Sides* and other McGraw-Hill Contemporary Learning Series titles, visit www.mhhe.com/cis.

This convenient guide matches the issues in **Taking Sides: United States History, Volume 2, 14/e** with the corresponding chapters in two of our best-selling McGraw-Hill History textbooks by Brinkley and Davidson et al.

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Issue 1: Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism?	Chapter 15: Reconstruction and the New South	Chapter 17: Reconstructing the Union, 1865–1877
Issue 2: Was the Wild West More Violent Than the Rest of the United States?	Chapter 16: The Conquest of the Far West Chapter 18: The Age of the City	Chapter 18: The New South & the Trans-Mississippi West, 1870–1914
Issue 3: Were the Nineteenth-Century Big Businessmen “Robber Barons”?	Chapter 17: Industrial Supremacy Chapter 18: The Age of the City	Chapter 19: The New Industrial Order, 1870–1914
Issue 4: Was the American Labor Movement Radical?	Chapter 17: Industrial Supremacy	Chapter 19: The New Industrial Order, 1870–1914
Issue 5: Were Late-Nineteenth-Century Immigrants “Uprooted”?	Chapter 18: The Age of the City	Chapter 20: The Rise of an Urban Order, 1870–1914
Issue 6: Were the Populists Irrational Reactionaries?	Chapter 19: From Crisis to Empire	Chapter 21: The Political System under Strain at Home and Abroad, 1877–1900
Issue 7: Did Booker T. Washington’s Philosophy and Actions Betray the Interests of African Americans?	Chapter 15: Reconstruction and the New South Chapter 20: The Progressives	Chapter 21: The Political System under Strain at Home and Abroad, 1877–1900 Chapter 22: The Progressive Era, 1890–1920 Chapter 24: The New Era, 1920–1929

(Continued)

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Introduction

The Study of History

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In a pluralistic society such as ours, the study of history is bound to be a complex process. How an event is interpreted depends not only on existing evidence but also on the perspective of the interpreter. Consequently, understanding history presupposes the evaluation of information, a task that often leads to conflicting conclusions. An understanding of history, then, requires the acceptance of the idea of historical relativism. Relativism means the redefinition of our past is always possible and desirable. History shifts, changes, and grows with new and different evidence and interpretations. As is the case with the law and even with medicine, beliefs that were unquestioned 100 or 200 years ago have been discredited or discarded since.

Relativism then encourages revisionism. There is a maxim that says, "The past must remain useful to the present." Historian Carl Becker argued that every generation should examine history for itself, thus ensuring constant scrutiny of our collective experience through new perspectives. History, consequently, does not remain static, in part because historians cannot avoid being influenced by the times in which they live. Almost all historians commit themselves to revising the views of other historians by either disagreeing with earlier interpretations or creating new frameworks that pose different questions.

Schools of Thought

Three predominant schools of thought have emerged in American history since the first graduate seminars in history were given at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, in the 1870s. The *progressive* school dominated the professional field in the first half of the twentieth century. Influenced by the reform currents of populism, progressivism, and the New Deal, these historians explored the social and economic forces that energized America. The progressive scholars tended to view the past in terms of conflicts between groups, and they sympathized with the underdog.

The post-World War II period witnessed the emergence of a new group of historians who viewed the conflict thesis as overly simplistic. Writing against the backdrop of the Cold War, these *neoconservative* and *consensus* historians argued that Americans possess a shared set of values and that the areas of agreement within the nation's basic democratic and capitalistic framework are more important than the areas of disagreement.

In the 1960s, however, the civil rights movement, women's liberation, and the student rebellion (with its condemnation of the war in Vietnam) fragmented the consensus of values upon which historians of the 1950s centered their interpretations. This turmoil set the stage for the emergence of another group of scholars. *New Left* historians began to reinterpret the past once again. They emphasized the significance of conflict in American history, and they resurrected interest in those groups ignored by the consensus school. In addition, New Left history is still being written.

The most recent generation of scholars, however, focuses upon social history. Their primary concern is to discover what the lives of "ordinary Americans" were really like. These new social historians employ previously overlooked court and church documents, house deeds and tax records, letters and diaries, photographs, and census data to reconstruct the everyday lives of average Americans. Some employ new methodologies, such as quantification (enhanced by advanced computer technology) and oral history, while others borrow from the disciplines of political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology for their historical investigations.

The proliferation of historical approaches, which are reflected in the issues debated in this book, has had mixed results. On the one hand, historians have become so specialized in their respective time periods and methodological styles that it is difficult to synthesize the recent scholarship into a comprehensive text for the general reader. On the other hand, historians now know more about new questions or ones that previously were considered to be germane only to scholars in other social sciences. Although there is little agreement about the answers to these questions, the methods employed and the issues explored make the "new history" a very exciting field to study.

The topics that follow represent a variety of perspectives and approaches. Each of these controversial issues can be studied for its individual importance to American history. Taken as a group, they interact with one another to illustrate larger historical themes. When grouped thematically, the issues reveal continuing motifs in the development of American history.

Entrepreneurs, Laborers, Immigrants, African Americans, and Farm Workers

Issue 3 explores the dynamics of the modern American economy through investigations of the nineteenth-century entrepreneurs. Were these industrial leaders robber barons, as portrayed by contemporary critics and many history texts? Or, were they industrial statesmen and organizational geniuses? The late radical historian Howard Zinn views the new industrialists as "robber barons" who adopted business practices that encouraged monopolies and used the power of government to control the masses from rebellion. But, John Steele Gordon, a business historian, argues that men such as Rockefeller and Carnegie developed, through the oil and steel industries, consumer products that improved the lifestyle of average Americans.

In the wake of industrialization during the late 1800s, the rapid pace of change created new working conditions for the labor class. How did laborers

react to these new changes? Did they lose their autonomy in large corporations? Did they accept or reject the wage system? Were they pawns of the economic cycles of boom and bust, to be hired and fired at will? Did they look for an alternative to capitalism by engaging in strikes, establishing labor unions, or creating a socialist movement? In Issue 4, Carl N. Degler maintains that American workers accepted capitalism and the changes that it brought forth. Though stopping short of a frontal attack on capitalism, Professor Leon Fink argues that the Knights of Labor envisioned a kind of "workingman's democracy" that would ensure minimal standards of health and safety at the industrial workplace. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the organizational innovations of Rockefeller and the assembly-line techniques pioneered by Henry Ford had revolutionized American capitalism.

The vast majority of these factory workers came from the farms and cities of Europe. Massive immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries introduced widespread changes in American society. Moreover, the presence of increasing numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, many of them Catholics and Jews, seemed to threaten native-born citizens, most of whom were Protestant and of northern and western European ancestry. Asian immigrants, mainly from China or Japan, added to nativist fears. In Issue 5, Oscar Handlin argues that the immigrants were alienated from their Old World cultures as they adjusted to an unfamiliar and often hostile environment. But Professor Mark Wyman argues that immigrants never gave up the fight for their personal autonomy. He points out that many immigrants to the United States believed their stay in America would be temporary, a fact that limited their efforts at assimilation and reinforced ties to their original homelands to which many of them returned once they had acquired some wealth.

Two issues cover the failure of the newly freed slaves to achieve political and legal equality. By 1900, most African Americans were not allowed to vote and were segregated into the poorest agricultural jobs as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Did Reconstruction Fail as a Result of Racism? George M. Fredrickson, in Issue 1, concludes that racism in the form of the doctrine of white supremacy, colored the thinking not only of southern whites but of most white northerners as well and produced only halfhearted efforts by the Radical Republicans in the postwar period to sustain a commitment to black equality. Heather Cox Richardson argues that the failure of Radical Reconstruction was primarily a consequence of a national commitment to a free-labor ideology that opposed the expanding central government that legislated rights to African Americans that other citizens that acquired through hard work.

One of the most controversial figures in American history was the early-twentieth-century African American leader Booker T. Washington. Was Washington too accommodating toward white values and goals and too accepting of the political disfranchisement and social segregation that took away the basic freedoms that African Americans earned after their emancipation from slavery? In Issue 7, Donald Spivey argues that Washington not only subordinated political, social, and civil rights to economic goals, but also failed to provide the training necessary to allow students to become capable, skilled

artisans. Robert J. Norrell, on the other hand, insists that Washington frequently challenged the political, economic, and social status quo of African Americans both publicly and behind the scenes.

No group seemed further away from urban-industrial America than the cowboys, farmers, miners, and lumberjacks who worked on America's last frontier. Issue 2 asks whether the Wild West was real or a mythical image created by novelists, movies, radio, television, and Wild West shows. Professor of history David T. Courtright argues that the cattle, mining, and lumbering western frontiers were extremely violent because these regions were populated by young, single, and transient males who frequented saloons and prostitutes, and engaged in fights with the local Indians and Chinese, as well as with each other. Professor Robert R. Dykstra argues that Dodge City had a low crime rate in the decade 1876–1885, and in the murder case of Kansas V. Gill, it conducted a jury trial “according to conventions nurtured through a thousand years of Anglo-American judicial traditions.”

Political and Social Successes and Failures, 1890–1945

Issue 6 discusses the first major political reform movement of the late nineteenth century. According to Richard Hofstadter, the populists were not democratic reformers but reactionaries who created a conspiracy theory around the issues of industrialism and the “money question,” which activated a virulent strain of nativism and anti-Semitism and revealed their desire to return to a rural utopia that they associated with the early nineteenth century. Charles Postel characterizes the Populists as forward-thinking reformers who hoped to use the government to manage an increasingly modern, technologically sophisticated, and globally connected society for the benefit of ordinary citizens.

The Progressive movement is examined in Issue 8. Richard M. Abrams attributes the failure of the movement to its limited scope. He maintains that it imposed a uniform set of values on a diverse people and did not address the inequalities that prevailed in American society. Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, however, emphasize the reforms introduced by the progressives that checked the abuses of industrialization and urbanization during the early 1900s.

Issue 10 discusses one of the major progressive “social control” reforms—Prohibition. The “noble experiment” to prohibit the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages had a rather short life. Originally passed in 1919, the Prohibition amendment was repealed fourteen years later. To this day, it remains the only amendment ever to have been removed from the Constitution. John C. Burnham revises the traditional image of the decade of the 1920s as the “lawless years.” He points out that when the “Prohibition experiment” was passed, two-thirds of the states, which encompassed over half of the population, were already dry. The purpose of the legislation, he argues, was to control the political and social practices of the immigrant working classes who lived in the cities. He denies that crime increased dramatically in the decade, attributing the so-called crime waves to the overblown accounts in the

newspapers and newsreels. Gambling, rather than the sale of illegal liquor, remained the major source of revenue for organized crime. Burnham also marshals statistical evidence to document a decline in per capita drinking in the early 1920s as well as in the diseases and deaths related to alcohol. David Kyvig concedes that Prohibition “sharply reduced the consumption of alcohol in the United States.” But images of lawbreaking through Hollywood films and newsreels and the inability of law enforcement officials in all levels of government to enforce a law, especially unpopular in American cities, “disenchanted many Americans and moved some to an active effort to bring an end to the dry law.”

The Great Depression of the 1930s remains one of the most traumatic events in U.S. history. The characteristics of that decade are deeply etched in American folk memory, but the remedies that were applied to those social and economic ills—known collectively as the New Deal—are not easy to evaluate. In Issue 11, Roger Biles contends that the economic stabilizers created by the New Deal programs prevented the recurrence of the Great Depression. Burton J. Folsom, Jr., on the other hand, criticizes the New Deal from a twenty-first century conservative perspective. In his view, because New Deal agencies were anti-business, they overregulated the economy and did not allow the free enterprise system to work out the depression that FDR’s programs prolonged.

Code, conflicting signals and the lack of a central agency coordinating U.S. intelligence information made it impossible to predict the Pearl Harbor attack.

World War II brought the end of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. It was the war that was really supposed to end all wars. FDR, haunted by the ghost of Woodrow Wilson, hoped that the United Nations could resolve national conflicts. Unfortunately, an unintended consequence was the reemergence of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. Who started the Cold War? Was it inevitable, or should one side take more of the blame? In Issue 12, Professor Arnold A. Offner argues that President Harry S. Truman was a parochial nationalist whose limited vision of foreign affairs precluded negotiations with the Russians over cold war issues. But John Gaddis, the most important American scholar of the cold war, argues that after a half century of scholarship, Joseph Stalin was uncompromising and primarily responsible for the cold war.

No discussion of American foreign policy is complete without some consideration of the Vietnam War. Was America’s escalation inevitable in 1965? Did the government accomplish a “peace with honor” when it withdrew American troops from Vietnam in 1973 in exchange for the return of our POWs? In Issue 16, President Nixon believes that the South Vietnamese government would not have lost the civil war in 1975 had not the United States Congress cut off aid. But, Professor Larry Berman argues that Nixon knew the agreement was flawed. But the President intended to bomb North Vietnam troops to prevent the collapse of South Vietnam until he left office.

Social, Cultural, and Economic Changes Since 1945

Carl N. Degler has labeled the years from 1945 to 1963 as the age of “anxiety and affluence.” Issue 14 deals with this unique period in U.S. history. The population explosion that took place after World War II led to a youth culture

who challenged the value system of their parents. Tensions between parents and children have always existed in America. Do different tastes in dress and music reflect revolutionary or surface changes? Professor Jody Pennington, a Danish professor of American Studies, argues that the emergence of rock and roll in the 1950s along with new forms of consumerism expressed "the inner conflict between conservative and rebellious forces for high school teenagers who wanted to rebel against their parents yet still grow up to be them. But writer J. Ronald Oakley sees less rebellion. He argues that although the lifestyles of youth departed from their parents, their basic ideas and attitudes were still the conservative ones that mirrored the conservatism of the affluent age in which they grew up.

The situation for African Americans has vastly improved since the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. But did it improve educational, political, and economic opportunities for minorities? Issue 15 discusses how President John F. Kennedy was caught off guard when the civil rights movement escalated in the 1960s with non-violent demonstrations. How did Kennedy respond? Was he a reluctant reformer and did he finally demonstrate a strong commitment to civil rights? Carl M. Brauer asserts that President John F. Kennedy carried out an unambiguous commitment to civil rights that far exceeded anything his immediate predecessors had done which included efforts to end discrimination in voting, education, hiring practices, public facilities, and housing. Nick Bryant claims that President Kennedy took an overly cautious approach to civil rights matters to avoid a confrontation with white southern Democrats in Congress and relied too heavily on symbolic, largely cosmetic changes that left him with a meager legacy of civil rights accomplishments.

A direct lineage of the civil rights revolution was the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Did it help or harm women? In Issue 17, writer and lecturer F. Carolyn Garglia argues that women should stay at home and practice the values of "true motherhood" because contemporary feminists have discredited marriage, devalued traditional homemaking, and encouraged sexual promiscuity. But feminist and activist scholar Sara M. Evans takes a much more positive view of the women's movements for suffrage and liberation in the past 100 years. Despite their class, racial, religious, ethnic, and regional differences, Evans argues that women in America experienced major transformations in their private and public lives in the twentieth century.

The reader concludes with a major current debate about our history. Is the United States a declining power? Are we going the way of Rome in the third century? Or England in the twentieth century? In the first selection in Issue 18, Professor Andrew J. Bacevich, a West Point graduate and Vietnam veteran, believes that the United States has enlarged the power of the presidency and abuses its military power to create an informal empire in the energy-rich Persian Gulf in its pursuit of a consumer-dominated good life. But Dr. Fareed Zakaria, a political commentator for CNN, believes the United States is still a great power in the post-industrial world because of its tremendous advantages in education, immigration and scientific innovation.

Conclusion

The process of historical study should rely more on thinking than on memorizing data. Once the basics of who, what, when, and where are determined, historical thinking shifts to a higher gear. Explanation, analysis, evaluation, comparison, and contrast take command. These skills not only increase our knowledge of the past, but they also provide general tools for the comprehension of all the topics about which human beings think.

The diversity of a pluralistic society, however, creates some obstacles to comprehending the past. The spectrum of differing opinions on any particular subject eliminates the possibility of quick and easy answers. In the final analysis, conclusions are often built through a synthesis of several different interpretations, but even then they may be partial and tentative.

The study of history in a pluralistic society allows each citizen the opportunity to teach independent conclusions about the past. Since most, if not all, historical issues affect the present and future, understanding the past becomes necessary if society is to progress. Many of today's problems have a direct connection with the past. Additionally, other contemporary issues may lack obvious direct antecedents, but historical investigation can provide illuminating analogies. At first, it may appear confusing to read and to think about opposing historical views, but the survival of our democratic society depends on such critical thinking by acute and discerning minds.



Internet References . . .

Journal Sites

Important journal articles and book reviews that reflect the most recent scholarship on all the issues can be found on the following site:

<http://H-NE.msu.edu>

Freedmen's Bureau Online

This Web site contains more than one hundred transcriptions of reports on murders, riots, and "outrages" (any criminal offense) that occurred in the former Confederate states from 1865 to 1868.

<http://www.freedmensbureau.com/>

John D. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company

This site, created by Swiss entrepreneur Francois Micheloud, provides a highly detailed history of the American oil industry, with John D. Rockefeller as a main focus.

<http://www.micheloud.com/FXM/SO/rock.htm>

World Wide Web Virtual Library

This site focuses on labor and business history.

<http://www.iisg.nl/~w3vl/>

International Channel

Immigrants helped to create modern America. Visit this interesting site to experience "the memories, sounds, even tastes of Ellis Island."

<http://www.i-channel.com/>

American Family Immigration History Center

Records on the more than 25 million passengers and crew members who passed through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924 are available here.

<http://www.ellisland.org>

(Gene) Autry National Center

4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles, CA 90027; phone (323) 667-2000
This site contains information about one of the most important museums and collections of Western and Indian history.

<http://www.autrynationalcenter.org>

1896: The Presidential Campaign

The election of 1896 was one of the most contentious in U.S. history. When Republican William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan on November third, there were no fewer than six candidates on the ballot and the country was in the throes of an economic depression. This Web site provides close to 100 political cartoons surrounding the election campaigns.

<http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/1896home.html>