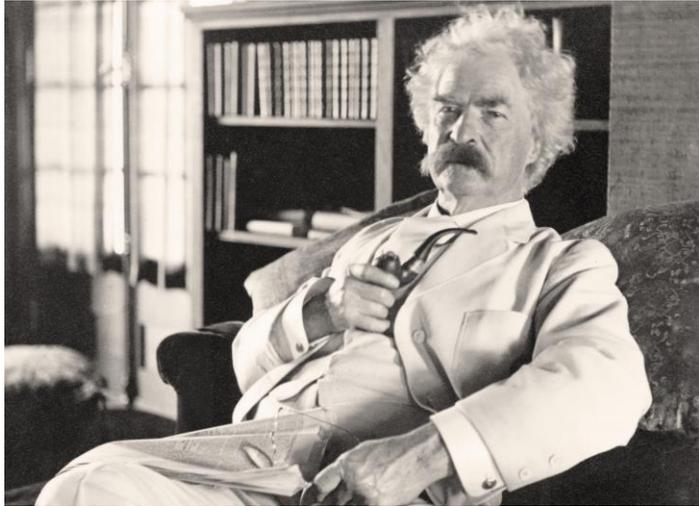


The Gilded Age

The period between the Civil War and WW1 is sometimes called the “Gilded Age” after the title of Mark Twain’s book of that name. It was an age with bigger than life characters like Twain, Carnegie, Bell, Edison and Teddy Roosevelt. It was also a time that gave birth to such features of our times as electricity, telephones, giant corporations, modern technology and huge wealth disparities.



The resemblance of the Gilded Age to our own is uncanny, including corporate irresponsibility, problems with racism, exploitation of the working poor, questionable foreign wars and debates about the rights of women.

This seminar will give us an opportunity to understand our forbearers and ourselves better as we explore the personalities, the politics, the culture, the arts, the social history, the economics and the tragic wars against Native Americans that were a part of this fascinating period of our history. In addition to discussion of material in the text, participants will be asked to give a short presentation of some relevant topic of interest to them. In addition they will be asked to read a collateral book such “The Shaping of Modern America by DeSantis or articles supplied by the moderator.

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The following are some of the topics available for presenting:

Reconstruction in the South
Radical Republicans
The sharecroppers
Exodus of Southern Blacks
Jim Crow Laws
The formation of the KKK
Harriet Tubman
The rise of the Standard Oil Company
Sears and of national retailers
The creation of “trusts”
Laissez-faire economics
Urbanization
Inventions and “modernization”
The beginning of the labor movement
Immigration
Ghettos and the urban poor
Child labor
Women workers
McCormack’s reaper and farming
Subjugation of the Native Americans

The “Wild West”
The life of a cowboy
Tammany Hall and political bosses
The rise of Socialism
The Mugwumps and political reform
American newspapers
The Spanish American War
America’s involvement in Latin America
Social Darwinism
Formation of public universities
Entertainment and the “Gay Nineties”
Ragtime music
Attitudes towards sexuality
The rise of national sports
American Socialists
The Muckrakers
The women’s suffrage movement
Jane Adams and Hull House
Teddy Roosevelt and anti-trust legislation