The transformation of the United States from an agricultural to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society brought about significant economic, political, diplomatic, social, environmental, and cultural changes.
The “Gilded Age” witnessed new cultural and intellectual movements in tandem with political debates over economic and social policies.

I. Gilded Age politics were intimately tied to big business and focused nationally on economic issues — tariffs, currency, corporate expansion, and laissez-faire economic policy — that engendered numerous calls for reform. (POL-6)

A. Corruption in government — especially as it related to big business — energized the public to demand increased popular control and reform of local, state, and national governments, ranging from minor changes to major overhauls of the capitalist system.
The “Bloody Shirt” Elects Grant in 1868
- US growth by 1870
- Period characterized by greed and corruption
Democrats in 1868

- Ohio’s George Pendleton was a frontrunner
- Plan to pay bonds in greenbacks
- Most obvious choice was NY Gov. Horatio Seymour
- Adamantly refused to be a candidate
- Chief Justice Salmon Chase?
- Had been seen as a possible Republican nominee
Democratic Convention - 1868

- Andrew Johnson 2nd on first 2 ballots
  - thought he was defeated by “duplicitly and deceit”
- Seymour won on 21st ballot
Horatio Seymour

-W. Seward – Democrats “could have nominated no candidate who would have taken away fewer Republican votes”

-Seymour’s conduct during war gave loyalty issue to Republicans – (addressed draft rioters as “my friends”)

-close ties to NY financiers cost appeal to Western economic resentments
Seymour’s Running Mate – Frank Blair

-family had been allied w/ Lincoln
  -helped keep Missouri Union
-publicized letter rejected Reconstruction
-Democratic President could restore “white people” to power in South, declare new gov’ts “null and void” – use army to disperse
  -specter of a 2\textsuperscript{nd} Civil War
Blair’s racism

-said Republicans placed South under “a semi-barbarous race of blacks who are worshippers of fetishes and poligamists” and would “subject white women to their unbridled lust”

Read Darwin’s The Origin of Species
Grant’s support

- “Seymour was opposed to the late war, and Blair is in favor of the next one.”
- Jay Cooke gave $20,000 to Republican campaign (assured bonds wouldn’t be greenback-redeemed)
- First time Northern capitalists united behind Republicans
1864.
TIS BUT A CHANGE OF BANNERS.

1868.
SEYMOUR & BLAIR

KKK
Election of 1868

- Grant had enthusiastic support as a war hero
- Democrats divided on currency issue
- Grant won a close popular vote
  - supported by freedmen
  - uncounted votes in south
- KKK intimidation
The Era of “Good Stealings”

-Fisk-Gould gold scheme - 1869
-Grant’s brother-in-law
Tweed Ring - NYC - “Tammany Hall”

- Bribery, graft, fraudulent elections
- Helped immigrants
- Brought down by Thomas Nast and Samuel J. Tilden
"That's what's the matter."

Boss Tweed. "As long as I count the Votes, what are you going to do about it? say?"
"What are you going to do about it?"
(cartoon by Thomas Nast)
Carnival of Corruption

- Grant - not corrupt, but surrounded by it
  - Credit Mobilier (1872) -
    - Union Pacific Railroad - formed CM Construction
      - Hired themselves for high rates
      - Bought off members of Congress & VP w/ stock
Whiskey Ring (1874-1875)

- Excise taxes on whiskey
- High-ranking gov’t officials skimming off top (millions of $)

Belknap Scandal

- Sec of War - resigned for taking bribes from companies supplying Indian reservations
Liberal Republican Revolt of 1872

Liberal Republicans nominated Horace Greeley
- also ran on Democratic ticket
- Grant won mud-spattered campaign for 2nd term
H. G. "LET US CLASP HANDS OVER THE BLOODY CHASM."—[See Page 881.]

"A Great Victory has been won in Georgia..... The verdict in Georgia is certainly conclusive."—New York Tribune, October 5, 1878.
1873 Salary Grab

-Congress double president’s compensation
-Awarded itself a 40% retroactive pay increase

could this happen today???

-Sec of Treasury – W. Richardson resigned after allowing tax fraud
Depression, Deflation, and Inflation

-Panic of 1873 - overspeculation
  -railroads, mines, factories, crops
  -bad loans
  -paper money (greenbacks)
-Dropped coinage of silver dollars - 1873
“The Crime of ‘73” - when Congress stopped coining silver
Bland-Allison Act

allowed a limited coinage of between $2 million and $4 million in silver each month

standard silver-to-gold ratio of 16 to 1

Passed over Hayes’ Veto
REPEAL OF THE SHOALING LAW
BY THE 39TH CONGRESS
Resumption Act of 1875

- withdraw greenbacks, resume gold
- debtors and farmers against this
- helped elect a Democratic House (1st since Civil War)
Pallid Politics in Gilded Age

- Control of House, Senate, and Presidency - back and forth
- few major issues
- differences - ethnicity and religion
- patronage
"An Ass, having put on the Elephant's skin, entered about in the Forest, and amazed himself by frightening all the foolish Animals he met with in his wanderings."—Rousseau's or Huron.
"Third Term Panic"

November 7, 1874 - Thomas Nast

Caption:
"An Ass, having put on the Lion's skin, roamed about in the Forest, and amused himself by frightening all the foolish Animals he met with in his wanderings."--Shakespeare or Bacon
Politics (continued)

Stalwart Republican faction - Roscoe Conkling of NY - all about patronage
Half-Breed Republicans

-James Blaine of Maine
-thought about civil service reform
Hayes-Tilden Standoff, 1876

- 1876 - Grant out
- Republicans - Rutherford B. Hayes - from Ohio (swing state)
- Democrats - Samuel J. Tilden - helped take down Tweed
- Contested votes in South
A NATIONAL GAME THAT IS PLAYED OUT.
Compromise of 1877 and End of Reconstruction

-2 sets of electoral returns from contested southern states
-Compromise of 1877
  -Hayes (Republican) could become president
  -All federal troops leave South
    -Ends Reconstruction; Democratic
“Redemption”
Birth of Jim Crow

- Redeemers rule South
- Black civil rights taken away
  - crop lien system
  - Jim Crow Laws
  - Plessy v Ferguson
  - Poll tax/literacy test/grandfather clause
Class Conflict and Ethnic Clashes

-Railroad Strike of 1877 - Hayes called in Fed troops
-Chinese Immigrants to CA
  -Railroads and mines
  -Conflicts w/ Irish immigrants (Denis Kearney)
  -Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
  -US v Wong Kim Ark (1882) – 14th Amendment/Citizenship
    -Tape v Hurley (1885) – public schools
1880 Presidential Election: Republicans

- Half Breeds: Sen. James G. Blaine (Maine)
- Stalwarts: Sen. Roscoe Conkling (New York)

Compromise:

- James A. Garfield
- Chester A. Arthur (VP)
Still waving the “Bloody Shirt”...
Pendleton Civil Service Act (1881)

passed in wake of Garfield’s assassination

originally only about 10% of gov’t jobs
Chester Arthur

Arthur not renominated because he wouldn’t go by patronage
Blaine-Cleveland Mudslingers of 1884

James Blaine nominated for Republicans in 1884

-Mulligan letters
Reform-minded Republicans (mugwumps) supported Democrats
Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland
Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion
BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CARYBDIS.
Cleveland’s First Term

Signed Interstate Commerce Act of 1887

the Dawes Act

vetoed Civil War Pension bills
Tariff Issue

Cleveland tried to lower
gov’t running $145 million surplus

major cause division between the two parties
causd Cleveland to lose to Harrison in 1888
Election of 1888

Cleveland more popular votes, but Harrison wins
The Billion-Dollar Congress

-Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 - Congress had to purchase $4 million in silver every month
-Higher tariff (McKinley Tariff) hurt farmers
-Sherman Anti-Trust Act
Farmers in Distress

• Farmers trapped in a vicious cycle.
  – Prices for crops falling.
  – Good farming land becoming scarce.
  – Banks foreclosing on farmers who could not make loan payments
Farmers Push for Reforms

- 1867, Oliver Hudson Kelley started Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange.
  - Intended to find social outlet and ed. Reform for farm families.
  - Later spent time and energy fighting railroads and est. farm co-ops.
Farmers’ Alliances

- Sent lecturers around to speak on low interest rates and gov’t. control of railroads.
  - Mary Elizabeth Lease
- Southern Alliance was largest.
- Colored Farmers’ Alliance formed for African-American farmers.
  - About 250,000 members
The Rise of Populism

- The movement of the people.
- Populist Party founded 1892.
Tom Watson

Populist from Georgia
- appealed to poor farmers of both races to unite against common grievances
Tom Watson (continued)

-became an outspoken racist
“the Negro has no comprehension of virtue...The South has to lynch him occasionally...to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty”
Election of 1892

James Weaver (Iowa) - Populist
- one of few 3rd parties to win electoral votes

Benjamin Harrison - Republican
- hurt by anger over McKinley Tariff

Grover Cleveland - Democrat
- only 2x non-consecutive winner
Populist Party Platform

- Increase in money supply
- Graduated income tax
- Federal loan program
- Election of US senators by popular vote
- Single terms for president
- Secret ballot
- 8 hour workday
- Immigration restrictions
Panic of 1893

- overspeculation on stocks
- railroads failed due to overbuilding
- 4 years; foreclosures; 20% unemployment
Issues with Gold

-investors traded silver dollars for gold dollars
-gold reserve fell low
-Cleveland turned to JP Morgan to borrow $65 million to support the dollar and gold standard
-Washington a tool of Eastern bankers?
Wilson-Gorman Tariff 1894

2% tax on incomes over $4,000 (constitutional?)
Coxey’s Army

Jacob Coxey - Populist from Ohio

led 200 protesters on march to Washington

demanded gov’t spend $500 million on public works

- many were terrified of a general rebellion
Divided Politics

• Republican and Democratic Parties divided by region
• Businessmen and bankers of Northeast were Republican
• Farmers and laborers of South and West were Democrats
Bimetallism vs. Gold Standard

- Central Issue was which metal would be the basis for the nation’s money system
- Bimetallism – a monetary system in which gov’t. would give gold or silver in exchange for paper money
- Gold Standard – wanted dollars backed only with gold
Silver vs. Gold

- Supporters of bimetallism hoped it would give life to a stale economy.
- The gold standard would provide a stable economy with less money in circulation.
Gold Bugs

- Bankers and businessmen
- Gold standard – less money out there
- Loans repaid in stable money
- Prices fall
- Value of $ goes up
- Few people have $  
- Pres. Cleveland

Silverites

- Farmers and laborers
- Bimetallism – more money out there
- Products sold at higher prices
- Prices rise
- Value of money decreases
- More people have money
Election of 1896

- Republican – William McKinley
- Democrat/(Populist) – William Jennings Bryan
Bryan’s “Cross of Gold” Speech

• At 1896 Democratic Convention, Bryan delivered what became known as the “Cross of Gold” speech.
• “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.”
“If protection has slain its thousands, the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands.”
Silver Party – Bryan
“Gold Democrats” – John Palmer (79)/ Simon B Buckner
An Uneven Race

- McKinley had millions of $ backing his candidacy.
- Bryan struggled for funds.
Defection of “Gold Bug” Democrats helped Republicans

Democrats called for unlimited coinage of silver at traditional inflationary ratio of 16 to 1
McKinley had 10x the campaign funds that Bryan did –
- Standard Oil gave $250,000
- JP Morgan gave $250,000
- Railroads gave $174,000
- NY Life Insurance Co gave $50,000
McKinley

“front porch campaign”
most of the work done by Mark Hanna
(Republican Senator from Ohio)
TR (head of NYC Police Commission) - talking about Altgeld and Bryan - “The one plans wholesale repudiation with a light heart and bubbling eloquence, because he lacks intelligence and is intoxicated by hope of power (Byran); the other would connive at wholesale murder, and would justify it by elaborate and cunning sophistry for reasons known only to his own tortuous soul”
Business leaders feared “silver lunacy”
The “twin-tailed” ticket - Bryan as Populist w/ Tom Watson of Ga and Democrat w/ Arthur Sewall of Maine.
- Watson attacked Sewall.
W.J. Bryan

- 36 years old
- traveled 18,000 miles by train
- gave over 600 speeches
- hurt by:
  - rise in wheat prices
  - employers threatening to shut down
Saw good and bad in the Populists

positive - insisted on fed gov’t’s responsibility to promote common good and deal w/ problems of industrialization

negative - backward-looking and nostalgic ideology, hopelessly tried to restore a mythical agrarian golden age