ENGLISH 308B
Gilded Age American Literature
Professor: Gavin Jones
Spring 2015

Time: Wednesday 3:15-6:05
Location: Lathrop 296
Office Hours: Thurs. 2:30-4:00, Friday 2:30-4:00
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The post-Civil War period unleashed the social structures and tensions with which we grapple today. This was the age of big business and class conflict; of mass urbanization and transportation; of race-based segregation and non-anglo immigration; of globalization, imperialism, and the closing of the West; of the reach of modernity into the self with the outbreak of American Nervousness. The era saw an explosion of interest in the regional and racial cultures of the United States, the increased agitation for women’s rights, the growth of tourism both at home and abroad, the rise of professional institutions and institutionalized social reform. This course will introduce graduate students to the creative innovations and the political tensions that stemmed from the formation of a multicultural and inequitable society. We will think broadly about the relationship between literature and history. Students will be encouraged to develop their critical identities by placing readings in the context of recent critical and theoretical developments as they pertain to literary movements—realism, naturalism, regionalism, the new journalism—and debates over race, gender, imperialism, etc.

Requirements:
- Mandatory attendance and participation in discussion (20% of final grade)
- A brief (5 min.) polemical presentation on a work of criticism or theory as it relates to the week’s reading (10% of final grade)
- A final, brief in-class presentations on any aspect of your reading in the course (primary or secondary texts), with a view to developing a topic idea, a critical approach, or a thesis for your final paper (10% of final grade)
- Final Paper of 15-18pp. (approx. 4000-5000 words; 60% of final grade), due by email by 11:59pm on Weds., June 10
- Incompletes will not typically be given for this class.

All books are available in the Stanford Bookstore

Introductions

Week 1 Hermann Melville, “The Frenzy in the Wake” (1866), and Ambrose Bierce, “Chickamauga” (1889). Handouts in class

Week 2 María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Who Would Have Thought It? (1872). Penguin

The Realist Canon


**Intermission: Intellectual Currents**

Week 5  Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907; published 1918). Library of America. Read the whole but focus in particular on the section from chapter 14 through the end of the book

**Regionalism and Counter-Regionalism**

Week 6  Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899). Dover


Week 7  Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman [1899] and Other Conjure Tales*. Duke

**Naturalism to Modernism**

Week 8  Frank Norris, *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco* (1899). Dover


*The Black Riders and Other Lines* (1895). Handout

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Week 10  Final presentations.