Chapter 19
Politics in the Age of Enterprise
1877–1896

Teaching Resources

Chapter Instructional Objectives
After you have taught this chapter, your students should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What was the role of political parties in domestic politics before 1900? What choices did political parties provide to voters?
2. How and why did political affairs play a central role in American culture in the late nineteenth century? How did women participate in political culture?
3. What were the origins and aims of the Populist movement?
4. In what ways did the political structure in the South change after 1877? How were blacks gradually disenfranchised?
5. How and why did racial segregation intensify in the late nineteenth century?

Chapter Annotated Outline

I. The Politics of the Status Quo, 1877–1893
   A. The Washington Scene
      1. There were five presidents from 1877 to 1893: Rutherford B. Hayes (R), James A. Garfield (R), Chester A. Arthur (R), Grover Cleveland (D), and Benjamin Harrison (R).
      2. The president’s most demanding job during this era was to dispense political patronage; after the assassination of President Garfield in 1881, reform of the spoils system became urgent even though this system was not the immediate motive for the murder.
   3. The Pendleton Act of 1883 created a list of jobs to be filled on the basis of examinations administered by the new Civil Service Commission, but patronage still accounted for the bulk of government posts.
   4. The biggest job of the executive branch was delivering the mail; in 1880, 56 percent of federal employees worked for the post office.
   5. One of the most troublesome issues of the 1880s was how to reduce the federal funding surplus created by customs duties and excise taxes.
   6. Congress had more control over national policy than the presidents, but Congress functioned poorly; it was regularly bogged down by procedural rules and by unruly members resistant to party discipline.
   7. Nor did either party have a strong agenda, so party differences became muddy; on most issues of the day, divisions on policy occurred within the parties, not between them.
   8. The tariff remained a fighting issue in Congress as the Democrats attacked Republican protectionism; each tariff bill was a patchwork of bargains among special interests.
   9. Every presidential election from 1876 to 1892 was decided by a thin margin, and neither party gained permanent command of Congress.
   10. The weakening of principled politics was evident after 1877, as Republicans backpedaled on the race issue and abandoned blacks to their own fate.
   11. Politicians clung to outworn issues and campaigns descended into comedy; the Democrat Cleveland was dogged by
the issue of his fathering of an illegitimate child, while his opponent, James G. Blaine, may have lost the election because an ardent Republican supporter called the Democrats the party of “Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion,” thus offending Catholic voters.

B. The Ideology of Individualism
1. The characteristics of public life in the 1880s—the passivity of the federal government, the evasiveness of the political parties, the absorption in politics for its own sake—derived ultimately from the conviction that little was at stake in public affairs.

2. In the 1880s the economic doctrine of laissez-faire reigned; the less government did, the better.

3. A flood of popular writings trumpeted the ideology of individualism, from the rags-to-riches stories found in the novels of Horatio Alger to innumerable success manuals. Also popular were Andrew Carnegie’s autobiography Triumphant Democracy and sermons praising wealth, including Russell H. Conwell’s “Acres of Diamonds” and Bishop Lawrence’s assurance that “Godliness is in league with riches.”

4. The celebration of American acquisitiveness drew strong support from social theorizing drawn from science, such as Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species (1859), which explained a process of evolution called “natural selection” and created a revolution in biology.

5. Herbert Spencer’s theory of Social Darwinism spun an elaborate analysis of how human society had evolved through competition and “survival of the fittest”—millionaires being the fittest.

6. Social Darwinists regarded any governmental interference as destructive to “natural” social processes.

C. The Supremacy of the Courts
1. Suspicion of government paralyzed political initiative and shifted power away from the executive and legislative branches.

2. From the 1870s onward, the courts increasingly became the guardians of the rights of private property against the grasping tentacles of government, especially state governments.

3. State governments had primary responsibility for social welfare and economic regulation under the federal system of residual powers, but it was difficult to strike a balance between state responsibility and the rights of individuals.

4. Used by the federal courts, the Fourteenth Amendment was a powerful restraint on the states in the use of their police powers in order to regulate private business.

5. The Supreme Court similarly hamstrung the federal government; in 1895 the Court ruled that the federal power to regulate interstate commerce did not cover manufacturing and struck down a federal income tax law, and in areas where federal power was undeniable—such as the regulation of railroads—the Supreme Court scrutinized every measure for undue interference with the rights of property.

6. Judicial supremacy reflected how dominant the ideology of individualism had become and also how low American politicians had fallen in the esteem of their countrymen.

II. Politics and the People
A. Cultural Politics: Party, Religion, and Ethnicity
1. Proportionately more voters turned out in presidential elections from 1876 to 1892 than at any other time in American history.

2. In an age before movies and radio, politics ranked as one of the great American forms of entertainment, yet party loyalty was a deadly serious matter.

3. Sectional differences, religion, and ethnicity often determined party loyalty; northern Democrats tended to be foreign-born and Catholic, and Republicans tended to be native-born and Protestant.

4. Hot ethnocultural issues—education, the liquor question, and observance of the Sabbath—were also party issues and lent deep significance to party affiliation.

B. Organizational Politics
1. By the 1870s both parties had evolved formal, well-organized structures.

2. The parties were run by unofficial internal organizations—“political machines”—that consisted of insiders willing to do party work in exchange for public jobs or connections.

3. Power brokerage being their main interest, party bosses treated public issues as somewhat irrelevant.

4. There was intense factionalism within the parties; in 1877 the Republican Party
divided into the Stalwarts and the Half-breeds, who were really fighting over the spoils of party politics.

5. Veterans of machine politics proved to be effective legislators and congressmen, and party machines did informally much of what governmental systems left undone. However, political machines never won widespread approval.

6. In 1884 some Republicans left their party and became known as Mugwumps, a term referring to pompous or self-important persons; their support of Democrat Grover Cleveland may have ensured his election by giving him the winning margin in New York State.

7. More adept at molding public opinion, through the newspapers and journals they controlled than at running government, the Mugwumps defined the terms of political debate, denying the machine system legitimacy and injecting an elitist bias into political opinion.

8. Northern states began to impose literacy tests to limit the voting rights of immigrants, and the adoption of the secret ballot in the early 1890s, which freed voters from party surveillance, abetted the Mugwumps' campaign.

9. Mugwumps were reformers but not on behalf of working people or the poor; true to the spirit of the age, they believed that the government that governed least, governed best.

C. Women's Political Culture

1. Due to the nature of party politics, it was considered to be no place for women.

2. The woman suffrage movement met fierce opposition; acknowledging the uphill battle that lay ahead, suffragists overcame the bitter divisions of the Reconstruction era and reunited in 1890 in the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

3. In that same spirit of realism, suffragists abandoned efforts to get a constitutional amendment and concentrated on state campaigns.

4. The doctrine of “separate spheres”—that men and women had different natures, and that women’s nature fitted them for “a higher and more spiritual realm”—did open a channel for women to enter public life.

5. Since many of the women’s social goals—ending prostitution, assisting the poor, agitating for prison reform, and trying to improve educational opportunities for women—required state intervention, women's organizations became politically active and sought to create their own political sphere.

6. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed in 1874 to combat alcoholism, and later, under the guidance of Frances Willard, the WCTU adopted a “Do Everything” policy.

7. The WCTU was drawn to woman suffrage, arguing that women needed the vote in order to fulfill their social and spiritual responsibilities as women—an argument that did not pose as much of a threat to masculine pride as when the claim was made that the ballot was an inherent right of all citizens as individuals.

8. By linking women's social concerns to women's political participation, the WCTU helped to lay the groundwork for a fresh attack on male electoral politics in the early twentieth century.

III. Race and Politics in the New South

A. Biracial Politics

1. When Reconstruction ended in 1877, blacks had not been driven from politics, but they did not participate on equal terms with whites, were routinely intimidated during political campaigns, and experienced gerrymandered electoral districts to maintain white supremacy.

2. After the Civil War, southern Democrats felt they had “redeemed” the South from Republican domination; hence, they adopted the name “Redeemers.”

3. The Republican Party in the South soldiered on, aided by a key Democrat vulnerability: the gap between the Redemption claims of universality and its actual domination by the South’s economic elite.

4. The Civil War brought out differences between the planter elite and the farmers who were called on to shed blood for a slaveholding system in which they had no interest.

5. After the Civil War, class tensions were exacerbated by the spread of farm tenancy, instead of farm ownership, and the emergence of the low-wage factory.

6. In Virginia, the “Readjusters” expressed agrarian discontent by opposing re-payment of Reconstruction debts to speculators.
7. After subsiding briefly, this discontent re-
vived with a vengeance in the late 1880s, as tenant farmers sought political power through farmers’ alliances and the newly evolving Populist Party.

8. As an insurgence against the Democrats accelerated, the question of black participation in politics and interracial solidarity became critical.

9. Black farmers developed a political structure of their own, the Colored Farmers’ Alliance, which made black voters a factor in the political calculations of southern Populists.

10. Through interracial appeals, the Populists put at risk the foundations of conservative southern politics.

B. One-Party Rule Triumphant

1. The conservative Democrats paraded as the “white man’s party” and denounced the Populists for promoting “Negro rule,” yet they shamelessly competed for the black vote.

2. Mischief at the polls—counting the votes of blacks who were dead or gone—enabled the Democrats to beat back the Populists in the 1892 elections.

3. Disenfranchising the blacks became a potent movement in the South; in 1890 Mississippi adopted a literacy test that effectively drove blacks out of politics.

4. Poor whites turned their fury on the blacks; they did not want to be disenfranchised by their own lack of education and expected lenient enforcement of the literacy test; poor whites were not protected from property and poll-tax requirements, however, and many stopped voting.

5. A new brand of demagogic politician came forward to speak for poor whites, appealing not to their economic interests but to their racial prejudices—Georgian Tom Watson rebuilt his political career as a spell-binding practitioner of race baiting and South Carolinian “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman adeptly manipulated images of white manhood to his advantage.

6. A brand of white supremacy emerged that was more virulent than anything blacks had faced since Reconstruction; the color line became rigid and comprehensive.

7. In the 1890s the South became a region fully segregated by law for the first time as Jim Crow laws legalizing the segregation of the races soon applied to every type of public facility.

8. In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of “separate-but-equal” segregation.

9. Williams v. Mississippi (1898) validated the disenfranchising devices of southern states, as long as race was not a specified criterion for disfranchisement.

10. With these rulings, blacks no longer participated in politics in the South and, more fundamentally, the symbolic effect was that they were no longer truly citizens of the republic.

11. Grimes County, Texas, where African Americans composed more than 50 percent of the population, regularly sent black representatives to the Texas legislature during the 1870s and 1880s, and the local Populist Party proved immune to Democrats’ taunts of “black rule” when a Populist–Republican coalition swept the county elections in 1896 and 1898.

12. In 1899 defeated Democratic candidates and prominent citizens organized the secret White Man’s Union. Blacks were forcibly prevented from voting in town elections that year, black leaders were shot down in cold blood, and night riders terrorized both white Populists and black Republicans.

13. Reconstituted as the White Man’s Party, the Union became the local Democratic Party in a new guise and they carried Grimes County by an overwhelming vote in 1900, after which the White Man’s Party ruled Grimes County for the next fifty years.

14. Like the blacks in Grimes County, Southern blacks resisted white supremacy as best they could. Beginning in 1891 blacks boycotted segregated streetcars in at least twenty-five cities and Ida Wells-Barnett began her antilynching campaign.

15. Some blacks were drawn to the Back-to-Africa movement, but emigration was not a viable choice.

IV. The Crisis of American Politics: The 1890s

A. The Populist Revolt

1. Had everything else remained equal, the elections of 1890 and 1892 might have initiated an era of Democratic supremacy; by the time of Cleveland’s inauguration, however, farm foreclosures and railroad bankruptcies signaled economic trouble and on May 3, 1893, the stock market crashed and the unemployment rate soared to above 20 percent.
2. Farmers needed organization to overcome their social isolation and to provide economic services—hence, the appeal of the Granger movement and later the farmers’ alliances.

3. Two dominant organizations emerged: the Farmers’ Alliance of the Northwest and the National (or Southern) Farmers’ Alliance.

4. The Texas Alliance continued in politics independently after its subtreasury system was rejected by the Democratic Party as being too radical.

5. As state alliances grew stronger and more impatient, they began to field independent slates; the national People’s (Populist) Party was formed in 1892.

6. In 1892 the Populist’s presidential candidate, James B. Weaver, captured enough votes to make it clear that the agrarian protest could be a challenge to the two-party system.

7. Although the Populist Party welcomed women, its platform was silent on woman suffrage.

8. Populism differed from the two mainstream parties in that it had a positive attitude toward government and in its development of a robust class ideology that acknowledged the conflict between capital and labor.

9. At the founding Omaha convention in 1892 Populists called for nationalization of the railroads and communications; protection of the land, including natural resources, from monopoly and foreign ownership; a graduated income tax; the Texas Alliance’s subtreasury plan; and the free and unlimited coinage of silver.

10. Free silver emerged as the overriding demand of the Populist Party, as embattled farmers hoped that an increase in the money supply would raise farm prices and give them relief.

11. Social Democrats and agrarian radicals argued that if free silver became the defining party issue, it would undercut the broader Populist program and alienate wage earners.

12. The practical appeal of silver was too great, and the Populists fatally compromised their party’s capacity to maintain an independent existence.

B. Money and Politics

1. In a rapidly developing economy, how fast the money supply should grow is a divisive question; debtors, commodity producers, and new businesses want more money in circulation to inflate prices and reduce the real cost of borrowing, while “sound-money” people—creditors, individuals on fixed incomes, those in the slower-growing sectors of the economy—want the opposite.

2. The freewheeling activity of state-chartered banks all issuing banknotes to borrowers that then circulated as money was sharply curtailed by the U.S. Banking Act of 1863; in 1875 circulation of greenbacks came to an end and the United States entered an era of chronic deflation and tight credit.

3. The United States had always operated on a bimetallic standard, but silver became more valuable as metal than as money; in 1873 silver was officially dropped as a medium of exchange.

4. When silver prices plummeted, inflationists began to agitate for a resumption of the bimetallic policy; modest victories were won with the Bland-Allison Act of 1878 and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890.

5. When the crash of 1893 hit, the silver issue divided politics along party lines.

C. Climax: The Election of 1896

1. As the party in power, the Democrats bore the brunt of responsibility for the economic crisis.

2. Cleveland did a poor job of handling the crisis: he forcibly dispersed Coxey’s army of jobless demonstrators; brutally put down the Pullman strike; and didn’t live up to his reputation as a tariff reformer, allowing the Wilson-Gorman Tariff of 1894, which caved in to special interests and left the many important rates unchanged.

3. Most disastrous was Cleveland’s stand on the silver question; a committed sound-money man, he had to abandon a silver-based currency and had Congress repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act.

4. Cleveland’s secret negotiations with Wall Street to arrange for gold purchases in order to replenish the treasury enraged Democrats and completed his isolation from his party.

5. At their Chicago convention in 1896, the Democrats repudiated Cleveland by nominating William Jennings Bryan as their presidential candidate.
6. In his “Cross of Gold” speech in 1896, William Jennings Bryan established the Democrats as the party of free silver.

7. The Populists accepted Bryan as their candidate and found themselves for all practical purposes absorbed into the Democratic silver campaign.

8. By persuading the nation that they were the party of prosperity and many traditionally Democratic urban voters that they were sympathetic to ethnic diversity, the Republicans turned both economic and cultural challenges to their advantage and won the election of 1896, thus ending the paralyzing equilibrium in American politics.

9. The year 1896 was also when electoral politics regained its place as an arena for national debate, setting the stage for the reform politics of the Progressive Era.

Key Terms

**patronage** The power of elected officials to grant government jobs. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, politicians systematically used—and abused—patronage to create and maintain strong party loyalties. After 1870, political reformers gradually introduced merit-based civil service systems in the federal and state governments. (584)

**spoils system** The widespread award of public jobs to political supporters following an electoral victory. Underlying this practice was the view that in a democracy, rotation in office was preferable to a permanent class of officeholders. In 1829 Andrew Jackson began this practice on the national level, and it became a central, and corrupting, feature of American political life. (584)

**tariff** A tax on imports, which has two purposes: raising revenue for the government and protecting domestic products from foreign competition. A hot political issue throughout much of American history, in the late nineteenth century the tariff became particularly controversial as protection-minded Republicans and pro-free-trade Democrats made the tariff the centerpiece of their political campaigns. (585)

**laissez-faire** The doctrine, based on economic theory, that government should not interfere in business or the economy. Laissez-faire ideas guided American government policy in the late nineteenth century and conservative politics in the twentieth. Business interests that supported laissez-faire in the late nineteenth century accepted government interference when it took the form of tariffs or subsidies that worked to their benefit. Broader uses of the term refer to the simple philosophy of abstaining from all government interference. (587)

**ideology** A systematic philosophy or political theory that purports to explain the character of the social world or to prescribe a set of values or beliefs. (587)

**Social Darwinism** The application of Charles Darwin's biological theory of evolution by natural selection to the development of society. This late-nineteenth-century principle encouraged the notion that societies progress as a result of competition and the “survival of the fittest.” Intervention by the state in this process was counterproductive because it impeded healthy progress. Social Darwinists justified the increasing inequality of late-nineteenth-century, industrial American society as natural. (588)

**residual powers** The constitutional principle that powers not explicitly granted to the federal government belong to the states. (588)

**ethnocultural** Refers to the distinctive social characteristics of immigrants and religious groups, especially in determining their party loyalties and stance on political issues touching personal behavior and public morality. (590)

**literacy tests** The requirement that an ability to read be demonstrated as a qualification for the right to vote. It was a device easily used by registrars to prevent blacks from voting, whether they could read or not, and was widely adopted across the South beginning with Mississippi in 1890. (594)

**separate spheres** Term used by historians to describe the nineteenth-century view that men and women have different gender-defined characteristics and that, consequently, the sexes inhabit—and should inhabit—different social worlds, with men in the public sphere of politics and economics and women in the private sphere of home and family. In mid-nineteenth-century America this cultural understanding was sharply defined and hotly contested. (594)

**gerrymander** The political strategy (named after the early-nineteenth-century politician Elbridge Gerry) of changing the boundaries of voting districts to give the dominant party an advantage. (596)

**Jim Crow** A term first heard in antebellum minstrel shows to designate black behavior and used in the age of segregation to designate facilities restricted to blacks, such as Jim Crow railway cars. (598)
Subtreasury System A scheme deriving from the Texas Exchange, a cooperative in the 1880s, through which cotton farmers received cheap loans and marketed their crops. When the Texas Exchange failed in 1891, Populists proposed that the federal government take over these functions on a national basis through a "subtreasury," which would have the added benefit of increasing the stock of money in the country and thus push up prices. (602)

Deflation The sustained decline of prices, generally accompanying an economic depression, but in the United States after the Civil War it was the result of rapidly rising productivity, market competition, and a tight money supply. (604)

Lecture Strategies

1. Write a lecture that focuses on politics in the late nineteenth century. Discuss the American political scene from the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes to the election of William McKinley. Points to cover include the limited function of the federal government and the presidency; the Mugwumps; party deadlock, especially in Congress; ethnocultural politics; the Populists; and the developing woman suffrage movement.

2. Create a lecture that analyzes the "ideology of individualism." Define individualism as it was understood at the time. Explain the principles of Social Darwinism and the activities of the courts in this regard. Explore the connection between the ideology of individualism and the idea of the American dream.

3. Write a lecture on the woman's suffrage movement. Dividing up this sizable topic is difficult; one possibility is to focus on 1870–1900, emphasizing the major people, organizations, and laws shaping the history of women's struggle for equality.

4. A lecture on the Populist revolt provides an opportunity to bring together discordant points in the chapter. For example, one could tie the quest for woman suffrage to the significant role women played in the Populist movement. Similarly, the hardships of agriculture can be linked to the issue of race, as exemplified by the Colored Farmers' Alliance's coexistence with the Southern Farmers' Alliance. The rural-urban or farmer-wage earner split is a natural point to make. The contrast between the diminishing economic importance of the agricultural sector and the rise of industrialism should be discussed.

5. The importance of the 1896 presidential election helps students understand how politics was changing at the turn of the century. Significant points to lecture on include how the election broke a political deadlock and created a Republican ascendancy, the sectional nature of the voting, the role of the currency standard in the campaign, the importance of the economy to voters, and a comparison of the campaigns of William Jennings Bryan and William McKinley.

6. Create a lecture that answers the question, "How did African Americans lose civil rights and political and economic power in the New South during the late nineteenth century?" Cover economic, social, and political factors of disempowerment. You may also want to comment at length on the legacy of slavery, and the failure of Reconstruction to address continuing discrimination against African Americans.

Reviewing the Text

These questions are from the textbook and follow each main section of the narrative. They are provided in the Computerized Test Bank with suggested responses, for your convenience.

The Politics of the Status Quo, 1877–1893 (pp. 584–589)

1. A novel published in 1880 speaks derisively of American democracy as being "of the people, by the people, for the benefit of Senators." What was there about the political scene that would have prompted the author to say that?

   • The late nineteenth century witnessed an increase in political corruption, political patronage, and the spoils system at the highest levels of Congress and the White House; an increase in the penetration of big business into the electoral process; and the rise of individualism and unfettered capitalism, which suggested that economic gain was of primary value in life.

2. Why was Darwin's Origin of Species, which was strictly about biology, important in the development of the ideology of conservatism?

   • Darwin suggested that the natural world was based on natural selection, in which certain species and individuals were selected for survival based on favorable traits.

   • American conservatives viewed Herbert Spencer’s creation of Social Darwinism as a metaphor or explanation for the survival of certain ethnic and
social groups over others, and the necessity for cutthroat competition in the business world.

- American conservatives adopted these values as they shaped the American economy and political scene.

3. How do you explain the reverence accorded to the judiciary in the late nineteenth century?

- Suspicion of government paralyzed political initiative and shifted power away from the executive and legislative branches. After the 1870s the courts increasingly accepted the role of guardians of private property against the grasping tentacles of big government.

**Politics and the People (pp. 589–595)**

1. Who were the Mugwumps? Do you regard them as important players in post-Reconstruction politics? If so, why?

- Mugwumps were reform-minded Republicans who resented exclusion of elites like themselves in favor of corrupt professional politicians. They called for disinterestedness and independence in American politics. Many Mugwumps had become alienated by President Grant’s corrupt administration.

- The Mugwumps were important players in shaping the national political scene; for example, the Mugwumps threw their support to Democrat Grover Cleveland and probably ensured his election by giving him the winning margin in New York State.

- They unleashed a national reform movement that helped to shape the Progressive reform movement.

- The Mugwumps, however, were more important in shaping public opinion than in running government. They controlled newspapers and the major magazines of the era, defined political debate, denied the machine system legitimacy, and injected an elitist bias into political opinion.

2. What do we mean by “ethnocultural” politics, and why is it important for an understanding of late-nineteenth-century American politics?

- Ethnocultural politics refers to the cultural values of ethnic and social groups that shaped their voting behavior over time. For example, blue laws passed in states to ban liquor consumption met with hostility from German and Irish American people, who voted for candidates based on religious and other cultural factors.

3. Why was it that women, although they mostly couldn’t vote, nevertheless became important political actors in this era?

- Women in the United States took on larger political roles based on their increasing cultural centrality in the home and the church. Women led a reform movement to fight drinking and Sabbath-breaking in American society in the late nineteenth century. This reform impulse provided women with social space to act out a larger agenda of increasing basic political and legal rights. In turn, their actions influenced men in both parties to shape political agendas along moral and ethnocultural lines.

**Race and Politics in the New South (pp. 595–599)**

1. The Redeemers imposed a system of one-party rule on the South after Reconstruction. Why was this system initially vulnerable to attack?

- One-party rule initially came under attack from the lingering power of the Republican Party in the South, the political organizing of African Americans (such as the Colored Farmer’s Alliance), and the efforts of Populists like Tom Watson to mute racial differences in favor of class interests between poor whites and blacks.

2. How do you explain the disfranchisement of southern blacks during the 1890s? What measures did whites enact to prevent blacks from voting?

- Blacks lost voting rights as a result of the resurgence of the Democratic Party and its use of machine politics to create one-party rule and white supremacy, the use of violence by whites in the form of race riots and the actions of the Ku Klux Klan, and the retreat of the Republican Party from protecting southern blacks.

- Southern state governments “redeemed” their states by passing new laws and creating literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses to disenfranchise blacks.

3. What was “Jim Crow”? Would the answer to question 1 serve also to explain its establishment in the South?

- Jim Crow refers to the rise of a brand of white supremacy more virulent than anything facing blacks since Reconstruction. The color line became more rigid and comprehensive. Jim Crow laws created legal segregation between blacks and whites in the South.
• The explanation for question 2 also helps to explain the rise of Jim Crow in the South after 1877.

The Crisis of American Politics: The 1890s (pp. 599–607)

1. Farmers, like other Americans, had strong ties to the established parties, yet many of them became Populists anyway. Why was that?

• Many farmers became Populists as a result of the recession in 1893, high unemployment, an increase in farm foreclosures, the decrease of grain and cotton prices, and exploitation by middlemen and railroad shippers.
• The established parties, evidenced by the 1893 depression, had failed to help poor Americans overcome economic dislocation; hence the necessity and appeal of a third party for farmers.

2. Cleveland is rated as a pretty good president for his first term and a bad one for his second term. How do you explain that reversal?

• Cleveland’s second term was a failure because of a downturn in the economy in 1893, and his callous Social Darwinist response to Coxey’s Army, a group of jobless marchers who arrived in Washington in 1894 demanding jobs. He arrested the leader and drove off the marchers.
• Cleveland also brutally suppressed the Pullman strike, further alienating him from unions and the working-class Democratic vote.
• In 1894 Cleveland caved in to special business interests by losing control of the battle for a congressional revote on the protectionist McKinley Tariff of 1890.
• Despite the suffering of farmers, Cleveland pressured Congress to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. He then used capital from a syndicate of private bankers led by J. P. Morgan to purchase gold and replace silver as the basis of the U.S. monetary system. Secret negotiations were revealed that further stained his second term.

3. It would be hard to imagine American voters today getting excited about the money supply (and hard, no doubt, for students to get excited about it in this chapter). So how do you account for the fact that free silver was the hot topic of the 1896 election?

• The severity of the economic recession of 1893 motivated many Americans to pay close attention to the national financial situation.

• In the context of constant corruption publicized during the Gilded Age, President Cleveland inflamed public passions through secret deals with banker J.P. Morgan to obtain gold purchases for the U.S. Treasury.
• The charismatic William Jennings Bryan, a passionate advocate of free silver, gave sensational speeches in favor of silver, such as the “Cross of Gold” speech at the Democratic convention that gave him the presidential nomination.
• The Democrats used free silver as the main plank on their platform, forcing other parties to address the issue during the election.

Chapter Writing Assignments

These questions appear at the end of Chapter 19 in the textbook. They are provided in the Computerized Test Bank with suggested responses, for your convenience.

1. In light of James Bryce’s complaint about the triviality of American politics (see chapter opener), how do you account for the fact that the voter turnout in the 1880s was the highest in our history?

• Politics remained a male-dominated affair; participation in politics was part of a male-centered culture that interested men in political affairs.
• Alterations in party politics and party organization, with a new focus on appealing directly to voters based on sensational and sophisticated political campaigns, increased voter interest in politics.
• Increased political corruption in the Gilded Age unleashed a moral reform movement that drew an increasing segment of the middle class into the political process to stop drinking, prostitution, and Sabbath-breaking.
• An increase of ethnocultural factors motivated American men, such as Irish and German Americans, to vote to protect cultural and religious values.
• White supremacy in the South and patriarchy throughout the United States helped to increase white male voter turnout to defeat the attempts of blacks and women to improve their civil rights.

2. How important do you think race was in explaining the failure of southern Populism?

• Race was crucial to the defeat of Populism in the South. Class interests between poor whites and blacks were marked, and the agrarian platform of Populism appealed to both poor whites and poor blacks, yet many poor whites continued to blame blacks in times of hardship. Southern
poor whites could not separate social inequality from racial inequality, and elite white Southern Democrats managed to defeat the Populists using corrupt vote counts.

- The rise of one-party rule by the Democratic Party in the South was based on a political appeal to race issues, which divided white and black Populists.
- Racial issues motivated white Democrats to use physical violence to defeat Populists.

3. Why do historians regard the election of 1896 as one of the decisive elections in American history?

- The 1896 election was pivotal in shaping the future pattern of American politics. Not since 1860 had the United States witnessed such a hard-fought election over financial issues, with McKinley (the Republican candidate) representing the big business issues of high tariffs, sound money, and prosperity against the more populist and moralistic Bryan.
- The paralyzing equilibrium in American politics between the two evenly matched parties ended with the election, making the Republicans the party of prosperity and the majority party of the nation.
- Electoral politics forever became an arena for national debate over economic and moral issues.

Class Discussion Starters

1. Why did the presidents from 1877 to 1897 not make a larger mark on history?

   Possible answers
   a. Government was conservative in size and scope, initiating and providing very few services.
   b. Government did not have a showy national agenda. Tariffs and patronage, although important, did not capture the public’s imagination.
   c. Presidents were not given much latitude by the office; their biggest job was dispensing political patronage.
   d. With the two major political parties so evenly matched, presidents were wary of undertaking any action that might benefit the other party.
   e. There was no war going on to focus attention on the president as the national figurehead.

2. Why was local politics so interesting to Americans in the late nineteenth century?

   Possible answers
   a. Politics was a form of mass entertainment.
   b. Certain issues of the day (temperance, education, religious questions) galvanized the electorate. Later, the Populists and the silver issue excited voters.
   c. Sometimes bitter factional disputes—the Mugwump uprising and the Stalwarts versus the Halfbreeds—raised intense interest.

3. What was the positive side of machine politics?

   Possible answers
   a. Because of machine politics, professionalism and discipline improved the performance of state and national legislatures.
   b. Party machines filled a void—doing what traditional government left undone—and fulfilled people’s basic needs, especially in the cities.
   c. Party machines provided citizens with civic identity and the ability to influence local matters.

4. What was the negative side of machine politics?

   Possible answers
   a. Because of machine politics, small numbers of people, many of whom were unelected or holding no official office, wielded extraordinary political power.
   b. Party machines competed with legitimate government agencies for power and influence.
   c. Constitutional electoral processes were disrupted by party machine interference.

5. Explain the rise of the woman suffrage movement.

   Possible answers
   a. Dedicated feminists such as Susan B. Anthony worked ceaselessly to promote women’s rights.
   b. Women had begun to make progress in winning the vote: suffrage for women had been granted in four western states.
   c. The temperance movement mobilized women to wield social power and taught them important skills in political organizing.
d. The relative absence of other contentious issues, such as slavery or the Civil War, meant that the movement didn’t have to take a back seat. The relative prosperity of the nation meant that there were women with the means, time, and drive to devote to the movement.

6. What differentiated Populists from Republicans and Democrats?

Possible answers

a. Populism directly appealed to classes and segments of society not served by the other parties.

b. Women played an important role in the Populist movement, while they were essentially excluded from the two major parties.

c. Populists believed that the government had positive responsibilities to the people; they advocated government programs that the two major parties shied away from.

d. Populists lacked the organization and structure of the established parties.

e. Populists lacked the demagogic weapons of the Republicans and Democrats (the “bloody shirt” and “redemption”).

7. Why did the question of silver become a national issue?

Possible answers

a. Farmers supported silver coinage. Large supplies of silver could be used to back currency. With more currency in circulation, inflation would lower farmers’ debts.

b. Silver became a political question as silver-state politicians joined the Populists in promoting its use.

c. Silver frightened “sound-money” proponents, who were alarmed by the prospect of crazed agrarians supporting a bimetallic standard that might undermine gold and a strong dollar.

d. Business cycle fluctuations, especially the Panic of 1893, strengthened pro-silver sentiment.

e. William Jennings Bryan captivated and agitated the populace with his “Cross of Gold” speech, and silver became the pivotal issue in the 1896 presidential campaign.

8. Why did agrarian radicalism decline after the 1896 election?

Possible answers

a. Bryan and the silver Democrats lost the election decisively.

b. Agricultural prices moved upward; as commodity prices rose, American farmers entered a “golden age” that lasted through World War I.

c. Large gold finds had the inflationary effects for which the free-silver faction had clamored.

d. Farming’s overall importance in the economy was declining as more workers made a living in commerce and manufacturing.

9. Explain the loss of black rights in the South.

Possible answers

a. With the memory of the Civil War receding, the victorious North lost interest in supporting black rights.

b. The Supreme Court made a number of decisions that undermined civil rights.

c. Congress failed to pass civil rights legislation to protect blacks.

d. Redeemers used the race question to check black–white political cooperation in the 1880s and 1890s.

e. Scientific theories of racial inequality were widely accepted.

10. What was the black response to racist developments in the South?

Possible answers

a. Atlanta blacks declared a boycott, and over the next fifteen years blacks boycotted segregated streetcars in at least twenty-five cities.

b. Resistance, as exemplified by Ida B. Wells and her outspoken and eloquent denouncement of lynching and violence used to intimidate blacks, became more commonplace.

c. Some blacks were drawn to the Back-to-Africa movement, abandoning all hope that they would ever find justice in America.

Classroom Activities

1. Provide each student with a copy of William Jennings Bryan’s passionate “Cross of Gold” speech, delivered at the Democratic convention in 1896. Read the document aloud in class, then ask the students a series of questions to reveal Bryan’s argu-
ment and supporting points. A counterpoint might include a few quotes from William McKinley on the silver issue.

2. Form the class into a debate on the subject of the woman's rights movement, pro and con. You may wish to bring in a clip from a film on women's rights, such as *Iron Jawed Angels*, an HBO series that re-creates the political struggles faced by women from 1900 to 1917. Another tactic to interest students in the material is to play music from the time period in class. Ask the students to search for and download music, such as ragtime, and play it in class to reveal themes, patterns, and values of the era.

**Oral History Exercise**

- Assign students to research the woman's suffrage movement to locate sources of oral interviews of suffragists from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The goal is for students to understand more deeply the complexities of the women's rights movement, and to understand the importance and limitations of oral history in understanding history. Students can use the entries as part of an assigned paper or class discussion. Students should initially submit the documents they find to you, and you can select usable documents for later discussion or class exercises.

**Working with Documents**

**COMPARING AMERICAN VOICES**

**Negro Domination! (p. 600)**

1. In his 1904 speech, Watson claimed that his views on black participation in politics had not changed. Is that correct?
   - His politics did change, from appealing to the class consciousness of poor whites and blacks to using race as a method of gaining reelection.

2. Do you think Watson became more of a racist between 1892 and 1904? In what ways?
   - After watching blacks struggle against sharecropping and Populism collapse over time, Watson in 1904 appears to blame blacks for failing to support poor whites against moneyed interests, for desiring social equality and black rule over whites, and for criticizing racist treatment by whites. He says that blacks do not deserve political equality with whites, something he did not argue ten years earlier.
   - Watson never advocated social equality and thought the races socially would always remain separate.

3. The “Negro Question” had to do with the relations between the races. In what ways did Watson redefine those relations between 1892 and 1904?
   - Watson redefined those relations by suggesting that blacks wanted to dominate whites socially and politically. He blames blacks for instigating divisions within the white political community that might lead to black rule.

**VOICES FROM ABROAD**

**Ernst Below: Beer and German American Politics (p. 593)**

1. In his speech, the Republican candidate Joe Davenport, himself no German, sings the praises of Germany, the "Fatherland." Why does he do that?
   - To curry favor with the Germans and secure their vote in the next election.

2. In the Civil War era, German Americans were solidly Republican, loyal supporters of Lincoln. The former mayor, Old Kumpf, is of that generation. So why does he stand up and denounce the Republican candidate Davenport?
   - Davenport’s party does not advocate as strong a stance against the temperance and prohibition movements as the former mayor wants.

3. The goings-on at the Turnverein hall were about the campaign for mayor. Yet when the school principal Rothman left, he was complaining about the injury done to Held, the Republican candidate for Congress. Does that call into question our claim in the text that national politics in the late nineteenth century was insulated—unlike in our own time—from ethnocultural politics?
   - It appears from the document that ethnocultural politics played a large role in shaping elections during the late nineteenth century.
   - Politics was considered to be a corrupt business in which men actively campaigned for office by promising benefits and criticizing opposing candidates.
Reading American Pictures

Parties and People: How Democratic Was American Politics? (p. 591)

1. Compare the people in the two photographs. Do the differences you see suggest anything about the class composition of American political parties in the late nineteenth century?
   - Parties were based on appeal to class interests, with Republicans being the party of big business while the Populist party represented the interests of rural Americans.

2. Giving women the vote, as the text says, was a highly divisive and unresolved issue in the late nineteenth century. Do these photographs throw any light on that issue? Or on how Republicans and Populists aligned themselves on it?
   - Populists supported an increased role for women in American politics, while Republicans outlawed women from political organizing on a meaningful level. Politics remained a male-only arena.

3. A hallmark of the nineteenth-century parties was their capacity to organize at the grassroots level. That is apparent in both photographs. But Populists regarded their brand of grassroots activism to be different—and far more democratic—from main-line parties. Do the photographs reveal any evidence that helps us understand why they might have felt that way?
   - The images depict a Populist group, including a cross section of age, gender, and class categories, holding a flag and relying on a typically rural American form of transportation versus the top-hat all-male elite meeting of the Republican party.

Electronic Media

Web Sites

- **Gilded Age Presidents**
  www.americanpresident.org/presidentialresources.htm
  A site sponsored by the University of Virginia focusing on the history of U.S. presidents during the late nineteenth century.

- **W. E. B. Du Bois**
  This site provides a biography of one of the most important black leaders of the era.

Films

- **Ragtime** (1981, Paramount Pictures, 155 minutes)
  Directed by Milos Forman and based on the novel by E. L. Doctorow, this film captures the racial passions inherent to the Gilded Age.

- **Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice** (1989, American Experience documentary, 60 minutes)
  Directed by William Greaves, this documentary examines the life and work of the crusader against lynching and Jim Crow rule.

- **A Great Civilized Power** (2000, American Experience documentary, 50 minutes)

- **Iron Jawed Angels** (2004, HBO, 125 minutes)
  Directed by Katja von Garnier and starring Hillary Swank, this film depicts how women struggled to secure the right to vote.

Literature

- **E. L. Doctorow, Ragtime** (New York: Penguin, 1975)
  This novel focuses on the lives of famous and ordinary individuals during the Gilded Age of America.

Additional Bedford/St. Martin’s Resources for Chapter 19

FOR INSTRUCTORS

Transparencies

The following maps and images from Chapter 19 are available as full-color acetates:

- Bandanna, 1888 Election
- Map 19.1 Presidential Elections of 1880, 1884, and 1888
- The Levi P. Morton Association (1888)
- En Route to a Populist Rally, Dickinson County, Kansas (1890s)
- Map 19.2 Disenfranchisement in the New South
- Map 19.3 The Heyday of Western Populism, 1892
- Map 19.4 Presidential Elections of 1892 and 1896
Instructor’s Resource CD-ROM

The following maps, figures, and images from Chapter 19, as well as a chapter outline, are available on disc in both PowerPoint and jpeg formats:

• Map 19.1 Presidential Elections of 1880, 1884, and 1888
• Map 19.2 Disfranchisement in the New South
• Map 19.3 The Heyday of Western Populism, 1892
• Map 19.4 Presidential Elections of 1892 and 1896
• Figure 19.1 Ethnicultural Voting Patterns in the Midwest, 1870–1892
• Bandanna, 1888 Election
• The Levi P. Morton Association (1888)
• En Route to a Populist Rally, Dickinson County, Kansas (1890s)
• The Cross of Gold

Using the Bedford Series with America’s History, Sixth Edition

Available online at bedfordstmartins.com/usingseries, this guide offers practical suggestions for incorporating volumes from the Bedford Series in History and Culture and the Historians at Work series into the U.S. History Survey. Relevant titles for Chapter 19 include

• THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK by W. E. B. DuBois, Edited with an Introduction by David W. Blight, Yale University, and Robert Gooding-Williams, Northwestern University
• LOOKING BACKWARD: 2000–1887 by Edward Bellamy, Edited with an Introduction by Daniel H. Borus, University of Rochester
• UP FROM SLAVERY by Booker T. Washington, with Related Documents, Edited with an Introduction by W. Fitzhugh Brundage, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
• A TRAVELER FROM ALTURIA by William Dean Howells, Edited with an Introduction by David W. Levy, University of Oklahoma
• SOUTHERN HORRORS and Other Writings: The Antilynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900, Edited with an Introduction by Jacqueline Jones Royster, Ohio State University
• PLESSY V. FERGUSON: A Brief History with Documents, Edited with an Introduction by Brook Thomas, University of California, Irvine

FOR STUDENTS

Documents to Accompany America’s History

The following documents and illustrations are available in Chapter 19 of the companion reader by Kevin Fernlund, University of Missouri-St. Louis:

1. James Bryce, The American Commonwealth (1888)
2. William Graham Sumner, The Forgotten Man (1883)
3. Republican and Democratic State Platforms on the Bennett English-Language School Law (Wisconsin, 1890) and The Liquor Question (Iowa, 1889)
4. Frances E. Willard, Woman and Temperance (1876)
5. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Solitude of Self (1892)
6. The 1890 Mississippi Constitution
7. Ida B. Wells, Lynching at the Curve (1892)
8. Booker T. Washington, Atlanta Exposition Address (1895)
9. W.E.B. Du Bois, Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others (1903)
10. Democrat and Republican National Platforms on the Currency, the Tariff, and Federal Elections (1892)
11. People’s (Populist) Party National Platform (1892)
12. Henry Demarest Lloyd, Wealth against Commonwealth (1894)
14. Henry Adams, National Politics in the 1890s (1918)

Online Study Guide at bedfordstmartins.com/henretta

The Online Study Guide helps students synthesize the material from the text as well as practice the skills historians use to make sense of the past. The following map, visual, and documents activities are available for Chapter 19:

Map Activity

• Map 19.2 Disfranchisement in the New South
Visual Activity

• Reading American Pictures: Parties and People: How Democratic Was American Politics?

Reading Historical Documents Activities

• Comparing American Voices: "Negro Domination!"
• Voices from Abroad: Ernst Below: Beer and German American Politics

Critical Thinking Modules at bedfordstmartins.com/historymodules

These online modules invite students to interpret maps, audio, visual, and textual sources centered on events covered in the U.S. history survey. Relevant modules for Chapter 19 include

• Documenting Violence: Ida B. Wells and the Crusade against Lynching, 1892–1900