


Spring 2015


HST 516: Emergence of Modern America, 1877–1920

Reacting to
the Past

Professor Kathleen Donohue



In this course, you will immerse yourself in four critical decades of American history. First, you will “relive” the past by taking up residence in Greenwich Village, where you will become a suffragist, a Wobbler organizer or a Bohemian intellectual, attend the Armory Art Show and debate politics at Polly’s Restaurant. You will analyze the speeches and writings of numerous historical figures, among them Karl Marx, Emma Goldman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and “Big” Bill Haywood. You will give speeches of your own, perhaps an impassioned plea for the rights of female textile workers, an urgent appeal to the inhabitants of New York City to introduce labor reform or an ardent defense of individualism. And you will write extensively, be a newspaper article, a review of the 1913 Armory Art Show or perhaps even a one-act play or song, which you might then perform at Mabel Dodge’s.



In the second half of the semester, we will turn from history to historiography, reading and discussing the writings of several of the most important historians working on this period. Our discussions, however, will inevitably be shaped by what we experienced in Greenwich Village. By the end of this course, you will have a “first-hand” understanding of the ways in which several of the major themes in U.S. history collided in Greenwich Village in 1913, a solid foundation in some of the major scholarship on the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and a more developed ability to analyze historiographical debates—not to mention improved skills in writing, analysis, debate, teamwork and leadership.

