

[New Directions in the History of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era](#)

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Chairs: Nancy C. Unger, Santa Clara University; Christopher Nichols, Oregon State University

Panelists:

- Nancy C. Unger, Santa Clara University
- Kimberly Hamlin, Miami University (Ohio)
- Allan Lumba, University of Michigan
- Alan Lessoff, Illinois State University
- Christopher Nichols, Oregon State University

In this panel the co-editors will present their overview of *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (Wiley Blackwell, 2017) and feature four of the contributors discussing their essays in depth. This collection of thirty-four new historiographic essays covers the years between 1877 and 1920, a period which saw the U.S. emerge from the ashes of Reconstruction to become a world power. The volume and the authors in this round table present fresh interpretations of the period and its historiography.

Nichols and Unger will provide a brief overview of the work, drawing from their introductory essay "Gilded Excesses, Multiple Progressivisms." This discussion will reveal the wide range of relevant specialties explored in the book's essays. Robert Johnston will kick off the specific contributor's portion with a recap of his provocative essay "Influential Works about the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," in which he reflects on the trajectory of major scholarly works on the period. Even as the older emphasis on political culture and political economy has been superseded by a new focus on race, gender, and empire, enduring questions of democracy continue to be central. In her discussion of "Gender," Kimberly Hamlin challenges the widely argued notion that the nineteenth-century concept of "separate spheres" for men and women eroded during the GAPE. Hamlin argues that separate spheres gave way to gendered lives as distinct standards for men and for women and the gender binary became naturalized.

In "Art and Architecture," Alan Lessoff argues for a broad understanding of art's role in society. He emphasizes that the agendas pursued by artists and architects were distinct from questions of bourgeois uplift, especially institutional development, professionalism and professional status. He also traces the creation of an American national art that would gain recognition internationally. Allan Lumba will round out the panel by placing the period into its proper global perspective in "Empire, Expansion, and Its Consequences." Lumba examines the crucial significance of the GAPE in the historical analysis of U.S. empire. He reveals how a robust and varied historiography has critiqued the dominant narrative of American exceptionalism, then maps out new approaches to U.S. empire during the GAPE, specifically through global and transnational analyses of labor, finance, migration, and political organizing.

Combined, the panelists and their topics provide a sense of the vibrant state of the field and underscore the importance and increasing relevance of this historical era.

Recorded in April 2018 at the OAH Annual Meeting held in Sacramento, California as part of the Mellon-funded Amplified Initiative.

Full Session

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