

Emotions in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

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Chair: Frank Costigliola, University of Connecticut, Storrs

Panelists:

- Jeremy Young, Dixie State University
- Brenton J. Malin, University of Pittsburgh
- Amy Louise Wood, Illinois State University

In 1985, Peter and Carol Stearns published their seminal article on “emotionology” in the *American Historical Review*. In the ensuing three decades, the history of emotions has emerged as one of the most innovative subfields in the American historical profession. A growing body of literature on emotions such as homesickness, anger, and “American cool” has covered time periods as disparate as the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the early Cold War. Since 2014, a book series at the University of Illinois Press has published several important monographs on emotions history, with more entries soon to follow.

Despite the exciting work being done on the history of emotions in the American context, there remains a great deal of research to be done specifically on the emotions of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Since Jackson Lears’ *No Place of Grace* (1981) identified the “quest for intense experience” as a key motivating force behind turn-of-the-century social change, the period has stood out as a time when emotions were perhaps uniquely important in shaping American society. “Never was oratory more orotund, propaganda more reckless, denunciation more bitter, reform more strident,” declared Howard Mumford Jones in *The Age of Energy* (1971). “A people thus verbally unrestrained must have been filled with exuberance and wrath.” Yet historians still know little about what shaped American emotions, and how those emotions in turn changed American culture, during those years.

Accordingly, this roundtable brings together several leading scholars in the history of emotions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to help sketch the emotional landscape of those decades. The panel’s chair, Frank Costigliola, is a former president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and one of the most innovative historians of emotions working today; his article on the role of emotions in shaping George Kennan’s contributions to the Cold War was published in the *Journal of American History* in 2016. Jeremy C. Young, an assistant professor of history at Dixie State University, is the author of *The Age of Charisma* (2017), which argues that the modern emotional connection between leaders and followers in America grew out of a unique group of charismatic social movements prominent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Brenton J. Malin, an associate professor of communication at the University of Pittsburgh, is the author of *Feeling Mediated* (2014), which centers on the role of radio technology in shaping American emotions in the early twentieth century. Amy Louise Wood, a professor of history at Illinois State University, analyzes the role of feeling in intellectual, popular, and state treatments of the criminal, and contextualizes these treatments within emotional responses to industrial capitalism. Together, these scholars will outline a framework for understanding the always passionate, often mercurial emotions of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era United States.

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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