

Thomas Kelly

OLLI Course Content Spring 2024

The 1890s; Trains, Plains, and Grover Cleveland?!?

Week 1: Post Civil War America. Closing the western frontier, building the Transcontinental Railroad, and the birth of truly national corporations.

Week 2: Who were the Robber Barons? We'll discuss key individuals including Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt. The corporations they built became focal points for both the successes and failures of the American Dream.

Week 3: With the expansion of national industry, relations between labor and capital became strained in the 1890s. We will discuss the growth of corporations, the first attempts at unionization, the growth of anarchist and socialist ideas, and the governmental responses to these issues.

Week 4: In the late 1800s the United States became an active participant in global affairs. We will discuss American intervention in Hawaii, The Spanish American War, and the growing U.S. involvement in the Panama Canal.

Week 5: The creation of the People's Party (Populists) in the early 1890s led the way to a national debate on whether government should support the "haves" or the "have nots." Or whether government should have any role in economic affairs at all. This week we will discuss the Populist movement in detail and explain how the Presidential election of 1896 permanently affected the United States.