

FYS 100  
Entrepreneurship in Commerce, Philanthropy, and Politics  
Spring 2005

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Grading: Attendance 10%, Class Participation 20%, Weekly Essays 40%, Final Paper 30%

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First Year Seminar Proposal  
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1. Title & Description

*Entrepreneurship in Commerce, Philanthropy, and Politics*

“Entrepreneur” comes from the French *entreprendre*, to undertake, dare, or venture. In economics the term usually designates a person who as owner-manager of a business enterprise invests their wealth with the risk of profit or loss. Entrepreneurs provide the creative energy that supports growing income and wealth. More generally, and in the context of philanthropy and politics, the term entrepreneur is used for the role of one who marshals people and resources behind a creative vision. This seminar uses American history of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to examine the social consequences of entrepreneurship in commerce, philanthropy, and politics.

2. Goals

The primary goal is to help students develop skills in oral and written analysis, i.e., dealing in a thorough and disciplined manner with ideas. To this end both class discussion and writing will be important elements of their work. For students who are uncomfortable talking in class, this will be an opportunity to increase their level of comfort. For those at the other extreme, talking a lot without saying much, this will be an opportunity to improve the quality of their comments. We will work to improve both the style and content of students’ writing, with an emphasis on writing to develop an argument.

3. Content

The analytical themes of the course will be discovering the substance of entrepreneurial activity and its social consequences. Reading assignments will include historical accounts of business, philanthropy, and politics in late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and periodical literature from the period. A sample of the kinds of materials I have in mind includes J.R.T. Hughes, *The Vital Few: The Entrepreneur and American Economic Progress*,

Oxford University Press, 1986; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, Harvard University Press, 1998; Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917*, University of Chicago Press, 1999; Bruce J. Evensen, *God's Man for the Gilded Age: D.L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism*, Oxford University Press, 2003, Gene Adair, *Thomas Alva Edison: Inventing the Electric Age*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

#### 4. Format

The course will be a seminar. I will not lecture, but will pose questions to prompt discussion among the students. Students will be expected to read assignments in preparation for each meeting, and to come to class prepared to summarize and evaluate the readings. Students will write regularly: briefs for class discussion, summaries and reactions to readings, and several papers on topics I will assign.