The Progressive Era Photography Project

The Progressive Era was filled with pockets of grass-roots coalitions that mounted reform movements on the local, state and national fronts by lobbying for policies that would correct political, economic and social inequities. By allowing individuals to initiate and petition for these reforms, it expanded the democratic process for many, but it also increased the people’s dependence on the federal government to solve problems. This expansion of the government’s responsibilities along with their ability to make long-term systemic changes enabled them to extend their power during another national crisis- The Great Depression.

Photography emerged as a form of technology, communication and art during the mid-1800s. By the start of the1900’s there were thousands of photographers that captured different events, which depicted various lifestyles in the United States. Photography brings history to life; therefore it is an important part of the study of the American experience during the 19th and 20th centuries. Thousands of photographs, which are available from the Progressive Era, characterize the time by featuring reactions to the great changes that occurred in America during the late 19th century due to industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. In the last few years, many photographs have been digitized, which allows people to access them online. Over the new couple of days, we will examine photographs that exist on the Internet and analyze them for their historical significance.

TASK #1

Given; access to digital media and guidelines, students will examine databases, archives, websites, and collections to identify and analyze photographs. Students will then create an exhibit of photographs that touch on at least three major themes of the Progressive Era.

Use the following website <http://www.edc.org/CCT/PMA/>. This website features some exercises that will help you to learn how to analyze photographs. Click on “Image Detective” on this page and look for on the bubble that says “See How a Scholar Investigates an Image,” then click on it to begin. After you have seen how a scholar examines a photograph, go back to the main page for “Image Detective” and click on any picture to begin. Look at a photograph, pose a question about what is going on in the picture, gather clues, examine background information and draw a conclusion. Complete this for at least 4 different pictures on the “Image Detective” main page.

Assignment #1 Please summarize what you learned about your 4 different photographs below.

Photo #1

Photo #2

Photo #3

Photo #4

Analyze the photographs to explain what they have to tell about the Progressive Era and prepare the exhibit to be used during class with the use of digital media.

TASK #2

Now with an understanding of the ways in which historians analyze historical photographs to learn about the past, it is time for you to do the same thing. Begin by exploring online photography resources (websites are listed below), to see what types of photographs are available. You will then describe what you have seen on the next page.

Websites:

The Triangle Factory Fire:

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma01/davis/photography/slideshows/slideshows.html>

Touring America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/touring/index.html>

Lewis W. Hine Child Labor Photographs:

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/index.html>

<http://education.eastmanhouse.org/discover/kits/kit.php?id=8>

Votes for Women: Suffrage Pictures:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/vfwhtml/vfwhome.html>

Photographs from the Chicago Daily News:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/ichihtml/cdnhome.html>

Jacob Riis:

<http://www.masters-of-photography.com/R/riis/riis_articles1.html>

Lower East Side Tenement Museum:

<http://www.tenement.org/research.html>

Photographs of the Progressive Era:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/progress/autos/>

American Photographs: The First Century

<http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/helios/amerphotos.html>

Photography and Social Reform:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/davis/photography/reform/progressive_era.html>

American Memory Project:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

Museum of Fine Arts:

<http://educators.mfa.org/galleries/slideshow/2268>

Assignment #2

Make a detailed list of the websites you visit (must visit a minimum of 4 websites) and describe the types of images that you discovered. To complete the list; include the title of each site, the theme of each site and provide a detailed summary of the photographs that were investigated.

1.       Website #1

                Theme of the collection:

                Describe the images:

2.       Website #2

                Theme of the collection:

                Describe the images:

 3.       Website #3

                Theme of the collection:

                Describe the images:

4.       Website #4

                Theme of the collection:

                Describe the images:

TASK #3

After reviewing all of the websites listed, choose 5 of your favorite photographs from the Progressive Era and analyze those photographs the the use of the method initially learned in this project. The photographs you select must represent at least 2 of the themes of the Progressive Era listed below:

Progressive Era Themes

A.      Corporations and Labor: Child labor, unions, worker and consumer protection, Triangle Fire, The Jungle, etc.

B.      Urbanization and Immigration: Growth of cities, nativism, and settlement houses, etc.

C.      Women’s Rights: Birth control movement, suffragettes, changing role of women in society.

D.      Progressive Reformers: Politicians, muckrakers, crusaders.

E.       Political changes: Votes for women, government reforms, progressive political interventions.

F.       Temperance/Prohibition: Moderation or banning of alcohol.

G.      You may also select a theme of your own choosing-- consider: conservation, social welfare, tariffs, anti-trust action, youth reform, socialism.

While you look for 5 photographs, keep in mind that the objective is to locate photographs that telll a story. Look for photographs that raise questions in your mind with regards to the premise of the picture, the people in the picture, and what the image represents.

You should save the links to your photographs by copying and pasting them onto a Microsoft Word document. You may choose to find 5 photographs and then analyze the pictures OR select and analyze photographs one at a time. Follow the steps learned on the Picturing Modern America site: <http://www.edc.org/CCT/PMA/>

PROCESS FOR ANALYZING A PHOTOGRAPH

1)       Form a question about the image.

2)       Gather clues about what is going on in the image.

3)       Use information to analyze what is going on in the image.

4)       Draw a conclusion about the image.

ASSIGNMENT #3

After you have analyzed your images, create a PowerPoint slide show of your images. Each slide show must have the following features:

Slide 1: Title Page with your name.

Slide 2: A summary in your own words that define the Progressive Era.

Slides 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7:  The selected images and a detailed analysis of the image you found. The analysis must be based upon following the four steps from Picturing Modern America and must describe which theme of the Progressive Era the image represents. Include the web address of the photograph so that I will know where you got it from.

ASSIGNMENT #4

Critical Thinking:

1) Define the Progressive Era.

2) Explain the most important success of the Progressive Era.

3) Explain the most significant failure or flaw of the Progressive Era.

4) Describe a political, social, or cultural movement today that would be defined as “progressive”.