

A SPLENDID LITTLE CENTENNIAL: REMEMBERING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

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Historians will soon confront another centennial as the United States nears 1998. The Spanish-American War Centennial will not receive the same adulation as the Civil War Centennial or the American Bicentennial. However, the Spanish-American War was a turning point in American history and its anniversary provides high school and college teachers the opportunity to look at numerous topics which moved America closer to being a world power. The history and social science faculty at Emporia State is conducting a "Teachers Weekend Workshop" for secondary teachers on Saturday and Sunday, September 27-28, in Emporia, and a one day session on the following Saturday, October 4, in nearby Iola, the home of General Frederick Funston. The workshop is being designed to prepare them to use the interest invoked by the centennial during 1998 in their teaching.¹

Rather than focusing solely on military, diplomatic, and political history, we plan to delineate the cultural and social forces of the age which made the conflict unique. We are planning a multidisciplinary program which may also attract teachers in other disciplines, particularly language arts and journalism. We plan to utilize history colleagues and those in English, journalism, and political science, as well as professionals from state and federal agencies, to provide the core of instruction.

Students will probe such issues of the 1890s as the birth of modern journalism, the rise of a loyal, yet determined, antiwar movement, the reform impulse combined with immigration restriction, Jim Crow and racial injustice, imperialism and the acquisition of Hawaii, war and disease, the rise of American women and organized labor, as well as the diplomatic, military, and political history of the war.

Americanists, Europeanists, and historians of the Third World can place the conflict into a global setting by denoting the impact of the *Fin-de-Siecle*, which rejected progress and liberalism, and presented a sense of coming doom for many in industrialized societies. (This course, along with other Gilded Age topics, might be adapted to an "end of a century" class comparing the late 1890s to the late 1990s.)

Once, Kansans recalled with pride the exploits of Frederick Funston and the state's four volunteer regiments, two of which were Black, that served during the war. Funston was so famous that only his untimely death in 1917 kept him from commanding the American troops in World War I. The second weekend at the local historical society in Iola, Kansas, where his home is preserved, will focus on Kansans in the war and on the kinds of resources teachers may find in their local counties.

¹Readers may contact the author for a syllabus or further information at Box 4032, ESU, Emporia, KS 66801 or via e-mail: <lovettch@esumail.emporia.edu>.

The use of primary sources in county and state historical societies provide teachers the opportunity to compare, for instance, the media of a hundred years ago with the news outlets of today. Diaries, letters, and journals also offer glimpses into the cultural and social milieu of the Spanish-American War. Advertisements, campaign buttons, and postcards offer teachers the chance to compare the popular culture of the two eras as well.

In an era of increased budget austerity, we hope to keep university and student expenses low. We plan to encourage early enrollment and furnish a recommended reading list, as well as helpful web site information, that allow teachers to be prepared for the program's activities before they arrive. Teachers taking the class for two hours credit will develop teaching units which will be edited and made available to other participants.

By using the immersion technique, students and teachers can be exposed to myriad themes without losing their focus during the workshop. Fifty-minute sessions, with a ten-minute break between, preserves the flow of the course and sustains the interest of the participants. A group lunch or dinner affords the planners the opportunity to bolster their program by inviting a distinguished professor to give an address on a topic relating to the war. A film session in the early evening will encourage teachers to utilize such documentaries as *The Splendid Little War* and *The American Experience: Hawaii's Last Queen* to reinforce the day's scholarly activities.

Select Bibliography

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Web Sites

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