

HIST3617 Lecture 1

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Section 1

Lecture 1

1.1 Intro: What is history?

- The study of change over time
- **Presentism** - reading the values of the present back into the past
- **Interpretation** - (how, what, when, why), not the same as condoning an event or an individual's actions
- Understanding how the holocaust, trans atlantic slavery, or indigenous depression worked is not the same as excusing or condoning them
- **Historiography** - How historians do history

"The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there" - L.P Hartley

1.2 Key terms L1

- Urban biography
- Georg Simmel
- How the other half lives
- Suburbs

1.3 Urbanization

1.3.1 Urbanization in the United States

- The main key to modern history is **urbanization**; transitioning from a rural country to an urban metropolis
- In the early 1900s, most Americans lived in what is called **island communities**
 - Mostly rural communities, homogenous demographic
 - Most people living here are protestant christian
 - All English speaking
 - Conservative
 - All deaths in population happen within 20 miles
 - These new cities were clustered in the northeastern corner of the US

1.3.2 Mass immigration

Most immigration to the US came from:

- Germany
- Ireland (due to the potato famine)
- Scandinavia
- UK

The lower east side of NYC was the most congested area in the early 1900s. It was common for 20 to 30 people to live in one apartment.

Other dense cities of the time include:

- Chicago (an outpost during the American civil war, known as the **White City**)
- Detroit
- in this context, **native** \neq **indigenous**

1.3.3 The notion of time

"The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" - G. Simmel 1903

- Capitalism leads to the standardization of time (creation of clocks and time zones rather than primitive measures like the sun or tides)

1.3.4 Urban Leisure Spheres

- Urbanization brings people together to form groups like sports teams, clubs, businesses, etc.
- Professionalization comes to urbanization relative to capital available
- Emergence of gender integrated spaces like dance halls
- *Nickelodeon* was a term for short and cheap films watched in a theater (for a nickel)

1.3.5 How the other half lives

- Immigrants were known as the "other half"
- More like the other three quarters
- In a capitalist society, the poor live in densely populated slums
- Race and gender mixing was common and was not seen as acceptable

1.3.6 Aspects of the urban crisis

- Emergence of densely populated slums
- Lack of socioeconomical and transportation infrastructure
- Rampant poverty

1.3.7 Emergence of public transit

- NYC subway opened in 1904
- It operated on a **flat fare system**. Pay one fare and go as far as you want. Contrary to the European system where you pay by distance (like GO transit)
- Lowers transportation and real estate costs.
- **Streetcar suburbs** existed back in the day. These were neighbourhoods with no driveways where a tram would run through.