CHAPTER 20: Teddy Roosevelt and the Modern Presidency
Objectives:

- We will examine the guiding ideology, domestic interests, and foreign entanglements of Theodore Roosevelt's administration
Psa_99:4  The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
The Accidental President:

- When President William McKinley suddenly died in September 1901, the victim of an assassination.
- Roosevelt (who had been elected vice president less than a year before) was only forty-two years old, the youngest man to ever assume the presidency.
Government, Capital, and Labor:

- Roosevelt allied himself with those progressives who urged regulation (but no destruction) of the trusts.
- At the heart of Roosevelt’s policy was his desire to win for government the power to investigate the activities of corporations and publicize the results.
Government, Capital, and Labor:

- A similar commitment to establishing the government as an impartial regulatory mechanism shaped Roosevelt’s policy toward labor.
- In the past, federal intervention in industrial disputes had almost always meant action on behalf of employers.
- Roosevelt was willing to consider labor’s position as well.
Government, Capital, and Labor:

- When a bitter 1902 strike by the United Mine Workers endangers coal supplies for the coming winter, Roosevelt asked both the operators and the miners to accept impartial federal arbitration.
- When the mine owners balked, Roosevelt threatened to send federal troops to seize the mines.
Government, Capital, and Labor:

- The operators finally relented, arbitrators awarded the strikers a 10 percent wage increase, a nine-hour work day.
- Although no recognition of their union
- Less than they had wanted but more than they would likely have won without Roosevelt’s intervention.
The Square Deal:

- During Roosevelt’s first years as president, he was principally concerned with winning reelection, which required that he not antagonize the conservative Republican Old Guard.

- He skillfully appeased both conservatives and progressives alike.
During the 1904 campaign, Roosevelt boasted that he had worked in the anthracite coal strike to provide everyone with a square deal.

One of his first targets after the election was the powerful railroad industry.
The Square Deal:

- The Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 established the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) and had been an early effort to regulate the industry; but over the years the courts had sharply limited its influence.
- Roosevelt asked Congress for legislation to increase the government’s power to oversee railroad rates.
The Square Deal:

- The Hepburn Railroad Regulation Act of 1906 sought to restore some regulatory authority to the government, although the bill was so cautious that it satisfied few progressives.
The Square Deal:

- Roosevelt also pressured Congress to enact the Pure Food Act which restricted the sale of dangerous or ineffective medicines.
- When Upton Sinclair novel *Jungle* appeared in 1906 featuring appalling descriptions of the conditions of the meat packing industry.
- Roosevelt pushed for passage of the Meat Inspection Act, which helped eliminate many diseases once transmitted in impure meat.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Roosevelt’s aggressive policies on behalf of conservation contributed to a gulf between him and conservatives.
- Using executive powers, he restricted private development on millions of acres of undeveloped government land.
- Most of it in the West by adding them to the previous modest national forest system.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, seized all the forests and many of the water power sites still in the public domain before the bill became law.
- Roosevelt was the first president to take an active interest in the new and struggling American Conservation movement.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Pinchot became the first director of the National Forest Service which he helped to create; promoted policies to protect land for carefully managed development.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Roosevelt also promoted public reclamation and irrigation projects.
- In 1902, the president backed the national Reclamation Act, better known as the Newlands Act (named for its sponsor, Nevada senator, Francis Newlands).
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- The Newland act provided federal funds for the construction of dams, reservoirs, and canals in the West-projects that would open new lands for cultivation and years later provide cheap electric power.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Roosevelt also spent time with John Muir, the nation’s leading preservationist and founder of the Sierra Club and sought to protect the natural beauty of the land and the health of its wildlife from human intrusion.
Roosevelt and Conservation:

- Congress created the national parks system, whose purpose was to protect public land from the exploitation or development.
- Roosevelt created new parks in such places like Crater Lake, Oregon.
The Hetch Hetchy Valley Controversy:

- The Hetch Hetchy was a spectacular high-walled valley within Yosemite National Park.
- But with the growing population of San Francisco and the growing demand for water, the site was thought of an ideal place for a dam that would create a large reservoir for the city.
The Hetch Hetchy Valley Controversy:

- In 1906, San Francisco suffered a devastating earthquake and fire and there was sympathy for the city strengthened the case for the dam;
- Theodore Roosevelt, who had initially expressed some sympathy for Muir’s position-turned the decision over to his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot.
The Hetch Hetchy Valley Controversy:

- Pinchot had no interest in Muir’s aesthetic and spiritual arguments.
- He approved construction of the dam.
- For over a decade, a battle raged between naturalists and the advocates of the dam.
- A battle that consumed the energies of John Muir.
- Who devoted his last years of his life to oppose a dam at Hetch Hetchy.
The Hetch Hetchy Valley Controversy:

- However in 1908, by a wide margin, San Francisco voters approved building a dam at Hech Hetchy and construction finally began after World War I.
- This setback of the naturalists was not, however a total defeat.
- The fight against Hetch Hetchy helped mobilize a new coalition of people committed to preservation not rational use of it.
Leaving the Presidency:

- Roosevelt loved being president.
- As his years in office produced increasing political successes, as his public popularity continued to rise.
- More and more observers began to assume that he would run for reelection in 1908, despite the longstanding tradition of presidents serving no more than two terms.
But the Panic of 1907 combined with Roosevelt’s growing radicalism during his second term so alienated conservatives in his own party that he might have had difficulty winning the Republican nomination.
Leaving the Presidency:

- In 1904, he had made a public promise to step down four years later.
- And so in 1909, Roosevelt, fifty years old, retired from public life, briefly.