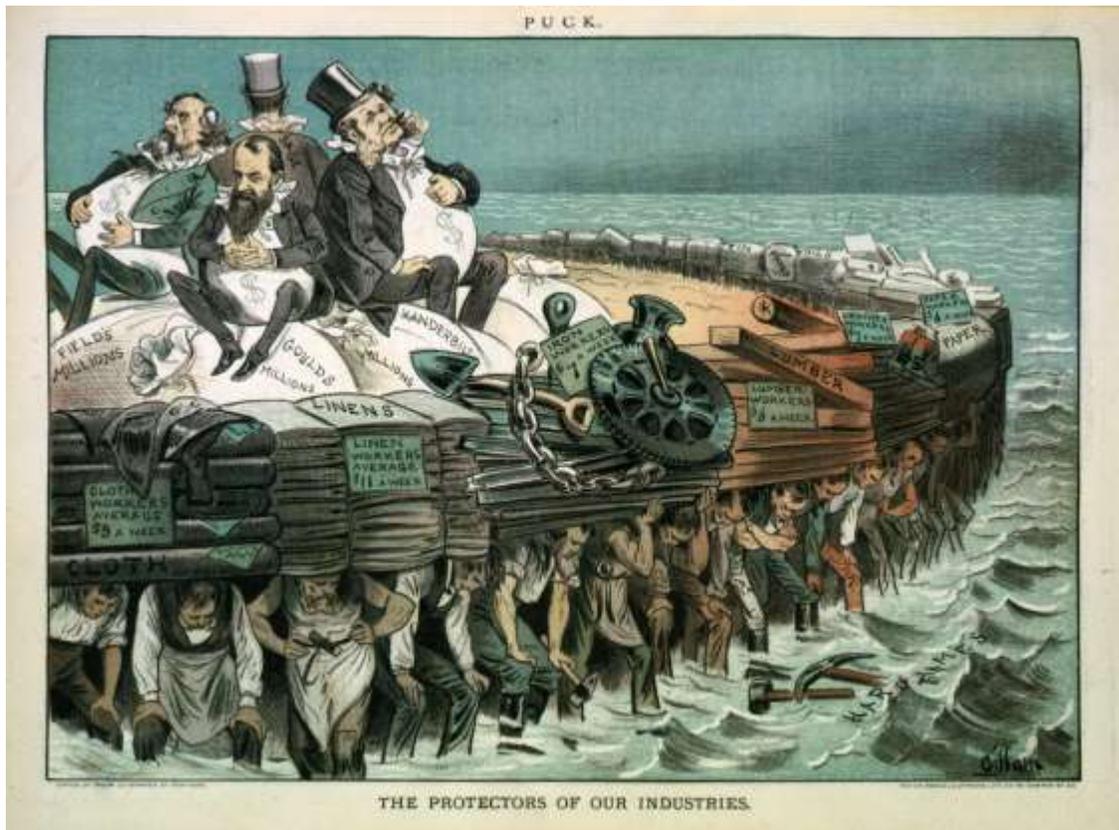


ENGL 462: American Realism and Naturalism

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“The Protectors of Our Industries,” *Puck*, 7 February 1883

The cultural shocks of the late-nineteenth-century period initiated a series of divergent revolutions in writing and literary production. Authors of this era describe unprecedented economic inequality, urbanization and overcrowding; federal withdrawal from the South and the rise of Jim Crow; continued Westward expansionism and the development of American imperialism; the emerging visibility of women workers; and scientific and pseudoscientific discourses arising in the wake of Darwin. Each of the works we will read together examines the influences of environment, race, heredity, and gender on individual development. Gertrude Bonnin, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, and Helen Hunt Jackson protest U.S. expansion and its depredations upon indigenous and non-Anglo cultures. Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, and Theodore Dreiser explore the conflicts of their own society through depictions of characters who most embody its values. W.E.B. DuBois, Jacob Riis, Louisa May Alcott, and Charles W. Chesnutt present writing as a form of activism; Abraham Cahan and Sui Sin Far describe the cultural erasure involved in “Americanization” as they help develop the genre known as the immigrant novel. This period is strangely resonant with our own, and while we’ll explore those parallels, we’ll also emphasize the ways that these writers need to be understood on their own terms. Students will be evaluated on a 12-14 page researched final paper and a series of shorter informal responses.