



Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science, 1865-1905

Mary O. Furner

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This award-winning book of the Frederick Jackson Turner Studies describes the early development of social science professions in the United States. Furner traces the academic process in economics, sociology, and political science. She devotes considerable attention to economics in the 1880s, when first-generation professionals wrestled with the enormously difficult social questions associated with industrialization. Controversies among economists reflected an endemic tension in social science between the necessity of being recognized as objective scientists and an intense desire to advocate reforms.

Molded by internal conflicts and external pressures, social science gradually changed. In the 1890s economics was defined more narrowly around market concerns. Both reformers and students of social dynamics gravitated to the emerging discipline of sociology, while political science professionalized around the important new field of public administration. This division of social science into specialized disciplines was especially significant as progressivism opened paths to power and influence for social science experts.

Professionalization profoundly altered the role and contribution of social scientists in American life. Since the late nineteenth century, professionals have exerted increasing control over complex economic and social processes, often performing services that they themselves have helped to make essential. Furner here seeks to discover how emerging groups of American social scientists envisioned their role what rights and responsibilities they claimed how they hoped to perform a vital social function as they fulfilled their own ambitions, and what restraints they recognized.

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