American Imperialism and the Spanish-American War
American Expansionism

- **Imperialism** - policy in which stronger nations extend their economic, political, or military control over weaker territories - was a trend around the world.

American imperialism was fueled by

1. **Desire for military strength** - Alfred T. Mahan an admiral in the U.S. Navy wrote *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890) in which he argued that the country with the best navy would control the world. U.S. built 9 steel hulled cruisers and transformed itself into the third largest navy in the world.


3. **Belief in cultural superiority** - Americans used a combination of Social Darwinism and racial superiority to justify imperialism. Many believed that the US had the responsibility to “civilize” and “Christianize” others.
U.S. Navy Force that operated in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Spanish West Indies in 1898
The United States Acquires Alaska

- **William Seward** – Served as Secretary of State under Presidents Lincoln and Johnson
- In 1867 he arranged for the purchase of **Alaska** from **Russia** for $7.2 million
  - Had trouble convincing House of Representatives to fund purchase
  - Alaska called “Seward’s Icebox,” “**Seward’s Folly**”
  - Alaska rich in timber, minerals, and oil
- Arranged for the U.S. to buy the Virgin Islands from Denmark (Didn't actually occur until 1917)
- Also wanted to add the Hawaiian Islands
The Annexation of Hawaii

- Early 1800's - Christian missionaries moved to Hawaii to convert the people
  - Missionaries founded schools and churches on islands
  - Became wealthy sugar and pineapple planters and eventually controlled the government (owned 75% of islands’ wealth)
- In 1875, the US agreed to import sugar from Hawaii duty free but McKinley Tariff of 1890 eliminated Hawaii’s duty free status – American planters called for annexation
- 1887, US pressures Hawaii to allow naval base at Pearl Harbor (became refueling station)
- 1891 - Queen Liliuokalani came to power and wanted to regain control of the island
  - Tried to remove landowning requirement for voting, “Hawaii for Hawaiians”
• Planters called the US government for help - U.S. sent marines and overthrew Queen
• Set up an independent republic - Sanford Dole named president
• Hawaii asked to be annexed by the U.S.
  - President Grover Cleveland didn't want to annex it and could not make Dole surrender power to queen
  - U.S. recognized Republic of Hawaii
• 1898 – Hawaii was annexed following the Spanish-American War
• Hawaii became the 50th state in 1959.
Queen Liliuokalani
American Interest in Cuba

• The U.S. had always had an interest in Cuba which is only 90 miles away.
• In 1854, President Pierce wanted to buy Cuba from Spain but Spain refused.
• Cubans rebelled against Spain between 1868 and 1878 but failed.
• A second war for independence erupted in 1895 led by Cuban poet and journalist Jose Marti “Cuba Libre!”
• Marti employed guerrilla tactics and deliberately destroyed property; the U.S. did not get involved.
• Spain responded to the revolt by sending General Valeranio Weyler to restore order - he put 300,000 Cubans in reconcentration camps where thousands died from disease and hunger.
Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park, Diego Rivera (1947)

Jose Martí, Jorge Arche (1943)
War Fever Escalated

- **Yellow Journalism** emerges in the U.S. - a sensational style of writing, which exaggerated the news to lure and enrage readers. It’s created by American newspaper tycoons William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer.
- In February of 1898, the New York Journal published a private letter by De Lome a Spanish minister in the U.S. in which he called President McKinley “weak” - the minister resigned and Spain apologized but Americans wanted war.
- In early 1989, President McKinley had ordered the U.S.S. Maine to Cuba to bring back American citizens - on February 15 the ship exploded, killing 260 men. “Remember the Maine”
- On April 20, 1898, the US declared war.
“You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war”
William Randolph Hearst
War with Spain

The Philippines

- Spain thought U.S. would invade Cuba but the first battle took place in the Philippines on April 30, 1898.
- **Commodore George Dewey** was ordered to defeat the Spanish fleet in Manila, the Philippine capital.
- It only took a few hours for Dewey’s men to destroy every Spanish ship.
- Over the next two months, 11,000 Americans joined forces with Filipino rebels led by **Emiliano Aguinaldo** to defeat the Spanish.
- Filipinos wanted freedom from the Spanish.
Cuba

- 125,000 Americans volunteered to fight - they were poorly trained, lacked supplies, and lacked effective leaders.
- Landed in Cuba in June 1898 with 17,000 men including four African-American regiments and the Rough Riders - a volunteer cavalry led by Leonard Wood and Theodore Roosevelt.
- The most famous battle happened in San Juan Hill on July 1, 1898 which was strategically important to the Spanish - Roosevelt played a minor role but was declared a hero.
- The Spanish fleet was subsequently destroyed and American troops invaded Puerto Rico.
Treaty of Paris

- War lasted 15 weeks, called “splendid little war” by Secretary of State John Hay.

- Terms of the treaty -
  1. Cuba was freed
  3. Spain sold the Philippines to the U.S. for $20 million.

- President McKinley justified buying the Philippines by saying that the U.S. would educate and christianize the Filipino people (only problem is that they had already been christianized by the Spanish)

- Some Americans believed that the treaty violated the Declaration of Independence by denying self-government.

- African-American educator Booker T. Washington argued that the U.S. should settle race relations at home before taking on social issues elsewhere and labor leader Samuel Gompers feared that Filipino immigrants would compete for American jobs.

- The treaty was ratified on February 2, 1899.