History 131/Literature 130
The History and Literature of the Great Depression
Spring 2006 – Inaugural Year – U.C. Merced
MonWed 3:30-4:50

Instructors: Professor Jan Goggans, Professor Sean Malloy
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Office Hours: Wednesday, 12 – 1
Individually available on request
Course Website: Available via UCMCROPS

Course Description

The period from 1929 to 1941 marks one of the most extraordinary times in American history, and the arts. The government’s response to the economic turmoil of the Great Depression was, along with the host of economic programs it established, to fund a multitude of public arts programs designed to remind American citizens close to being overwhelmed by “hard times,” that there was, indeed, something remarkable about being American. Literature, theatre, photography, music – all flourished under the patronage of FDR and the New Deal.

The American people themselves responded in strikingly divergent ways to the multiple challenges posed by the Great Depression. While the 1930s are traditionally portrayed as the decade of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, they were also the decade of California socialist Upton Sinclair, union stalwart John L. Lewis, radical writer Richard Wright, and arch-isolationist Charles Lindbergh. As these larger-than-life figures jostled for position on the national stage, millions of ordinary Americans struggled to find work or put food on the table.

In this course we will examine the multiple responses of the American people and their leaders to the crises of the 1930s. Students will read a wide variety of literary responses to the Depression as well as primary source historical documents. We will discuss these texts in class with an eye toward developing a better understanding of the way Americans thought and argued about the pressing issues of the day. We will also consider how the controversies of the 1930s helped to shape modern America and continue to linger in contemporary life.

Course Materials

Required books:

Dashiell Hammet, Red Harvest
Josephine Johnson, Now In November
John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle
Dalton Trumbo, Johnny Got His Gun
Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion
Zora Neal Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
Online reader: Some readings, audio files, and linked websites have been placed online and are available at our UCMCROPS website in the “Resources” folder grouped by week. Please print out these readings and bring them to your section for easy reference during discussion.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grading breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper (2-4 pages)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due in class February 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>February 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentary project</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Due in class on April 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (10-12 pages)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Due in class on May 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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For general guidelines with respect to grading criteria (e.g. “What is an A paper?”), please consult the following reference:
www.newhum.com/for_teachers/grading_criteria/suggested_grading_criteria.html

Written assignments turned in up to 24 hours late will receive a 1/3 grade reduction (e.g. an A would become an A-). Work turned in between 24-72 hours late will be lowered a full grade except in cases of serious illness or emergency. Any work turned in after 72 hours late will not be accepted and will count as an F. Exams must be taken at the scheduled times.

Special Needs

I welcome students with learning or other disabilities into this class. I encourage you to speak to me and to Special Student Services (107 Kolligan Library) about your situation as soon as possible so that we can figure out the best way to promote your success in this course.

Academic Honesty

Students and professors are governed by the Interim Academic Honesty Policy, which is available at the Students First Center at Kolligan Library. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses which in some cases may be grounds for suspension or dismissal. Basic guidelines to avoid these problems are outlined below, but if you are in any doubt, please consult the instructor or your Teaching Assistant.

Plagiarism in written work (such as the two assigned papers) is not always easy to define. As a simple guideline, if you submit your own work, you will avoid all serious types of plagiarism. If you use a direct quotation or borrow an interpretive idea from another work, you must cite it. If you paraphrase another document, you must cite it. The basic standard: If you use any idea that did not originate in our own mind, you must cite it. For information about original work,
Week 1: Introduction to the History and Literature of the 1930s

January 18: Introduction to the Course

Week 2: American in the “Roaring Twenties”

January 23: Middletown, USA

Reading:
Watkins, *The Hungry Years*, 5-33

January 25: Poisonville

Reading:
Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest*

Week 3: The Great Crash and the Great Depression

January 30: Crash!

Readings:
Watkins, *The Hungry Years*, 37-103 (skim)

February 1: Adrift in the Great Depression

Reading:
Lorena Hickok to Harry Hopkins, September 3, 1933.
Excerpts from John dos Passos *U.S.A.* trilogy, 443-458.

Audio:

**Week 4: FDR and the New Deal**

**February 6: FDR and the First 100 Days**

Readings:
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, acceptance speech, July 2, 1932
- Herbert Hoover, “Address at the Coliseum in Des Moines, Iowa, October 4, 1932
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Outlining the New Deal Program,” May 7, 1933

Audio:
- Herbert Hoover, campaign address, 1932. [1:52]


**February 8: America Responds to the New Deal**

Readings:
- Anne O’Hare McCormick, “This America: A Re-Discovery,” September 1934.

*Short Paper Due in Class*

**Week 5: The Dust Bowl**

**February 13: Literary Perspectives on the Dust Bowl**

Reading:
- Josephine Johnson, *Now In November*

**February 15: A New Deal for Farmers?**

Reading:
- Watkins, *The Hungry Years*, 339-391

**Week 6**

**February 20: President’s Day Holiday – NO CLASS**

**February 22: American Exodus**
Reading:

Film: “The Plow That Broke the Plains,” 1936

**Week 7**

**February 27: California Dreamin’**

Reading:

Film: “California Election News #1 and #2,” 1936.

**March 1: MIDTERM**

**Week 8: Labor in the 1930s: Urban Industrial Workers**

**March 6: The SF Waterfront Strike**

Reading:

**March 8: Industrial Workers in Chicago**

Reading:

**Week 9: Labor in the 1930s: Agricultural Workers**

**March 13: Agricultural Strike Background**

Reading:

**March 15: In Dubious Battle**
Week 10: Arts in the 1930s

March 20: Federal Art

Reading:

Arshile Gorky, “My Murals for the Newark Airport.”
Beniamino Benvenuto Bufano, “For the Present We Are Busy.”


March 22: Federal Theater Project

Reading:

Hallie Flanagan, “Is This the Time and Place?” October 5, 1935. [8]
http://newdeal.feri.org/ftp/ftp001.htm
http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/868.htm

Film: One Third of a Nation

Week 11: Spring Break

NO CLASS

Week 12: Race and the American South

April 3: To Kill A Mockingbird

Reading:

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird.

April 5: To Kill A Mockingbird (film)

Week 13: Jim Crow in the Great Depression
April 10: The Jim Crow South

Readings:
http://newdeal.feri.org/aaccc/aaccc01.htm
American slave narratives (select one from the New Deal Network site)

Audio:

April 12: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Reading:
Zora Neal Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 14: Public Works in the 1930s

April 17: Woody Guthrie and Grand Coulee Dam

Reading:
Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory*

April 19: The TVA and the Boulder Dam (AKA the Hoover Dam)

Reading:
George C. Stoney, A Valley to Hold To,” July 1940.
Andrew J. Dunar and Dennis McBride, eds., *Building Hoover Dam*, 57-83.

Week 15: The War At Home

April 24: Gender and Family in the Great Depression
Reading:
Sarah Berry, *Screen Style*, 1-94
Meridel Lesueur, “Women on the Breadlines,” *New Masses*, January 1932, 5-7

April 26: Johnny Got his Gun

Reading:
Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*

**Week 16: Isolationists and Internationalists**

May 1: *War Comes to America* (film)

Reading:
Peter C. Rollins, “Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* Film Series and Our American Dream.”

May 3: The Great Debate

Reading:
Address by Charles A. Lindbergh, April 23, 1941, America First Committee pamphlet.
America First Committee Principles, n.d. [circa 1940-41].
Henry L. Stimson Diary, December 7, 1941. [4]

Audio:
Charles Lindbergh, address on American neutrality, September 11, 1941. [9:15]

**Week 17: America on the Eve of War**

May 8: The New Deal Legacy

Reading:
Franklin D. Roosevelt, Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1937.
May 10: Conclusion
The Great Depression had many causes. In fact, economists still debate over all the factors that led to the crisis. The following are some of the most important causes. Even though Americans faced one of the greatest challenges in our nation’s history during the 1930s, they were able to produce art and entertainment to raise everyone’s spirits. Radio became a central aspect of many people’s home lives. They could listen for free to comedy shows like Amos ‘n’ Andy and The Jack Benny Show. The Great Depression was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 to 1939. It began after the stock market crash of October 1929, which sent Wall Street into a panic and wiped out millions of investors. Over the next several years, consumer spending and investment dropped, causing steep declines in industrial output and employment as failing companies laid off workers. By 1933, when the Great Depression reached its lowest point, some 15 million Americans were unemployed and nearly half the country’s banks had failed.

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