

Depression-Era United States

*History 411
The Junior Seminar
Professor Jacqueline Dirks*

Junior
Seminar
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Class Syllabus

Professor and Class Info
Course Deadlines

Weeks:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,
8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Jacqueline Dirks HIST 411 Fall 2000
Office: Eliot 214A Tuesdays & Thursdays
ext. 7675 2:30-4:00 p.m.

This course is designed for declared history majors with junior standing, and is limited to those history juniors (or declared American Studies juniors with a history concentration) who have completed two previous courses in history at Reed College.

The Great Depression (1929-1941) was a watershed event of the twentieth century. Students will explore a range of secondary texts and primary documents that focus on key events and different historical approaches to the study of this era. Topics include the expansion of executive power under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the establishment of federal programs and agencies to deal with the effects of the Depression (commonly known as "the New Deal") and the growth of labor unions. We will also examine political and popular culture in this period, including documentary photography produced under the auspices of federal programs, commercial radio, and Hollywood movies.

The main task of students in this seminar is to pay close attention to how the authors employ various sources, including census data, letters and diaries, oral history testimony, social scientific surveys, to support their arguments. The readings, library seminars, Junior Seminar Web site and

tutorial, and my occasional lectures, are meant to prepare students to design and research a topic, compose a selected bibliography and review essay, and write and revise a thirty (30)-page research paper by the end of this term. You will read course material and undertake their own research for the first eight weeks of the course, then spend the remaining weeks writing, revising and presenting your research at different stages. You will be graded on your participation in discussions, bibliography and historiographical review essay, and final paper. Class participation will include serving as editor for one of your classmates' rough drafts, and your short oral presentation on your argument to be scheduled for the final weeks of the course.

Course deadlines:

Friday, September 15 ONE PAGE DESCRIPTION OF PAPER TOPIC DUE

Friday, October 6 HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE (TWO COPIES)

Wednesday, November 15 ROUGH DRAFTS DUE--ONE COPY EACH TO PROFESSOR AND STUDENT EDITORS

Tuesday, November 21 ROUGH DRAFTS, WITH COMMENTS, TO BE RETURNED TO STUDENTS BY ALL EDITORS IN CLASS BY THIS DATE

REVISED FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

Please note that this course is part of the Mellon Library Research Project, which is a collaborative effort between members of the History and Social Sciences faculty and the Reed College Library. This project is designed to familiarize Reed students with library research methods and sources in preparation for thesis research during the senior year. As a part of this project, a series of four workshops on library research have been incorporated into this course, and a web site has been created to assist students in researching and writing the History junior seminar paper. The intent of the project is not to add to the already considerable academic requirements of the History junior seminar, but to help students who are writing the seminar paper to locate and access needed research materials in an effective and timely manner.

Course books (available on library reserve and for purchase at the Reed bookstore):

Ronald Edsforth, *The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression* (2000)

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

(Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton and the New Deal* (University of California Press, 1994)
 Paula Rabinowitz, *They Too Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary* (1994)
 Cheryl Greenberg, "*Or Does It Explode?*": *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (1991)

Week One

Tuesday, August 29

Introductory Lecture: Why Do We Read and Write About History?

Required reading:

Studs Terkel, "A Personal Memoir (and parenthetical comment)" in Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (1970): 3-9 [Book reserve]

Michael A. Bernstein, "Why the Great Depression Was Great: Toward a New Understanding of the Interwar Economic Crisis in the United States," in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton, 1989): 32-54 [Book reserve]

Suggested for further reading:

"The Great Depression," (1993) PBS documentaries (seven parts) [In Reed IMC]

Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (1973)

Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*

John Garraty, *The Great Depression* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1986)

American Social History Project, *Who Built America? Volume Two* (Pantheon, 1992)

Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State* (Belknap/Harvard, 1991)

Robert McElvaine, *The Depression & the New Deal: A History in Documents* (2000)

Origins and Comparisons: Overview of the Period

Thursday, August 31

Begin required reading:

Edsforth, *The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression* (Blackwell, 2000)

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Week Two

September 5

Required reading:

Finish Edsforth, *The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression*

September 7

Required Library Seminar.

Meet in the Library Seminar Room (L221, the second floor room above the entrance to the library) at the regularly scheduled class time. The librarians will provide research strategies to help you define a topic for your research paper.

Week Three

The Rise of Organized Industrial Labor
September 12 & 14

Required reading:

Lizabeth Cohen *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*

ONE PAGE DESCRIPTION OF PAPER TOPIC DUE Friday, September 15

Suggested for further study:

Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (1991)

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Like a Family : Cotton Mill Workers* (1991)

Bernstein, Irving, *A Caring Society : The New Deal, The Worker, and the Great Depression: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1985)

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Week Four

Farm Workers and the Depression

September 19

Required Library Seminar.

Meet in the library computer lab (Room L18, across the hall from the IRCs) at class time.

Begin required reading:

Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton and the New Deal* (University of California Press, 1994)

Suggested for further study:

Donald H. Grubbs, *Cry From the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (University of Arkansas Press, 1971)

Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (Vintage, 1974)

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (1990)

Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)

September 21

Finish Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*

Devra Weber, "Raiz Fuerte: Oral History and Mexicana Farmworkers,"

Vicki Ruiz and Ellen DuBois, eds. *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (Routledge, third ed., 2000): 393-402
[Book reserve]

Week Five

Representing The Thirties: Official Culture

September 26 & 28

Required reading:

Paula Rabinowitz, *They Too Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary*

Introduction, Chapters 2, 3 & 4

Note:

The History Matters Web site <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>

"Under the Magnifying Glass" which features a discussion of the problem of using photographs as historical evidence. This prototype uses Farm Security Administration photos of the 1930s as an example. Students should make sure to look at this site while reading Rabinowitz.

Suggestions for further reading:

Lawrence Levine. "The Historian and the Icon: Photography and the History of the American People in the 1930s & 1940s," in *The Unpredictable Past*

William Stott, *Documentary Expression in Thirties America* (1973)

Maren Stange, *Symbols of Ideal Life*, Chapters 3 and 4 (1990)

Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Culture* (Smithsonian Institution, 1991)

James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Houghton Mifflin, 1939)

Richard Wright and Edwin Rosskam, *12 Million Black Voices* (Viking, 1941)

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Week Six

Women and Gender in the 1930s

October 3

Required reading:

Annelise Orleck, "We Are That Mythical Thing Called the Public': Militant Housewives During the Great Depression," in Ellen DuBois and Vicki Ruiz, eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (Routledge; third edition, 2000):

Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the U.S., 1890-1935" *American Historical Review* 97: 1 (1992):

19-54.

[Note: Students should download this article from JSTOR-see a librarian if you have not yet done this.]

OR Click on this link to find the JStor Database:

http://simeon.library.reed.edu/resources/ejrn1_collections.html

October 5

Required Library Seminar.

Meet in the Library Seminar Room (L221, the second floor room above the entrance to the library) at the regularly scheduled class time.

Suggested for further study:

Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA, 1981)

Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Twayne, 1982)

Lois Scharf, *To Work & To Wed: Female Employment, Feminism & the Great Depression*

Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression: Caste and Color in San Antonio, 1929-1939* (Texas A & M Press, 1984)

Lois Rita Helmbold, "Downward Occupational Mobility During the Great Depression: Urban Black and White Working Women," *Labor History* 29: 2 (Spring 1988): 135-172

Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

Phyllis Palmer, "Outside the Law: Agricultural and Domestic Workers under the Fair Labor Standards Act," *Journal of Policy History* 7 (1995): 416-40.

Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Free Press, 1997), Introduction and Chapters 7-10: 1-13; 183-302.

Alice Kessler-Harris, "Designing Women and Old Fools: The Construction of the Social Security Acts of 1939," in Linda Kerber, et.al. eds., *U.S.*

History as Women's History (1998): 87-106.
 Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy*
 (Cornell University Press, 1998)

Friday, October 6

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE (TWO COPIES)

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Week Seven

Media and Popular Culture in the 1930s: Film and Radio

October 10

Required article:

Lawrence Levine, "American Culture and the Great Depression," in *The Unpredictable Past* (Oxford, 1993): 206-230 [Book reserve]

Required film:

"The Grapes of Wrath" [U.S., 1940. Dir. John Ford. 129 min., b/w. 20th Century Fox.]

[We will screen this outside of class, or students may watch it on their own. Note that the film will be the topic of today's discussion.]

Suggested films:

"City Lights" [U.S., 1931. Dir. Charles Chaplin. 87 min., b/w. United Artists]

"Modern Times" [U.S., 1936. Dir. Charles Chaplin. 85 min., b/w. United Artists]

"Gone With the Wind" [U.S., 1939. Dir. Victor Fleming. 217 min. color, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer]

"Stagecoach" [U.S., 1939. Dir. John Ford. 95 min., b/w. United Artists.]

"Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"

[U.S., 1939. Dir. Frank Capra. 126 min., b/w. Columbia Pictures.]

A fourth, required library seminar will meet on this day, outside of class time. One of the librarians will have looked over copies of your HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY and will provide strategies to help you find additional material.

October 12

Required article:

Margaret McFadden, "'America's Boyfriend Who Can't Get a Date': Gender, Race and the Cultural Work of the Jack Benny Program, 1932-1946," *Journal of American History* 77:1 (September 1990): 596-608.

[Note: Students should download this article from JSTOR.]

Suggested for further study:

Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years* (Wesleyan University Press, 1973)

Warren Susman, "The Culture of the Thirties" and "Culture and Commitment" in

Culture As History (Pantheon, 1984)

Richard Slotkin, "The Studio System, the Depression, and the Eclipse of the Western, 1930-1938," *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Atheneum, 1992)

Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth-Century* (London; New York: Verso, 1996)

Claire Potter, *War on Crime: Bandits, G-Men and the Politics of Mass Culture* (Rutgers U. Press, 1998)

Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race,*

1938-1948 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999)

A third required library seminar will meet this week, outside of class time. One of the librarians will have looked over copies of your HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW ESSAY and will provide strategies to help you find additional material.

FALL BREAK--OCTOBER 14-22

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Week Eight

October 24 & 26

Required reading:

Cheryl Greenberg, "*Or Does It Explode?*": *Black Harlem in the Great Depression*

Suggestions for further reading:

Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (University of Illinois Press, 1983)

Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (1996)

John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights*

Movement in the South (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

Week Nine

Assessing the Depression and New Deal

October 31 & November 2

Required reading:

Alan Brinkley, "Prosperity, Depression and War:, 1920-1945," in Eric Foner, ed.,
The New American History (Temple University Press, 1990): 133-158
 [Book reserve]
 Eric Foner, "The New Deal and the Redefinition of Freedom," in Foner,
The Story of American Freedom (Norton, 1998): 195-218 [Book reserve]

Suggestions for further reading:

Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1960-1980*(1989)
 Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (1995)

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Week Ten

November 7 & 9

CLASS WILL NOT MEET--WORK ON YOUR ROUGH DRAFTS
 (I will hold office hours for Junior Seminar students during the regular course meeting time.)

Week Eleven

November 14 & 16

CLASS WILL NOT MEET--ROUGH DRAFTS DUE WEDNESDAY,
 NOVEMBER 15.

One copy of the paper should be delivered to my office; you are responsible for getting copies to your assigned student editors by November 15. Your required assignment this week is to read and comment on your colleagues' papers.

Friday, November 17 TBA

Professor Linda Gordon of NYU will meet with interested history juniors and seniors.

Week Twelve

Tuesday, November 21

Class will meet--attendance is required--lottery for presentations to be held.

ROUGH DRAFTS, WITH COMMENTS, TO BE RETURNED TO STUDENTS BY ALL EDITORS IN CLASS BY THIS DATE.

Class will not meet on Thursday, November 23--Thanksgiving

Week Thirteen

November 28 & 30

Students (chosen by lottery) will begin presentations of their arguments

Last Class meeting: Tuesday, December 5

Students (chosen by lottery) will finish presentations of their argument

REVISED FINAL PAPERS DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 11

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