

DRAFT - TO BE FINALIZED IN JANUARY 2016

HISTORY 455-601, AMERICAN LIFE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Spring 2016, Wednesday 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

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Office hours: Wednesday before/after class or by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVE: The Great Depression, one of the most cataclysmic events in our history, remains remote to most Americans today. While dimly aware of the more familiar aspects of the period such as unemployment and the Dust Bowl, few are familiar with the era's dynamic social and cultural changes which still resonate eight decades later. This seminar will trace the profound impact of the 1930s on American life, addressing such topics as FDR's New Deal, political challenges from the radical left and right, and the shifting roles of woman and African Americans. We will also examine other significant aspects of everyday life during this era, including Hollywood films, network radio, and popular music.

REQUIRED TEXTS: (available new at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street or you may look into getting used copies at www.bookfinder.com or similar websites):

David Hamilton editor, *The New Deal*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Course reader available from University Readers.com

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REQUIREMENTS: Final grades will be based upon the following:

1. **Class participation** (25%).
2. **Short response paper** (25%).
3. **Research paper** (50%).

Tentative schedule of classes:

NOTE: READINGS TO BE FINALIZED IN JANUARY 2016

January 13 **Introduction - What caused the Great Depression?**

Video: *The Crash of 1929*

January 20 **Economic collapse and the coming of the New Deal**

Robert McElvaine, "Fear Itself, Depression Life," 170-194, from *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*.

Lizabeth Cohen, "Adrift in the Great Depression," 213-249, 460-473 from *Making a New Deal: Industrial workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*.

Video: *Riding the Rails*

January 27 **The New Deal**

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Robert S. and Helen Merrell Lynd, "Making a Home," 144-180 from *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts*.

Pete Daniel, "The New Deal and Southern Agriculture," 126-145 in David Hamilton, editor, *The New Deal*.

Video: *FDR*

February 3 **The New Deal (continued)**

Three interpretations from David Hamilton editor, *The New Deal*.
William E. Leuchtenberg, "The Triumph of Liberal Reform," 3-18.

Barton Bernstein, "The Conservative Achievement of New Deal Reform," 18-36.

Anthony Badger, "The Unanticipated Consequences of New Deal Reform, 36-50.

February 10 **Responses from the Left and the Right**

Donald Warren, *Radio Priest - Charles Coughlin, the Father of Hate Radio*, (chapters 3-6), 40-97, 313-322.

Video: *Huey Long*

February 17 **The New Unions**

Stephen Norwood, "Ford's Brass Knuckles: Harry Bennett, The Cult of Muscularity, and Anti-Labor Terror - 1920-1945," *Labor History*, Summer 1996, 365-391.

Video: *The Great Depression: Volume 3: Striking Back*

February 24 **African American life during the 1930s**

St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, "Bronzeville," 379-397 and "Negro Business: Myth and Fact," 430-469 from *Black Metropolis: a study of Negro life in a northern city*.

Victoria Wolcott, "The Culture of the Informal Economy: Numbers Runners in Inter-War Black Detroit," *Radical History Review*, 1997, 46-75.

Video: *Scottsboro - An American Tragedy*

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March 2 Film and American Life during the 1930s

Thomas Doherty, "This Is Where We Came in: The Audible Screen and the Voluble Audience of Early Sound Cinema, 143-163 in Janet Staiger editor, *The Studio System*.

Stephen Vaughn, "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *Journal of American History*, June 1990, 39-65.

"The Motion Picture Production Code of 1930" in Thomas Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934*, 347-64.

Video: Representative Hollywood film of the 1930s

March 16 Film and American Life during the 1930s (part 2)

Brian Taves, "The B Film: Hollywood's Other Half," 313-350, 446-447 from *Grand Design - Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939*.

Video: Representative Hollywood film of the 1930s

March 23,30 The rise of radio

Paul Dennis, "Chills and Thrills: Does Radio Harm Our Children? The Controversy Over Program Violence During the Age of Radio," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, Winter 1998, 33-50.

Edward Oxford, "Night of the Martians," 183-194, in Randy Roberts and James S. Olson editors, *American Experiences - Readings in American History*, 4th edition, Volume II, From 1877.

Audio: Samples of 1930s radio programming

April 6,13 Depression music and popular culture

Lewis Erenberg, *Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture*.

Video: *Benny Goodman - Adventures in the Kingdom of Swing*.

April 20 Women in the Depression

Andrea Tone, "Contraceptive consumers: Gender and the political economy of birth control in the 1930s." *Journal of Social History*, Spring 1996, 485-506.

Ruth Cowan, "Two washes in the morning, and a bridge party at night: The American housewife between the wars," *Women's Studies*, 1976, 147-172.

Video: *Amelia Earhart*

April 27 Catch-up and discussion of final papers