The Great Depression in the United States, 1929-1942

This course examines one of the most fascinating, and controversial, periods in modern U.S. history. During the Great Depression, Americans endured more than a decade of hard times. We will explore the economics of the Great Depression, and also discuss the social, political, and cultural dimensions of this crisis. Topics covered in the course include: the stock market crash of 1929, the origins of the depression, Herbert Hoover's response, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, radical and conservative alternatives to the New Deal, the "old-age" and anti-chain-store movements, prohibition, crime, literature, pop culture, and Hollywood's "Golden Age."

Required Books, Articles, and Films: All of the following are available on reserve in Morris Library

Books

3. Bean, *The Great Depression*–miscellaneous articles available on D2L.

Films

EXTRA, EXTRA!! (Bonus points):

Read a chapter from Bergmann's *We're in the Money: Depression America and Its Films* (on reserve). Each chapter deals with a specific genre of film in the 1930s. Then watch two movies in that genre and write a 4-5 page essay discussing what these films revealed about depression America. Bonus: Maximum of 10 points added to your paper grade (on a scale of 100).
ASSIGNMENTS:

Quizzes (20%): given on all discussion days. This assignment is to ensure that you keep up on the assigned reading. The questions will not be difficult: If you have read the assignments, you should do well. Discussion may also factor into this grade.

Lecture Note Reviews (20%) To encourage and improve note-taking skills, I will grade and provide feedback on your lectures notes. Good note taking is essential to academic performance and success in "the real world." It reflects an ability to listen carefully and digest information that you will use later. This assignment also tests your knowledge of course material and prepares you for the comprehensive open-note final exam (contingent upon satisfactory performance on lecture note exams). You will turn in your lecture notes twice during the semester (see syllabus).

Biographical Essay (25%): See attached guidelines.

Final exam (35%): There will be an open-note comprehensive exam. I will give you possible questions in advance.

NOTE: The syllabus is a tentative schedule of lectures and discussions. The instructor may change it as his discretion.
NEW ERA TO NEW DEAL: AN OVERVIEW OF THE 1920S AND 1930S

January

WEEK 1

19: "What was so great about the Great Depression?"

THE HOOVER YEARS (1921-1933)

21 "Prosperity Decade"? The American Economy During the 1920s

WEEK 2

26 Herbert Hoover: "New Era" Prophet
   Movie: The Crash of 1929
28 Discussion: “The Stock Market Crash”

WEEK 3

Feb. 2 Herbert Hoover: The Presidential Years
4 Herbert Hoover: The Presidential Years
   Movie: The Road to Rock Bottom

WEEK 4

ROOSEVELT AND THE NEW DEAL (1932-1940)

Feb.

9 Franklin Roosevelt and the Campaign of 1932
   The First "New Deal"
11 The Second New Deal ESSAY TOPIC DUE

WEEK 5

16 The Second New Deal
   Discussion: “On the Road” LECTURE NOTE REVIEW #1 DUE
18 "The Great Contraction": Is There an Explanation for 1929-1933?

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, AND SOCIETY

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

WEEK 6

23 The New Deal: Did it Prolong the Great Depression?
   Roosevelt's War on Business
25 Mass Marketing: Persistence of "American Dream"; Anti-Chain Store Movement
WEEK 7

March 1 Discussion: “Business during Hard Times”  
Unemployment and Labor Unions
3 Discussion: “Labor: Workers and the Unemployed”

WEEK 8

8 Movie: The Radio Priest

POLITICS: THE NEW DEAL COALITION

10 Jews and Catholics: Coming of Age

WEEK 9

March 15-17 SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)

WEEK 10

22 African-Americans: A New Deal for Blacks?  
24 Discussion: "Why Did Blacks Become Democrats?"

CRITICS OF THE NEW DEAL

WEEK 11

29 Senior Citizens: The "Old Age Movement" and Social Security  
31 Popular opposition to Roosevelt: Overview  
  Discussion: “Radical Critics”

WEEK 12

April 5 Congressional conservatives  
  Newspapers  
7 Discussion: "Conservative critics” LECTURE NOTE REVIEW #2

WEEK 13

SOCIETY

12 Movie: “Surviving the Dust Bowl”  
14 Farmers: The Dust Bowl and the "Okies": An American Exodus

WEEK 14

19 Discussion: “Farmers”  
21 Women: Holding Their Own  
  Prohibition and Crime: The End of a "Grand Experiment"

CULTURE
WEEK 15

26 Discussion: “Prohibition”
28 Hollywood: "The Golden Age"

WEEK 16

May 3 Discussion: “Family: Men, Women, Children, College Students”
Pop Culture: A Nickel and Dime Decade

5 Discussion: "Literature and Pop Culture"  PAPER DUE

*FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED PER FINAL EXAM CALENDAR (REGISTRAR):
Schedule of Reading Assignments

The required readings total approximately 600 pages (40 pages/week), but the reading load varies over the course of the semester. Make sure that you complete the assigned readings by the dates listed below.

**Week 1:** Read ahead for next week’s discussion and quiz. (0 pages)

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**Week 2:** The Stock Market Crash (1929) (40 pages)
“*It Started on Wall Street*” (four selections), *E-Reserve (Skydrive)*
“Julia Walther” (162-164) and “David J. Rossman” (78-81), in *Hard Times*
“Women in the Stock Market: The Ladies of the Ticker” (47-56) on *E-Reserve*

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**Week 3:** The Hoover Years (1929-1932): Opposing Viewpoints; The “Bonus March” (23 pages)
Franklin D. Roosevelt, “America Needs a New Deal,” on *E-Reserve*
Hoover, “Roosevelt’s New Deal Would Harm America,” on *E-Reserve*
“Jim Sheridan” (13-16) and “Everett McIntyre” (17-18), in *Hard Times*

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**Week 4:** The New Deal, 1933-1939 (12 pages)
McElvaine, *The Depression*, 41-48, 54-57

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**Week 5:** Life on the Road (42 pages)
“Taking it On the Road” (four selections), *E-Reserve (Skydrive)* under title “Nishi3”

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**Week 6:** Economics of the New Deal (32 pages)
McElvaine, *The Depression*, 18-19, 48-54
Higgs, “Regime Uncertainty: Why the Great Depression Lasted So Long,” on *E-Reserve*

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**Week 7:** Business: Down But Not Out (91 pages)
“Martin DeVries” (74-75), “Charles Stewart Mott” (134-35), in *Hard Times*
Marchand, “Advertising in Overalls,” on *E-Reserve*, 285-295 only
Bean, “Mass Marketing Meets Main Street,” *E-Reserve*
Cullen, “Supermarket Proposal” (highlighted portions), *E-Reserve*
Sicilia, “Supermarket Sweep,” *E-Reserve*

**Labor: Workers and the Unemployed**
McElvaine, *The Depression*, 69-77

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**Week 8:** --

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**Week 9:** Minorities and the New Deal (51 pages)
McElvaine, *The Depression*, 115-127
Weiss, “Why Blacks Became Democrats,” on *E-Reserve*
Davis, “The New Deal Has Not Aided Blacks,” on *E-Reserve*
“Horace Cayton,” in *Hard Times*, 434-38
*Week 11: **The Old Age Movement and Social Security**

(59 pages) “George Murray,” in *Hard Times*, 314-16.

**Radical Critics**
McElvaine, *The Depression*, 79-99
"A Total Alternative: The Platform of the Socialist Party, 1932," on *E-Reserve*
Thomas, "Socialism, Not Roosevelt's Pale Pink Pills," on *E-Reserve*

*Week 12: **Conservative critics**

(40 pages) Moley, "Roosevelt's Refusal to Make a Choice," on *E-Reserve*
Lawrence, “Redistributing Wealth Would Not Help Americans,” on *E-Reserve*
Mencken, “The New Deal is a Fraud,” on *E-Reserve*
Taft, “The New Deal Must Be Limited,” on *E-Reserve*
Walter Lippmann, "Planning Will Lead to Oligarchy," on *E-Reserve*

*Week 13: **Farmers**

(51 pages) McElvaine, *The Depression*, 129-137
“Out on the Farm” (four selections), *E-Reserve (Skydrive)* under title “Nishi Farmers”
“Peggy Terry/Mary Owsley,” in *Hard Times*, 46-51.

*Week 14: **Prohibition**

(30 pages) Thompson, “Prohibition Enforcement Requires a Softer Hand,” on *E-Reserve*
Wickersham Commission, “Prohibition Enforcement is Not Working,” on *E-Reserve*
Panunzio, “Immigrants Did not Obey Prohibition,” on *E-Reserve*
Thornton, “Prohibition was a Failure,” on *E-Reserve*

*Week 15: **Literature and Popular Culture**

(41 pages) McElvaine, *The Depression*, 139-155
Richard Wright, "12 Million Black Voices," on *E-Reserve*
Thomas Wolfe, "You Can't Go Home Again," on *E-Reserve*

Week 16: **Family: Men, Women, Children and College Students**

(39 pages) McElvaine, *The Depression*, 101-113
Louis Adamic, "My America," on *E-Reserve*
“College Students of the Depression,” on *E-Reserve*

**Foreign policy**
Roosevelt, "War in Europe: The President Addresses the People, 1939," on *E-Reserve*
"The Dissident View: Charles Lindbergh Argues against Intervention," *E-Reserve*
Biographical Essay: Guidelines

During the Great Depression, many interesting and important figures crossed the historical stage: politicians (Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Huey Long), businessmen (Henry Ford, Alfred Sloan), labor leaders (John L. Lewis), military figures (Douglas MacArthur), civil rights activists (Mary McLeod Bethune), film stars (Mae West, James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart), economists (John Maynard Keynes, Irving Fisher), and others. For this assignment you must write a 8-10 page, double-spaced essay on an individual who made a significant impact in his or her field. The following instructions should aid in your research and writing, but if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to see me.

**Step 1: Topic Selection**

Choose an individual whom you find interesting and important. You might begin by starting with areas of study you are especially interested in: business? politics? film? Due to space limitations, you should select a manageable topic (it might be difficult to cover Franklin Roosevelt's entire presidential career in 8-10 pages, though you might narrow your discussion of his presidential career to his interest in conservation or his attitude toward women and minorities). Once you have focused on a general area of interest, consult one or more of the following bibliographies and dictionaries:

- Ciment, Encyclopedia of the Great Depression and New Deal (2001)
- Graham, Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Times: An Encyclopedic View (1985)
- Olson, Historical Dictionary of the New Deal (2001)

Note: All topics must be approved by me before you begin your research and writing.

**Step 2: Research**

The above works should point you to books and articles dealing with your subject and his or her field. You should also refer to the following (for more reference works go to http://tinyurl.com/38zcyg):

- African American national biography

  *American National Biography: Subjects contained in the ANB are deceased

  *America: History and Life: Historical articles written since 1964 are available on-line with abstracts and links to many of the complete PDF articles.

- Biographical Dictionary of American Business Leaders

- Black Studies Center: contains several invaluable reference works to African American History plus the complete digitized run of the Chicago Defender. This is an online database.

- Chicago Tribune (1849-present): online database.

- Current Biography (1940-): Biographical sketches of persons both living and dead. There is a cumulative index for the annual yearbooks published 1940-90.

- JSTOR: online database containing complete runs (in PDF) of hundreds of journals. The leading American historical journal goes back to the mid-nineteenth century! Use along with
Project Muse, another online database.


You may find that there are no book-length biographies or autobiographies available on your subject. Instead, you might read the writings of your subject. For example, no one has written a full-length biography of Boake Carter, conservative radio commentator and columnist of the 1930s; yet, Morris Library does contain several of his books. You could read one of these books, and then relate it to our class discussion of conservatism.

**Taking notes:** I strongly recommend that you take your notes on 4X6 cards, with the appropriate publication information contained on each card. Then, when it comes time to writing your paper, you can simply shuffle your cards into the format you have outlined.

**Step 3: Writing**

You should place your subject in historical context and discuss, in a critical fashion, how he or she affected the course of events during the Great Depression (your individual may have continued to play a prominent role in his or her field after the depression, but you should focus on the period 1929-42). Your report should define the dates of the person's life, and explain the main features of his or her career. What were his or her principal experiences in life that shaped his or her ideology? With what other significant individuals, groups, or institutions did the person associate? You can place your subject in historical context by relating them to the material covered in class or in your other readings. For example, if you are writing a biography of Francis Townsend (leader of the "old-age" movement), you might compare and contrast his alternative to the New Deal with that of Huey Long or Father Coughlin.

If you find that there is not enough class material relating to your subject, you can refer to the following encyclopedias, which may provide some added context:

- History Matters (a great portal to historical web sites covering a wide range of topics. Future teachers ought to bookmark this one!): [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/)
- Encyclopedia of Black America (1981)
- Encyclopedia of Feminism (1986)
- Encyclopedia of Social History (1992)
Step 4: Final paper

Along with your final paper, you should include all of the material you used to write the paper (returned upon request). Put the paper and the following in a securely bound folder.

1. An electronic copy emailed to Turnitin.com (instructions forthcoming)
2. Notes photocopies, etc.

Tips on Writing Your Paper

1. Allow enough time to write a good paper. In general, good writing is rewritten writing. You will probably need to prepare an outline and several drafts of your paper before you finish. Be sure to proofread your paper carefully. Papers with many misspellings or typographical errors will be returned as unacceptable and will have to be reworked.

2. Provide your readers with a structure for the paper—an introduction, main body, and conclusion.

3. Make sure that each paragraph includes a topic sentence (experienced writers often make the first sentence in a paragraph the topic sentence).

4. Avoid string-of-quotation writing. Use some evidence and examples to support your arguments; but do not litter your paper with one quotation after another. Let your own ideas shine through.

5. Avoid run-on sentences that are too long. Be precise and succinct.

6. Footnoting: Direct quotations must be put in quotation marks and footnoted. You must also provide footnotes when you are using someone else's ideas. Footnotes can appear at the bottom of each page or collected at the end of the paper as endnotes. Each note should identify the author of the work, its title, place of publication, date of publication, and page number. Example:


   Citations to reference works should include the name of the reference, the title of the entry, and the author (if any). Example:


WARNING: I will not tolerate academic misconduct in this class. I will report suspected cases of misconduct. The Student Conduct Code sets forth penalties for academic misconduct (www.siu.edu/~docedit/policies/conduct.html). Possible sanctions include failure of an assignment, failure in a course, disciplinary probation, or suspension from the university. Don't risk it.

You must research and write your papers yourself. You may not have a friend write your paper. You may not hire someone to write your paper (this includes Internet paper mills, which I can and do check). You may not turn in a paper previously used in a different class.

Avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism consists of using someone else's ideas as your own without properly acknowledging them. Changing a few words is not enough; it is still plagiarism. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, consult your teaching assistant or instructor.
The following list of subjects indicates the diversity of topics you might consider for your essay, but it is not meant to be complete. Please feel free to choose a person from this list, or use the above reference works to locate an individual you find interesting.

**African-Americans**
- Bethune, Mary McLeod: Highest-ranking black government official
- Father Divine: Charismatic "messiah" figure. Large following in northern cities.
- DuBois, W.E.B.: NAACP activist
- Miller, Kelly: Dean of Howard University, the most widely-read black columnist of his day (500,000 read his weekly "Kelly Miller Says" column)
- Robeson, Paul: Actor
- Wright, Richard: Novelist

**Business**
- Barton, Bruce: Advertising executive, author
- Filene, Edward: Department store executive, founder of U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Ford, Henry: Auto manufacturer
- Hartford, John and George: Chain store executives (A&P)
- Sloan, Alfred: General Motors
- Wood, Robert: Sears & Roebuck

**Comic characters**
- Mickey Mouse (or Walt Disney)
- Orphan Annie
- Skippy (or his creator, Percy Crosby)
- Superman
- Tracy, Dick

**Conservatives**
- Bailey, Josiah: U.S. Senator
- Carter, Boake: Radio commentator
- Fish, Hamilton: Republican congressman who also fought with the "Harlem Hellfighters" (all-black) during WWI. Anti-New Deal, pro civil rights.
- Glass, Carter: U.S. Senator
- Moley, Raymond: Ex-Roosevelt aide, newspaper columnist

**Economists**
- Chase, Stuart
- Fisher, Irving
- Keynes, John Maynard
- Means, Gardiner
- Schumpeter, Joseph
- Swope, Gerard
### Film
- **Breen, Joseph**: Hollywood censor
- **Cagney, James**: Actor known for his roles as a gangster
- **Dietrich, Marlene**: Actress
- **Hays, Will**: Hollywood censor
- **Warner, Jack**: Warner Brothers, close associate of FDR
- **West, Mae**: Actress, sex symbol

### Journalists
- **Kent, Frank**: Syndicated columnist, historian, critic of FDR
- **Krock, Arthur**: *New York Times* columnist
- **Lawrence, David**: Founder and editor of *U.S. News*, syndicated columnist
- **Lippmann, Walter**: Syndicated columnist
- **Thompson, Dorothy**: “First Lady of American Journalism,” radio commentator, expelled from Germany for anti-Nazi views on the radio
- **Sullivan, Mark**: Syndicated columnist, historian

### Labor
- **Dubinsky, David**: ILGWU
- **Hillman, Sidney**: Amalgamated Clothing Workers Association
- **Lewis, John L.**: UMW, CIO

### Literature
- **Agee, James**: Author, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*
- **Carnegie, Dale**: Self-Improvement guru (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*)
- **Caldwell, Erskine**: Author, *Tobacco Road*
- **Dos Passos, John**: Marxist author of *USA*, conservative critic of New Deal (*District of Columbia*)
- **Lewis, Sinclair**: Author of *It Can't Happen Here*, already well known for *Babbitt*
- **Sinclair, Upton**: Author, Socialist, Democratic candidate for governor of California

### Music
- **Ellington, Duke**
- **Goodman, Benny**
- **Vallee, Rudy**

### Politics and Government
- **Arnold, Thurman**: Author, antitrust
- **Brandeis, Louis**: U.S. Supreme Court justice
- **Chavez, Dennis**: U.S. Senator (New Mexico)
- **Cohen, Benjamin**: Legislative draftsman, Roosevelt aide
- **Frankfurter, Felix**: Harvard Law professor, Supreme Court justice
- **Hoover, J. Edgar**: F.B.I. director
- **Hopkins, Harry**: W.P.A. director, Secretary of Commerce
- **Ickes, Harold**: P.W.A. director
- **Johnson, Hugh**: N.R.A. head
- **Lindbergh, Charles**: Aviator, leading isolationist
- **Morgenthau, Henry**: Secretary of Treasury
- **Landon, Alf**: Republican presidential candidate
- **Olson, Floyd**: Farmer-Labor Governor (Minnesota)
- **Smith, Al**: Democratic presidential candidate, critic of Roosevelt
Smith, Gerald L.K.  Demagogue
Townsend, Francis  "Old-age" movement
Tugwell, Rexford  Roosevelt adviser, government official
Willkie, Wendell  Republican candidate for president, 1940

Radio commentators
Carter, Boake
Close, Upton
Kaltenburn, H.V.

Socialists/Communists
Thomas, Norman  Socialist Party presidential candidate

Women
Dewson, Molly  Democratic Party activist
Davis, Maxine  Journalist
Perkins, Frances  Secretary of Labor, first female member of presidential cabinet
Roosevelt, Eleanor  First Lady, syndicated columnist
Sanger, Margaret  Birth control advocate