

# Decade in American Culture: 1929-1941

01.050.303.01 – Spring 2010

Department of American Studies – Rutgers University

Tuesday 7:15PM-10:05PM – Art History 200 – Douglass Campus

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## **Instructor**

Matthew B. Ferguson, M.C.R.P.

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(Subject Line: Decade in American Culture)

## **Office Hours**

Tuesday 6:00PM – 7:00PM & By Arrangement

Office Hours Location: Ruth Adams Bldg 017B/017A

## **Required Texts**

***The Great Depression: America 1929-1941***

By: Robert S. McElvaine - ISBN: 9780812923278

***Soul of a People: The WPA Writer's Project Uncovers Depression America***

By: David A. Taylor - ISBN: 9780470403808

***Great Fortune: The Epic of Rockefeller Center***

By: Daniel Okrent - ISBN: 9780142001776

***Miss Lonelyhearts & The Day of the Locust***

By: Nathaniel West - ISBN: 9780811218221

***Yonnonidio***

By: Tillie Olson - ISBN: 9780803286214

## **Additional Readings on SAKAI site or provided by Instructor**

Books should be available at the Cook/Douglass Bookstore (formerly the Co-op Bookstore) and at online retailers such as BN.com, Amazon.com & Half.com

## **Course Overview**

This course will focus on the historical, social and political impact of the 1930s and how this decade shaped and continues to shape American identity even today. In addition to covering the national economic decline beginning in 1929, the growing labor movement and the Dust Bowl, we will also examine the implementation and impact of FDR's New Deal paying particular attention to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and its lasting contribution to American infrastructure. This course will also specifically focus on the development and growth of urban centers in the United States during the 1930s using Rockefeller Center and New York City as a primary example. Additionally, we will examine the developments of popular culture in this decade specifically literature, music, radio and film and how this growing entertainment industry would ultimately define the American culture as a whole.

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should be able to thoroughly read, comprehend and critically analyze primary and secondary sources. This critical analysis should result in the ability to construct well-articulated, text supported written or oral responses. In addition, student should be able to synthesize information from various sources or media to support specific ideas or arguments.

Finally, students should have a preliminary understanding of the historical, social, and political impact of the 1930s on the formation of American identity, values and social policy. In addition to becoming more familiar with the body of literature and media focusing on this formative period in American culture, students will be able to identify and analyze both the formation and representation of American values in our society.

## Course Outline

### **Tuesday January 19 – Course Introduction & Syllabus Review**

The “Decade” in American Culture

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Steamboat Willie* (1928)

*The Three Little Pigs* (1932)

### **Tuesday January 26 – The 1920s, The Crash & Early New Deal**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *PBS - Crash of 1929* (2009)

READING DUE: *McElvaine* pgs 3 - 71

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 1/23\*\***

### **Tuesday February 2 – FDR & the Fireside Chats**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *FDR: A Presidency Revealed* (2005)

READING DUE: *McElvaine* pgs 72 – 169

*Additional Readings on SAKAI*

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 1/30\*\***

### **Tuesday February 9 – Economics & Age**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Riding The Rails* (2003)

READING DUE: *McElvaine* pgs 170 - 263

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 2/6\*\***

### **Tuesday February 16– Migration**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)

READING DUE: *McElvaine* 264 - 349

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 2/13\*\***

### **Tuesday February 23 – The Dust Bowl**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *The Plow That Broke The Plain* (1936)

*PBS – Dust Bowl* (2009)

READING DUE: Excerpt from “*Worster’s Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*” – Posted on SAKAI

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 2/20\*\***

### **Tuesday March 2 – The WPA & the Formation of Collective Identity**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *It Happened One Night* (1934)

READING DUE: Taylor’s “*Soul of a People*” pgs 1-124

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 2/27\*\***

### **Tuesday March 9 – The WPA & the Voice of the Common Man**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Music of the 1930s*

*Additional Popular Culture Media*

READING DUE: Taylor’s “*Soul of a People*” pgs 125-230

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 3/6\*\***

### **Tuesday March 16 – NO CLASS! HAPPY SPRING BREAK!**

### **Tuesday March 23 – Heroes & Villains of the Great Depression**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Seabiscuit* (2003)

READING DUE: *Olsen’s entire “Yonnonidio” approx. 150 pgs*

**Tuesday March 30 – Politics & Progress**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Duck Soup (1933)*

*Additional Popular Culture Media*

READING DUE: Okrent’s “Great Fortune” pgs 1-98

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 3/27\*\***

**Wednesday March 31 – MIDTERM PAPER DUE BY 11:30PM VIA SAKAI**

**Tuesday April 6 – Popular Culture & Consumption**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *42nd Street (1933)*

*The Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933)*

READING DUE: Okrent’s “Great Fortune” pgs 99-202

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 4/3\*\***

**Tuesday April 13 – Infrastructure & The New Deal**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *PBS - Civilian Conservation Corps (2009)*

*PBS – The Hoover Dam (2009)*

READING DUE: Okrent’s “Great Fortune” pgs 203-320

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 4/10\*\***

**Tuesday April 20 – The American Identity in Popular Culture**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Hollywood Singing & Dancing: 1930s (2009)*

*Additional Popular Culture Media*

READING DUE: Okrent’s “Great Fortune” pgs 320-433

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 4/17\*\***

**Tuesday April 27 – Class & Culture**

Screening/Media Excerpts: *Modern Times (1936)*

READING DUE: West’s entire “Day of the Locust” approx 120 pgs.

**\*\*Critical Analysis Assignment Due By 10:00PM on Saturday 4/24\*\***

**Tuesday May 4 - FINAL OFFICE HOURS – 6:30-8:30PM (Livingston Student Center 107D)**

**Tuesday May 11 - FINAL EXAM DUE VIA SAKAI BY 11:00PM**

**Acknowledgement**

Portions of this course outline and structure are adapted from Professor Ann Fabian’s Decade in American Culture course in the Fall 2003 semester.

Grading Components		Grading Cut-Offs
Weekly CA Assignments	60 Points	90.0+ Points = A
Midterm Paper Assignment	15 Points	85.0+ Points = B+
Final Exam	30 Points	80.0+ Points = B
		75.0+ Points = C+
Total Possible Points	105 Points	70.0+ Points = C
		60.0+ Points = D
		59.9 Points or Below = F

## Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes but attendance will not be recorded. You are responsible for all material and media presented in class, as well as all assigned readings. Your success in this class will be directly related to your attendance and participation in class.

When reviewing student grades from previous semesters, students who ACTIVELY attended class regularly did significantly better than those who did not.

If you must miss class for an extended period of time, please communicate with me ASAP so that we can figure out how to handle your particular situation.

## Critical Analysis Assignments

The weekly critical analysis assignments will ask students to read and analyze the primary and secondary sources assigned for the course. The intent of these assignments is to prepare students for meaningful and articulate class discussions as well as assist in developing the skills of critical analysis and thorough reading necessary for future course work and research. The assignments will be broken down into four parts:

1. **Outline** – This section will ask students to outline the assigned reading by identifying the main themes and ideas of each chapter/reading. There is no set format for this section but the use of organized bullet points with page numbers is suggested. Ultimately, these outlines will be helpful when constructing arguments for the midterm and final exam. (No Word Count Minimum)
2. **Important Points** – This section will present students with a few quick questions to answer regarding the assigned reading. These questions are designed to hone in on key points or ideas and should be answered in a sentence or two. (No Word Count Minimum)
3. **\*\*Critical Analysis** – This section will ask students to respond to one or two main ideas or topics using the assigned readings as evidence for the stated point. These topics will be less guiding as the semester goes on. Depending on the assigned reading, it may ask for a supported opinion, reaction or synthesis with current events. **Note: I am looking for analysis NOT summary.** When referring to a specific quote or section, feel free to just note the page number. Ex: (McElvaine 23) This analysis should be clear and thoughtful. Responding to one quote or talking at length about an unrelated personal experience will not suffice for this assignment. (Word Count: 300-500)
4. **Your Questions/Thoughts** – This section allows for you to express any outstanding questions or thoughts on the readings allowing your Instructor to respond in the upcoming class. (No Word Count Minimum)

The critical analysis assignments are due each week via SAKAI by **10:00PM** on the **Saturday PRIOR** to class. **NOTE: You are writing about the readings due for the UPCOMING class!** The assignments should be submitted **IN LINE** meaning that you will have to cut and paste your work into the appropriate text box. My suggestion is that you compose your assignment in a Word document, SAVE it and cut/paste when ready to submit. This will spare you from any catastrophic SAKAI meltdowns. Assignments will be accepted **LATE** until **10:00PM on Sunday** for partial credit.

I would recommend that you get into a pattern of submitting these assignments early in order to achieve the highest quality academic product. Assignments will be graded on a 1-5 scale with a 5 being reserved for only the most thoughtful reactions. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**

### **Midterm Assignment**

The midterm assignment will require students to construct a 3-6 page essay analyzing Depression-era media in the context of the period presented up to that point. A full prompt will be distributed in class.

Students will need to submit this assignment through SAKAI no later than **11:30PM on Wednesday, March 31, 2010**. Essays will be accepted **LATE** until 11:30PM on Wednesday, April 7, 2010 at a penalty of half a letter grade off per day late. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**

**All formal written assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.** Please include a standard single-spaced heading on the first page of each assignment and your last name in the header of each page. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be a “take home” exam to be completed in an essay format. The exam will require students to comprehensively review and synthesize course information from readings, lectures, and media. A full prompt will be distributed in class.

Students will need to submit this final exam through SAKAI no later than **11:00PM on Tuesday, May 11, 2010**. Exams **WILL NOT** be accepted late for any reason. **Note: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI!**

**All formal written assignments should be double-spaced with one-inch margins using 12 pt. Times New Roman font.** Please include a standard single-spaced heading on the first page of each assignment and your last name in the header of each page. Proper spelling and grammar are a reflection of your commitment to the assignment and are therefore factored into your grade for the assignment.

### **Extra Credit**

There will be at least one opportunity for students to earn extra credit during the semester. These opportunities are **100% optional** and are only intended to provide students with a way to boost their grade. More information on extra credit will be distributed in class.

### **Class Conduct**

All students are expected to be on time to class. If for some reason, you need to arrive late or leave early, please do so with minimum disruption. Please place all cell phones on silent and refrain from text messaging. Since this course involves discussion, it is inevitable that differing opinions will be presented. The University as a whole supports the free and open exchange of ideas and this course will be no different. All students are expected to be respectful of any and all opinions shared in class.

### **Emergencies**

In case of emergency, please check the University status page to see if the University is still operating. (<http://campusstatus.rutgers.edu>) If for some reason I need to cancel class, I will e-mail you (from SAKAI) by 2:00PM on the day of class to let you know.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic freedom is a fundamental right in any institution of higher learning. Honesty and integrity are necessary preconditions of this freedom. Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses.

Maintenance of the standards of academic honesty and the successful administration of this policy depend on the mutual cooperation of faculty and students. Dissemination of the Academic Integrity Policy to all faculty, staff, and students will ensure that all members of the community are informed about academic integrity.

Faculty cooperation is essential for successful application of the procedures defined by the Academic Integrity Policy. Faculty members can help promote academic integrity by making clear on their syllabi their expectations concerning homework assignments, collaborative student efforts, research papers, examinations, and the like. Efforts should be made to detect and to prevent cheating and plagiarism in all academic assignments. If faculty members have evidence of academic dishonesty, they are expected to report such evidence promptly.

Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit.

This policy seeks to demonstrate the University's concern with academic dishonesty and to guarantee a fair procedure for resolving complaints of academic dishonesty.

## **WHEN IN DOUBT...ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR!**

*Personal Note: I've worked very hard to create assignments and tests that are both interactive and challenging for you as a student. In addition to being insulting to me, when you cheat...you are cheating yourself out of a learning experience. Be forewarned that I will not hesitate to report you for any violation of academic integrity. All assignments will be run through TurnItIn.com plagiarism detection software.*

### **Violations of Academic Integrity**

The various ways in which academic honesty can be violated are discussed below. The comments and examples within each section provide explanations and illustrative material, but do not necessarily exhaust the scope of these violations.

#### **A. Cheating**

Cheating is the use of inappropriate and unacknowledged materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The use of books, notes, calculators and conversation with others is restricted or forbidden in certain academic exercises. Their use in these cases constitutes cheating. Similarly, students must not request others (including commercial term paper companies) to conduct research or prepare any work for them, nor may they submit identical work or portions thereof for credit or honors more than once without prior approval of the instructor.

#### **B. Fabrication**

Fabrication is the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. "Invented" information may not be used in any laboratory experiment or other academic exercise without authorization from the instructor. It is improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and covertly "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses. The student must also acknowledge reliance upon the actual source from which cited information was obtained. A writer should not, for example, reproduce a quotation from a book review and indicate that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.

### C. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty

Students who knowingly or negligently allow their work to be used by other students or who otherwise aid others in academic dishonesty are violating academic integrity. Such students are as guilty of intellectual dishonesty as the student who receives the material even though they may not themselves benefit academically from that dishonesty.

### D. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be properly cited in the text or in a footnote. Acknowledgment is required when material from another source stored in print, electronic or other medium is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "to paraphrase Plato's comment..." and conclude with a footnote identifying the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information which is common knowledge such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be footnoted; however, all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged.

In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, only materials that contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography. Plagiarism can, in some cases, be a subtle issue. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be discussed with the faculty member.

### E. Denying others access to information or material

It is a violation of academic integrity to deny others access to scholarly resources, or to deliberately impede the progress of another student or scholar. Examples of offenses of this type include: giving other students false or misleading information; making library material unavailable to others by stealing or defacing books or journals, or by deliberately misplacing or destroying reserve materials; or altering computer files that belong to another.

The Full Policy on Academic Integrity and additional information can be found on at the Office of Student Conduct Website (<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu>)