

**HIS 213.02—SPECIAL TOPICS: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II**  
Fall Semester, 2019. MHRA 1214. Tuesday & Thursday, 6:30-7:45 pm.

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Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 7:45-8:45 pm; Wednesday 11:00am-12:00pm; and by appointment



Photograph: “American Way” by Margaret Bourke-White

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The era of the Depression and the Second World War was the most intensely formative in modern American history and in this period the South was “the Nation's No. 1 economic problem,” as Franklin Delano Roosevelt said in 1938. Our region was a bellwether of changes occurring across the United States and while national in scope, this course will therefore use the South as one specific lens through which to analyze larger trends and issues. We will range from the origins of the Depression to the New Deal and then the global emergency of the Second World War. We will examine postwar reconversion—a period which was certainly not “the best years of our lives” for those who experienced the upheaval of the former home front. During the semester, a cultural approach will be used to investigate the socioeconomics and politics of labor, class, gender, and race in America from the late-1920s to the mid-1940s. Military history will be an aspect of this course, too, as will be international relations. But even when covering the war years, a focus will be kept on the human experience of the average soldier, sailor, airman, and civilian. Finally, we will consider the “long New Deal” and the birth of our own era.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

### General Education Historical Perspectives Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives.
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing.

**Course Objectives:** In addition to GHP SLOs, by the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Identify major themes and trends during the Depression and World War II, and to assimilate this knowledge into your understanding of the national experience as a whole. (Departmental SLO #1: “Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. [Historical comprehension]”)
2. Use primary and secondary sources to formulate concrete historical arguments. (Departmental SLO #2: “Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical analysis]”)

## COURSE MATERIALS & READINGS

### Required Texts

Frederick Lewis Allen (FLA), *Since Yesterday: The 1930s In America, September 3, 1929-September 3, 1939*

Thomas W. Cutter and T. Michael Parrish (C&P), *Doris Miller, Pearl Harbor, and the Birth of the Civil Rights Movement* (Texas A&M University Press, 2018). ISBN: 978-1-62349-602-9.

### Other Readings

Required readings also include speeches and fireside chats by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), other primary material, and a variety of secondary sources. All can be found on Canvas under files.

### Caveats About All Reading Material

It is your responsibility to follow the course schedule. We are not reading every page (or even chapter) in either book, and some chapters or subsections (§) are out of sequence. Use your judgment with the other readings—they are excerpted; if not redacted for clarity, you are expected to figure out where to begin and end, and to get the gist of the material. Many of these readings are meant to humanize the process of history as a lived experience.

## COURSE STRUCTURE AND GRADING

This is a special topics course—an intensive focus on one specific era and its repercussions. As such, His 213.02 has parameters which are different than those encountered in a general survey.

**Attendance:** Because this is an in-depth profile of a roughly twenty year period in American history, you are expected to be present at every class. Emergencies do arise, however. Consequently you may miss two (2) classes with absolutely no excuse required. Any other absences must be pre-approved or covered by a doctor's note or other documentation accepted *post facto* by me. Excessive and unexcused absences may result in your overall course grade being lowered by ten (10) points per miss.

**Quizzes:** THERE ARE NO QUIZZES!

**Term Paper/Research Project:** THERE IS NO TERM PAPER OR RESEARCH PROJECT!

**Reading Journal:** In lieu of reading quizzes, general quizzes, and other written work, you will keep a reading journal or log. These should follow the directions/template provided by your instructor. Entries must be typed and printed out. Journals will be collected eight (8) times over the course of the semester, approximately every two weeks; see the course schedule for dates. The lowest journal grade or a zero due to an absence either excused or unexcused will be dropped; obviously, submit all eight times to maximize your average grade. JOURNALS MUST BE KEPT TO DATE. See the parameters on the template at the end of the syllabus. [GHP SLOs 1, 2; Dept SLOs 1, 2.]

**Exams:** There are two (2) exams, a midterm and the final. Both are cumulative and comprehensive,

covering everything we have read and discussed in His 213.02 since the beginning of the semester. They will both consist of multiple choice and short answer (mini-essay) questions. Short answer questions will include the analysis and contextualization of at least one primary source document. [GHP SLOs 1, 2; Dept SLOs 1, 2.]

**Extra Credit:** There may or may not be an opportunity to accrue extra credit over the course of the semester. This will be at the discretion of the instructor. Such opportunities would likely be attending a function such as a university guest speaker whose topic is relevant to our studies.

**Participation:** In a special topics course, participation is crucial. Be prepared to discuss the readings! That is part of the reason behind the reading journals—they help you prep for class! Attendance is an obvious prerequisite for a good participation grade, but does not make one a certainty! You must be engaged and participatory! [GHP SLO 2.]

**Grading:** This course is graded on a one hundred (100) point scale. The breakdown is:

Journals: 8 x 7 points each w/ lowest dropped.....	49 points
Midterm.....	15 points
Final Examination.....	25 points
Participation.....	<u>11 points</u>
Total.....	100 points

## COURSE POLICIES

Below are some other important course policies. Please note them and adhere to them. If you are in violation, you will be required to leave the room and you *will* incur an absence—or expulsion from the course and possibly the university in the instance of plagiarism.

**I Start class on time** and end on time, if not a little early. **DO NOT BE LATE!**

**Attendance is taken at every class.** It is *your* responsibility to sign-in. Anyone over ten minutes late will incur an absence—I know all about traffic and parking on this campus, so there are no excuses!

**Electronics are *not* permitted.** Take notes the old-fashioned way. If you must use an electronic device, see me and refer to the section below about Academic Support and Disability Accommodation. If you are cleared to use an electronic device, you will be required to sit in the first row.

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated!** In the journal entries, it is expected that all words and thoughts are your own. If you borrow another author's phrases or interpretations, you must appropriately cite them. See Canvas files for an excellent reference on plagiarism and how to avoid it. Plagiarism is a grievous academic violation; refer to the UNCG Student Handbook if you are unclear about the definition and consequences of plagiarism <https://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/violation/policy/plagiarism>

**Academic Support and Disability Accommodation** is a serious consideration at UNCG. The university promotes equal access to educational opportunities for all students. If you have special needs that may impact your ability to perform effectively in His 213.02, speak to me and contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS). That office is in Elliot University Center (EUC) #215. This service may also be contacted via e-mail at <https://ods.uncg.edu>

**Inclement Weather, etc** will hopefully not curtail our class schedule. If such happens, however, you are responsible for keeping up to date on all readings until we meet next. If due, reading journals will be collected when we do meet next.

**Late Work will not be accepted** except under *very* extenuating circumstances. Do NOT email your reading journal entries, unless doing so has been cleared by me

**Eating is disruptive** for other students and disrespectful to the instructor; if you are chomping down, you will be asked to leave the and will incur an unexcused absence. Light snacks like granola bars are okay, but please eat dinner—including fast food—*before* or *after* class!

**My notes** are my own; I do not give out copies of them, power-points, slides, or other materials.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### UNIT I: THE DEPRESSION

#### WEEK 1.

**Tues. 8/20.** Introductions and Course Overview.

**Thurs. 8/22.** The Long Depression: The “Great Collapse,” Wheat, and the Debts–Reparations Cycle.

Reading: Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road*, 82-91.

#### WEEK 2.

**Tues. 8/27.** Industrial Revolutions, 1929: Elizabethton, Gastonia, Marion.

Reading: Travis Sutton Byrd, *Unraveled*, 48-67.

**Thurs. 8/29.** Crash!

Reading: FLA, Ch 1. § 1, 4; Ch 2. § 1-2, 5.

#### WEEK 3.

**Tues. 9/3.** The “Organize the South” campaign and the Boarder's Revolt of 1932.

Reading: Travis Sutton Byrd, “The Boarders' Revolt of 1932,” SHA/LAWCHA (10pp)

\*Journal #1 due.

**Thurs. 9/5.** The March of the Bonus Armies.

Reading: FLA, Ch 4. § 2-3.

#### WEEK 4.

**Tues. 9/10.** The Election of 1932, Interregnum, Inauguration, and a Holiday.

Reading: FLA, Ch, Ch 4, § 1, 5-7; Ch 5, § 1.

FDR, “The Forgotten Man.” (3pp)

FDR, “First Inaugural.” (4pp)

**Thurs. 9/12.** The Hundred Days.

Reading: FLA, Ch 5, § 2-5.

\*Journal #2 Due.

#### WEEK 5.

**Tues. 9/17.** Alphabet Agencies and the First New Deal; EPIC and “Share the Wealth”

Reading: FLA, Ch 7 § 1, 3, 5.

**Thurs. 9/19.** The Blue Eagle—Murdered by an “NRA Strike” and a “Sick Chicken.”

Reading: NIRA, Title I: §7(a), 7(b), 7(c) (¼ pp)

Travis Sutton Byrd, *Tangled*, 213-221, 228-229, 242-254.

#### WEEK 6.

**Tues. 9/24.** The Documentary Tradition and the Depression.

Reading: None.

\*Journal #3 due.

**Thurs. 9/26.** The “Dirty Thirties”: The Dust Bowl Phenomenon.

Reading: Travis Sutton Byrd, “Dust Bowl Blues.” (8 pp)

Ann Marie Low, *Dust Bowl Diary*, excerpts (9pp)

#### WEEK 7.

**Tues. 10/1.** The Culture of the Depression: Sex, Fashion, Sports, and the Arts.

Reading: FLA, Ch. 6 § 1-2, 4-7; Ch 10, § 2, 8.

\*We will likely screen film clips from “Wild Boys of the Road.”

\*Journal #3 due.

**Thurs. 10/3.** Agrarians v. Regionalists: Looking to the Past or Planning for the Future.

Reading: FLA, Ch 4, § 4.

Marion D. Irish, “Proposed Roads to the New South, 1941” (~26pp)

WEEK 8.

**Tues. 10/8.** The Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU).

Reading: James D. Ross, *Rise and Fall...*, 116-125.

\*Journal #4 due.

**Thurs. 10/10.** MIDTERM EXAM.

WEEK 9.

**Tues. 10/15.** NO CLASS—FALL BREAK!

**Thurs. 10/17.** “Roosevelt-Haters,” the Popular Front, the Wagner Act, and CIO “Sitters-Downers.”

Reading: FLA, Ch 9, § 3-7; Ch 11, § 1-3.

WEEK 10.

**Tues. 10/22.** Court-Packing, the Second New Deal, and the Roosevelt Recession.

Reading: FLA, Ch 11, § 4-6.

FDR, “Fireside Chat On Reorganizing The Judiciary.” (1¼ p)

Gov. Herbert H. Lehman to Sen Robert F. Wagner. (~½ p)

**Thurs. 10/24.** Storm Clouds Gather: Fascism Abroad and Jim Crow at Home.

Reading: FLA, Ch 12 § 1-3, 6.

C&P, Preface, xi-xiv; Ch 2, 11-17.

\*Journal #5 due.

## UNIT II: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

WEEK 11.

**Tues. 10/29.** Pearl Harbor.

Reading: Robert O'Neill, ed., *The Road To Victory*, 15-20, 22-23, 26-37, 40-41.

C&P, Ch 3, 18-25.

FDR, “A Date Which Will Live In Infamy.” (~2pp)

Anon., “Diary Reveals Jap 'Question,’” *Greensboro Daily News* (Mar. 22, 1946), A2. (1p)

\*We will likely screen film clips of “Tora, Tora, Tora.”

**Thurs. 10/31.** The Battle of the Atlantic and the Air War.

Reading: Earl Swift, “Lighter Than Air,” (~4 pp text)

Anon., “Sub Attack... Revealed,” *Greensboro Daily News* (Mar. 22, 1946), A1. (1p)

Joe Eaton, “Life,” 57-60; “Missions From England,” 61-65; “Overlord,” 72-78.

WEEK 12.

**Tues. 11/5.** The ETO: The Ground War—From Torch to Berlin.

Reading: Ernie Pyle, *Here Is Your War*, 151-160.

\*Journal #6 due.

**Thurs. 11/7.** The PTO: A Military Overview From the Doolittle Raid to Okinawa / Racialized Warfare.

Reading: Propaganda Cartoons in John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 181-200.

PTO Strategic Map (N/A). *PLEASE PRINT THIS OUT AND BRING IT TO CLASS!*

WEEK 13.

**Tues. 11/12.** The Home Front: Gender, Labor, and the War.

Reading: Mary Lucas, "Bob Lucas, the B-26, and Me," in the *559<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron*, 277-278.

Sara Evans, "Rosie the Riveter," in *Women's America*, 442-447.

Beth Bailey and David Farber, "Prostitutes on Strike," in *Women's America*, 426-434.

**Thurs. 11/14.** The Home Front: Race and the War.

Reading: C&P, Ch 5, 61-71.

Eleanor Roosevelt, "Race, Religion, and Prejudice." (1pp)

Edward J. Escobar, "Zoot Suiters and Cops," 284-303.

### UNIT III: THE LONG NEW DEAL

WEEK 14.

**Tues. 11/19.** The End of the War: Bretton Woods, Yalta, Potsdam, the Bomb, and V-J Day.

Reading: Paul Tibbets interviewed by Studs Turkel. (3pp)

Travis Sutton Byrd, *Threadbare*, excerpt. (~6pp)

\*Journal #7 due.

**Thurs. 11/21.** Reconversion: The Best Years of Our Lives?

Reading: Joseph Goulden, *The Best Years*, 50-51, 81-83, 91-96, 99-110.

FDR, "Economic Bill of Rights" (1½ pp)

\*We will likely screen film clips from "The Best Years Of Our Lives"

WEEK 15.

**Tues. 11/26.** Into the Cold War.

Reading: Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade*, 66-81.

Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow: The Ideological Contest" (1p)

Anon, "Two Scientists Predict Totalitarianism..." (1p)

**Thurs. 11/28.** NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK!

WEEK. 16.

**Tues. 12/3.** The Welfare State, the "Greatest Generation," and Modern America

Reading: C&P, Ch 7, 82-102.

\*Journal #8 Due.

\*We will likely screen clips from Edward R. Murrow's "Harvest of Shame."

**Thurs. 12/5.** NO CLASS—READING DAY!

WEEK 17.

**Tues. 12/10 (7-10pm).** FINAL EXAM.

(Below are directions for the reading journal directions/template—and a crucial caveat)

The reading journal is not meant to be an onerous duty, but to help you internalize the readings in preparation for classroom discussion; they should also help you study for essay questions on the exams. Entries should be no longer than about one (1) page single spaced. Entries cover material from the last entry through the last class, and are meant to incorporate what you have learned in lectures as well as in the texts.

Entries *must* be typed and handed in on the due date. No late work will be accepted, even in the case of an excused absence!

Prompts will be posted on Canvas under assignments; respond to these without equivocation—

maundering will *not* get you a good score!

Do **not** repeat the prompt! I know what the prompts are. Repetition is fluff, a tip-off that you are desperate to somehow fit words into empty space!

Do **not** generically state, “the readings said...” Be specific. Use quotes and cite individual readings in parenthetical notation in this form: (Author's Name, *Short Title* [only if more than one text by the same writer], page number). For example: (Allen, 151) or (Caldwell, *Tobacco Road*, 59-60).

Do **not** reference random material from on-line sources, pod-casts, books, articles, or documentaries; limit yourself to the readings and what we have discussed in class—I do not want to know what Joe Blow said about the New Deal or the welfare state on Fox News or PBS!

Entries **are** to be mini-essays, coherently formatted and written in academic language. Please adhere, more-or-less, to the following template:

NAME

DUE DATE

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TITLE

Paragraph 1. Introduction. State a thesis and identify the readings you are focusing on to support your contention(s).

Paragraph 2. Reflection on the pieces in question. How do they resonate with you; how do they reify the the lived experience of the time, place, and people? The readings are generally meant to humanize the Depression and the Second World War, and to fit into historical context vis-a-vis lectures and classroom discussion. Tease these connections out. For instance, when looking at the cartoons from John Dower's *War Without Mercy*, you should be able to reflect on the racialization of the war in the Pacific and link that *mentalité* to Jim Crow and Juan Crow on the home front. Interrogate the pieces and make an argument about what they are saying.

Paragraph 3. If appropriate, analyze the authors' sources. Scrutinize these to detect bias or sloppy research. For primary material, how did the authors' perspectives influence what they had to say and the picture they presented; in the case of Ernie Pyle, for example, it is not enough to just say that he was a proud American. Dig deep—explore his empathy with the average GI.

Paragraph 4. Conclusion. What questions do you have that were raised by the reading? Also, how does what you gleaned from the material complicate your understanding—received wisdom—about the period and/or the specific events in question? For instance, does the death of the NRA make you wonder about what you learned about the New Deal in high school? Summarize what the readings mean, what you have learned. Finally, if appropriate, connect everything back to your initial thesis.

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Now for the all-important warning!

As you do the readings avoid presentism. Keep this caveat by Ivor Noel Hume in mind:

“...historians studying other times—even quite recent other times—must never forget that the game of life may have been played by quite different rules from our own and that it is their context that we must interpret the good and bad of it.”

Your journal entries, in other words, should not be polemics about contemporary affairs. Think like a historian, not a twenty-first century undergraduate. Be historically empathetic. The people of the Depression and the Second World War were decidedly **not** us! They did not necessarily think or act as

we might, even under similar circumstances. Try to understand the exigencies and mores that shaped their own moment on earth. Do that and your journal will open a door into the *mentalité* of another, vanished era.

Finally, have fun! The readings have been selected because they are interesting, informative, and in many case quite eyeopening. Enjoy them, build a bridge into the past, and enjoy reflecting on them in your journal!



Photo: Margaret Bourke-White, Untitled (US Army Construction Battalion, Italy, 1944)