

**HIS 213.02—SPECIAL TOPICS: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II**  
Fall Semester, 2020.

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Office hours: Virtual (email 24 hours in advance, Mon-Fri, to arrange a time and platform.)



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. Consequently, while national in scope, this course will 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*. ISBN:0-06-091322-3. This book is readily available through Amazon and other on-line vendors; it is an e-book in the Jackson Library collection; finally, and most appropriately, it is free of charge for reading or download on archive.org

### 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. Look under author’s name. A limited amount of material may be added over the span of the semester, as new sources and interesting bits pop up from time to time.

### Caveats About All Reading Material

It is your responsibility to follow the course schedule. We are not reading every page (or even chapter) in FLA, 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. In some regards, this course will have the hallmarks of an independent study and/or a seminar.

**Attendance:** Because this is an online course, normal attendance policies are bent but not broken. In fact, if anything, an online course can be more rigorous than simply showing up in a classroom. You are expected to do ALL the readings and view all lectures and powerpoints (ppts) as your instructor posts them. This material will available during a limited window of time, then unpublished. You will have enough time to work at your own speed—*within reason!*

**Introduction:** By the end of the first week, you will have introduced yourself to me via a printable e-mail attachment (preferably a PDF). I want to know your background, your interest in the Depression and the Second World War (as well as a few things you may know about the era), and finally how you plan on using the knowledge gained from this course as you move forward academically and professionally. This mini-essay should be relatively brief: a page, more-or-less. This is also a writing sample that I can compare to your journals and exams to assist in detecting plagiarism!

**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. Hand-written and scanned entries will *not* be accepted and a grade of zero for that submission *will* result! I am a twentieth century historian, not an expert on cuneiform, and will *not* decipher unruly penmanship! Journals will be collected eight (8) times over the course of the semester, approximately every two weeks; see the course schedule for dates. 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, with the weight of the semester's comprehensive information and knowledge reserved for the final. These will necessarily be open book / open notes and will 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. Any information taken from outside sources will result in a zero for the pertinent question; organic thinking, contextualization, and reference to relevant material will result in the highest grade. [GHP SLOs 1, 2; Dept SLOs 1, 2.]

**Lectures** will be pre-recorded. Some Zoom meetings for lecture / discussion will be held. As this is an asynchronous course, dates and times TBA.

**Extra Credit:** Given the Covid pandemic and the other vagaries of online education, 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.

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

|                                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Journals: 8 x 7 points each..... | 56 points  |
| Introduction.....                | 4 points   |
| Midterm .....                    | 15 points  |
| Final Exam.....                  | 25 points  |
| Total.....                       | 100 points |

## COURSE POLICIES

Below are some other important course policies. Please note them and adhere to them. .

**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 quote and appropriately cite them. Plagiarism is a grievous academic violation and may result in your expulsion from this course and/or the university; if you are unclear about the concept and consequences, refer to the UNCG Student Handbook: <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. This is especially important under the current circumstances, when even online performance could be jeopardized via covid. If you have special needs that may impact your ability to perform effectively in His 213.04, 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>

**Late Work will not be accepted** except under *very* extenuating circumstances. Do NOT email your reading journal entries late, unless doing so has been cleared by me; otherwise they will not be read, nor graded.

**My notes** are my own; I do not give out copies of them.

**Lectures, powerpoints, etc** are open only during the specified time windows. Snooze, you lose!

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### UNIT I: THE DEPRESSION

#### WEEK 1. (Aug. 18-21.)

Introduction and Course Overview.

The Long Depression: The “Great Collapse,” Wheat, and the Debts–Loans-Reparations Cycle.

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

\*Introductions due via email by 5pm, Aug. 21. (See Course Structure for directions.)

#### WEEK 2. (Aug. 24-28.)

Industrial Revolutions, 1929: Elizabethton, Gastonia, Marion.

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

Crash!

Reading: FLA, Ch 1. § 1-2, 4, 6; Ch 2. § 1-2, 5-6.

#### WEEK 3. (Aug. 31 - Sept. 4.)

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 via email by 5pm, Sept. 2.

The March of the Bonus Armies.

Reading: FLA, Ch 4. § 2-3.

Additional material on the Bonus Armies *may* be posted, with an announcement.

WEEK 4. (Sept. 8-11. NOTE: Mon, Sept. 7 is the Labor Day holiday. As a unionist, I will *not* be available for office hours, etc. I encourage everyone to consider the role of unions in the history they have learned.)

The Election of 1932, Interregnum, Inauguration, and a Holiday.

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

FDR, “The Forgotten Man.” (3pp)

FDR, “First Inaugural.” (4pp)

David M. Kennedy, “Interregnum, from *Freedom From Fear*, 104-130

The Hundred Days.

Reading: FLA, Ch 5, § 2-5.

\*Journal #2 due via email by 5pm, Sept. 11.

#### WEEK 5. (Sept. 14-18.)

Alphabet Agencies and the First New Deal; EPIC and “Share the Wealth”

Reading: FLA, Ch 7 § 1, 3, 5.

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. (Sept. 21-25)

The Documentary Tradition and the Depression.

Reading: FLA, Ch 10 § 1, 3-5.

\*Journal #3 due via email by 5pm, Sept. 23.

The “Dirty Thirties”: The Dust Bowl Phenomenon.

Reading: FLA Ch 8 § 1-3.

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

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

WEEK 7. (Sept. 28 – Oct. 2.)

The Culture of the Depression: Sex, Fashion, Sports, and the Arts.

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

\*Journal #3 due.

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. (Oct. 5-9.)

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU).

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

\*Journal #4 due via email by 5pm, Oct. 7

“Roosevelt-Haters,” the Popular Front, the Wagner Act, and CIO “Sitters-Downers.”

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

WEEK 9. (Oct. 12-16.)

MIDTERM EXAM

**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. (Oct. 19-23.)

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)

Storm Clouds Gather: Fascism Abroad and Jim Crow at Home.

Reading: FLA, Ch 12 § 1-3, 6.

\*Journal #5 due via email by 5pm, Oct. 23.

## UNIT II: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

WEEK 11. (Oct. 26-30.)

Pearl Harbor.

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

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

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

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. (Nov. 2-6)

The ETO: The Ground War—From Torch to Berlin.

Reading: Ernie Pyle, *Here Is Your War*, 151-162, and Thetford, B1, B9.

\*Journal #6 due via email by 5pm, Nov. 4.

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

### WEEK 13. (Nov 9-13)

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.

The Home Front: Race and the War.

Reading: Eleanor Roosevelt, “Race, Religion, and Prejudice.” (1pp)

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

## UNIT III: THE LONG NEW DEAL

### WEEK 14. (Nov. 16-20.)

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 via email by 5pm, Nov. 18.

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)

### WEEK 15. (Nov. 23-24. NOTE: Thanksgiving Break begins at 10 pm Nov. 24.)

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)

\*Journal #8 due via email by 5pm, Nov. 24.

### WEEK. 16. (Nov. 30 – Dec. 5. NOTE: This *IS* Finals week!)

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; they should also help you study for essay questions on the exams. Entries should be no longer than about one (1) page single spaced. A paragraph is unacceptable, but if you need more length than a page or so to *really* plumb the material and express your thoughts, please feel free—within reason—to be more expansive! (An objective metric, as any editor will tell you, is word-count. This syllabus is 3,000 words; I am looking for approximately 500-700 words per entry.) 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, not hand-written and scanned, and emailed 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). Use footnotes if you are comfortable doing so, as that is the gold standard (Depression-era pun intended) for academic citation.

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, the so-called “Greatest Generation,” 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, and see the rubric as posted on Canvas under Files:

NAME

DUE DATE

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 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.

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 cases quite eye-opening. 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)