

**SYLLABUS**  
**History 4261.003: The American People in Depression and War**  
**Spring 2013**  
**TTh 12:30-1:50, Wooten Hall 216**

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Office hours (in WH 257) T 2:00-4:00, Th 11:00-12:00, and by  
appointment

**Course Description:** In 1929 President Herbert Hoover boasted that the United States of America was closer to eliminating poverty than any society or nation had ever been in the history of the world. Later that year the U.S. began its spiral into the worst economic and social crisis in its own history, the Great Depression; it lasted more than a decade. Only when the U.S. entered World War II did its economy approach 1929 levels of production, but during the war years the country achieved full employment and experienced more economic growth than it ever had before or has since. By the 1950s the U.S. again had the most powerful economy in the world and widespread prosperity. Not surprisingly, these changes were wrenching for the Americans who lived through them. How did they cope with and make sense of the changes?

We will study social, political, and cultural interactions among different groups of Americans during this period, and we will examine the ways that these groups struggled to reconcile the ideals of the American republic with the realities first of a crushing economic depression, and then with an expanding central government and capitalist economy. Emphasis will be given here to the major social and political trends that shaped the development of the modern American nation-state between the 1930s and 1950s, but we will also explore the ways that struggles over race, gender, and culture changed American society.

I expect students to develop reading, writing, and verbal skills through the course of the semester, but a solid foundation in these areas is a prerequisite for the course. The course will require you to read and master a great deal of information, and to write about it in a way that showcases your critical-thinking skills.

**Required Texts/Readings:** The following books are required. They are available from the college bookstore and other outlets. **Some of these books are available in multiple editions, so please pay close attention to the edition I am assigning:**

Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Mariner Books, 2006)

William E. Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years: On Roosevelt and His Legacy* (Columbia University Press, 1995)

J. Todd Moya, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Studs Terkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II* (The New Press, 1984)

Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.: America During World War II*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Harlan Davidson, 2012)

In addition, I will from time to time assign primary source readings and articles, which I will hand out in class and/or make available via the course Blackboard site. Students may also find it helpful to keep an American history survey textbook on hand to serve as a background resource. I can recommend the second volumes of Foner, *Give Me Liberty!*; Tindall and Shi, *America: A Narrative History*; Divine, et al., *America Past and Present*; and Bailyn, et al., *The Great Republic: A History of the American People*, among others.

**Grades:** Grades are computed on a ten-point scale: 90.0 – 100 = A, 80.0 – 89.9 = B, etc. I do not “curve” grades as such, but I will take improvement into account when assigning final grades.

Your grades will be based on two midterms (each of which will be worth 15% of your total grade), two reaction papers (each worth 20% of your final grade), one final exam (20%), and class participation (10%).

**You have the option of writing a 10-page research paper on an aspect of the New Deal or World War II in Texas in lieu of your final exam. (Examples of research subjects could include public works projects like the Indian Lodge at Fort Davis State Park or Dallas’s White Rock Lake, both of which were CCC projects, the WPA’s post office murals, or Lake Texoma; or a WWII-era military base. Of course, there are many other possible examples in addition to these.) If you choose this option, you must let me know by March 5—no exceptions.**

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and formatted in a way that does not challenge my eyesight or sanity. You will receive more detailed instructions for the reaction paper and research paper assignments later in the semester.

**I will not accept late papers without evidence of an emergency and will allow make-up exams only with evidence of an emergency.**

**Expectations:** The attached class schedule lists weekly reading assignments, which you should ideally complete before the first lecture of that week. Whether or not you can complete reading assignments before I deliver the corresponding lectures, I do expect you to keep up with the readings. I will also create an electronic discussion group for the class at the course's Blackboard site. I encourage you to discuss the course's content with your classmates as much as possible, either face-to-face or on the electronic discussion board. You should use these occasions to practice your ability to present and support historical arguments—respectfully, of course.

I do not have an official attendance policy, but you absolutely cannot expect to do well in this course if you miss class often. If you do miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate; I will share my lecture outlines with you, but I will not share my lecture notes. You will find that I work hard to prepare for class, make a point of arriving to the classroom on time, do my best to return graded assignments promptly, treat my students with respect, and maintain a sense of humor. I ask no more—or less—than the same from you. **Please turn your cell phone off before you enter my classroom or prepare to be embarrassed.**

**Statement Regarding Academic Dishonesty:** I encourage you to become familiar with the University's Policy of academic dishonesty found in the *Student Code of Conduct* (<http://policy.unt.edu/policydesc/code-student-conduct-and-discipline-18-1-11>). The content of the *Student Code* applies to this course.

If you turn in an assignment in this course, our understanding is that the words and ideas in the assignment are entirely your own. (If they are not your own, you need to cite them. I will provide you with specific guidelines for citing outside sources in your writing assignments.) If you have any doubt regarding these requirements, please consult with me before you complete any assignments for this course. **It is your responsibility to guarantee that the work you hand in is entirely your own and that you understand my expectations.** **If you fail to fulfill any of these requirements and do choose to plagiarize an assignment, you will receive *at minimum* a zero for the assignment, which means that you will most likely fail the course.** I refer cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Students, who may decide to take further punitive actions.

**Disability Statement:** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability

Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact the office by phone at 940.565.4323.

Students who have registered with the ODA should make an appointment to discuss their disabilities accommodation requests with the instructor. Students with special circumstances covered by the ADA may also consult with the History Department's ADA liaison, Professor Clark Pomerleau, in WH 234.

### Class Schedule (Subject to change on short notice)

Jan 15	Class introduction
Jan 17	Cultural clashes in the 1920s
Readings:	Leuchtenburg, Ch. 7; Miller, <i>New World Coming</i> , Ch. 12-13 (available on Blackboard)
Jan 22	The Boom/The Bust
Jan 24	The Crash
Readings:	Egan, Introduction-Ch. 5; Miller, Ch. 16-17 (available on Blackboard)
Jan 29	Down and out in the Great Depression
Jan 31	The election of 1932
Readings:	Leuchtenburg, Ch. 1-3, Egan, Ch. 6-10
Feb 5	FDR and the New Deal
Feb 7	The First 100 Days
Readings:	Leuchtenburg, Ch. 4-6, Egan, Ch. 11-20
Feb 12	The Dust Bowl
Feb 14	<b>First Midterm</b>
Readings:	Egan, Ch. 21-Epilogue
Feb 19	The "Second New Deal": Creating Welfare State Capitalism
Feb 21	Second New Deal, cont.
Readings:	Leuchtenburg, Ch. 8-9
Feb 26	What the New Deal Accomplished
Feb 28	Roots of War; <b>Reaction Paper I due</b>
Readings:	Terkel, Introduction and Book One
Mar 5	War in Europe
Mar 7	War in the Pacific
Readings:	Terkel, Books Two-Three
Mar 12-14	<b>Spring Break</b>
Mar 19	The US at War
Mar 21	The Homefront
Readings:	Terkel, Book Four-Epilogue
Mar 26	The World War II legacy for Latinos (Guest lecturer: Professor Kat Cloer)
Mar 28	<b>Second Midterm</b>
Readings:	Winkler, all

Apr 2            Women at War  
Apr 4            Documentary: "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter"  
Readings:      Moyer, Prologue-Ch. 3

Apr 9            African Americans at War  
Apr 11          **No class meeting**  
Readings:      Moyer, Ch. 4-Epilogue

Apr 16          World War II's effects on American society; **Reaction Paper II due**  
Apr 18          The Cold War: International Implications  
Readings:      TBA

Apr 23          The Cold War: The War at Home  
Apr 25          Research presentations  
Readings:      TBA

Apr 30          Research presentations  
May 1            Review

May 7, 10:30 a.m. **Final Exam**