

# They Must Be Represented ! Culture and Crisis in the Great Depression

Cours en ligne pour le Semestre 1 de 3<sup>ème</sup> année

## Course Title

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*They Must Be Represented ! Culture and Crisis in the Great Depression*

**Type de cours :** Cours en ligne

**Langue du cours/Language of instruction :** Anglais

## Enseignant(s) – Professor(s)

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## Course description – Targets

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The Great Depression profoundly changed the way Americans saw their country and their government: how can one believe in the American Dream when 25% of the population is unemployed? In spite – or because – of the deep economic crisis, cultural production was intense during the 1930s. The federal government funded documentary projects aimed at showing the people the country as it was (and gathering support for the President's initiatives) and the entertainment industry boomed.

The aim of this course is twofold: to familiarize students with the political and cultural transformations of 1930s America and to see how the crisis affected the image the United States had of itself as a land of freedom and opportunity. The course can also spark debate on the contemporary situation of the United States.

We will be working on political and literary texts (Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Steinbeck, Zora Neale Hurston, Grace Lumpkin, John Dos Passos...), photographs, films and songs (Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Margaret Bourke-White, Pare Lorentz, Victor Fleming, Woody Guthrie, George Gershwin, Billie Holiday...). The first half of the course will focus on the political and social history of the decade, while the second half will deal more directly with its artistic productions. Students will be encouraged to discuss these works as well as to imagine their own project on "culture and the crisis".

## Online teaching method

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Students will have access to the texts and documents pertinent to the class on Moodle. The online teaching will be a blend of live classes delivered on Teams, individual assessment when possible and videos on specific aspects of the course.

## Assessment

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Assessment will be based on:

- A mid-term essay (30%)
- An end-of term project (40%)
- Quizzes, short presentations and participation throughout the semester (30%): this part of the evaluation will be detailed in the fall and adapted to the needs and possibilities of the students (digital tools, etc...).

## Course outline

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The course outline presents the main themes that we will be tackling during the semester; these will not all be treated through a Teams session. The aim of the course is to be as interactive as possible, providing the students with assessment and study objectives online and offline.

1. Introduction: An Education by Shock; a Brief Overview of the Great Depression
2. From Boom to Bust: The Economic and Social Crisis
3. A Change in Political Culture: How Franklin Delano Roosevelt Transformed Government
4. Showing the Crisis: The Cultural Policies of the Depression
5. The Era of Documentary
6. Entertainment and Escapism: Hollywood in the 1930s
7. Fighting the Crisis: the Era of Radicalism?
8. Hobos and Outcasts
9. Farmers and migrants in Depression literature
10. Violence and Racism

## Bibliography

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A coursepack with essential reading will be made available at the start of term via email and on Moodle. The priority is for students to read closely the texts in the coursepack.

Extracts from most books mentioned below will be in the course pack, there are suggestions of additional reading is suggested, which will be complemented in the fall by additional online resources.

\*\*\*: priority reading

\*\* : extracts of these books will be in the coursepack

### **History of the New Deal and the Roosevelt presidency**

\*\*BADGER, Anthony J. *The New Deal, The Depression Years, 1933-1940*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002.

COHEN, Adam. *Nothing to Fear. FDR's Inner Circle and the Hundred Days that Created Modern America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010.

\*\*KENNEDY, David. *Freedom from Fear. The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

POLENBERG, Richard (ed). *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933-1945. A Brief History with Documents*. St Martin's Press, 2000.

\*\*\*RAUCHWAY, Eric. *The Great Depression and the New Deal. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

SCHLESINGER, Arthur M. Jr. *The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933, The Age of Roosevelt*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 [1957]

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Coming of the New Deal: 1933-1935, The Age of Roosevelt*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 [1958]

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Politics of Upheaval: 1935-1936, The Age of Roosevelt*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003 [1960]

### American society and culture during the Great Depression

\*\*\*DICKSTEIN, Morris. *Dancing in the Dark. A Cultural History of the Great Depression*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

ROSE, Nancy E. *Put to Work. The WPA and Public Employment in the Great Depression*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009.

\*\* STOTT, William. *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

SZALAY, Michael. *New Deal Modernism. American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

*Primary sources (novels, political and historical texts, documentary works)*

\*\* AGEE, James et EVANS, Walker, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

\*\*ALGREN, Nelson, *Somebody in Boots* (1935), London: Harper Collins, 1993.

\*\*ALLEN, Frederick Lewis. *Only Yesterday. An Informal History of the 1920s*, available online:

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0500831h.html>

-- *Since Yesterday. America in the 1930s*, available online:

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0600221h.html>

\*\* ANDERSON, Nels. *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man* (1923), reprinted as *On Hobos and Homelessness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

\*\* BOURKE-WHITE Margaret, and CALDWELL, Erskine. *You Have Seen Their Faces*[1937]. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1995.

\*\* CALDWELL, Erskine. *Tobacco Road*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1995.

\*\* DOS PASSOS, John. *U.S.A.: The 42nd Parallel, 1919, The Big Money* [1930, 1932, 1936]. Eds.

Townsend Ludington, Daniel Aaron. New York: Library of America, 1996.

HURSTON, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). New York : Harper Perennials, 2013.

\*\* LANGE, Dorothea, TAYLOR, Paul. *An American Exodus; a Record of Human Erosion* [1939]. Paris: J-M Place, 1999.

\*\*LUMPKIN, Grace. *To Make My Bread* [1932]. University of Illinois Press, 1996.

\*\* STEINBECK, John. *The Grapes of Wrath* [1939]. New York: Penguin, 1976.

TERKEL, Studs. *Hard Times. An Oral History of the Great Depression*. New Press, 2001. Some of the interviews recorded in *Hard Times* can be listened to at <https://studsterkel.wfmt.com/explore/topics/great-depression>

WRIGHT, Richard, ROSSKAM, Edwin, *12 Million Black Voices; a Folk History of the Negro in the United States*, New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1992.

\*\* WRIGHT, Richard, *Native Son*. New York : Harper's, 2005.

For a good synthesis of the period in French, read : Yves-Marie Péréon, Elise Trogrlic, *Les années Roosevelt*. Paris : Atlande, 2013.

### Online resources

Music from the Depression : <http://musicfromthedepression.com>

PBS – The American Experience, “Surviving the Dust Bowl”:  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dustbowl/>

Resources on the New Deal from the Library of Congress:  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/>

Essays on Roosevelt’s life and politics: <https://millercenter.org/president/fdroosevelt>  
Website devoted to art, culture and politics in the 1930s (cinema, literature, advertising,  
music, radio...): <http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7E1930s/front.html>