

HIST/P SC-3020/3430-901
Making Modern America:
In Search of the Great Depression & New Deal
Presidential Dream Course
(Fall 2015)

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Time: MW, 4:30-5:45PM
Location: M, AH 0255; W, Various
Credits: 3
Prerequisite: 100 or 200-level HIST or PSC

Office Hours
Gaddie: M: 1-2:30 & by appt.
Wrobel: MW: 1:30-4PM
Clayton: TR: 9:30AM-1PM

Course Description

The Great Depression of the 1930s transformed both the relationship between the national government and its citizens and the physical landscape of the nation through massive public works projects. In addition, the human suffering of the decade fundamentally transformed the relationship of artists and intellectuals to the American public. The nation's intellectual class had viewed the public derisively in the 1920s, but during the Depression portrayed that public as noble, even heroic.

In addition to being an era of economic and political transformation, the 1930s was one of the richest periods of creative cultural activity in the visual arts, literature, and music that the nation has seen. This course introduces students to the historical, political, economic, and cultural developments of this remarkable decade.

"Making Modern America" moves well beyond the goal of merely understanding the developments and legacies of the 1930s. We will travel in search of the physical presence of the 1930s in the built environment and the archival records of the University of Oklahoma, City of Norman, and state of Oklahoma. We will work with the OU Libraries (including the Western History Collections and Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center), to create a three-part interactive website from our scholarly investigations and historical reconstructions:

1. *In Search of the Great Depression and New Deal in Norman and at OU*
2. *The Federal Writers' Project Guide to 1930s Oklahoma Revisited*
3. *Landmarks of Greatness from the 1930s*

The first part of the website is a digital archive comprised of oral histories (with the last of the surviving Norman residents and Oklahoma residents with Norman/OU connections who were alive during the 1930s), photographs, maps, works of art, and artifacts, and a digital mapping and reconstruction of the surviving built environment of the New Deal.

The second website segment is devoted to an updating of *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State* (1941), part of the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Writers Project State Guides Series. The 1986 reprint of this work is required reading for the class. Our plan is to create a "then and now" documentary record of the physical and cultural landscape of parts of the state by re-taking four or five of the tours/road trips conducted by the Oklahoma guide authors in the late 1930s. These tours will examine how much of the built environment of the thirties remains along those routes and how much has been transformed, and how the cultural landscapes have changed. Each of these four or five tours will be re-taken by a small group of students from the class. This part of the website will coincide (in Spring 2016) with the 75th anniversary of the original publication of the Oklahoma guide.

The third part of the website is comprised of group projects on a single landmark from the decade: an event, a piece of legislation, court ruling, literary work, film, song, musical score, work of social or political theory, theology, philosophy, or even a building, museum, monument, or public work that serves as a testament to the enduring significance of the Depression Decade. These papers will be housed on the website in a format that parallels the most innovative and user-friendly historical and literary content websites, e.g., SteinbeckNow: <http://www.steinbecknow.com> Each paper will feature photos and other illustrations, and, potentially, accompanying audio files and/or film clips. We will be encouraging groups to work on topics related to *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Course Objectives

In addition to providing a deep introduction to the political, economic, and cultural history of the 1930s, the course offers instruction in a wide range of research skills—including fieldwork, oral history, archival research, geographic information systems, and digital history. Course projects will involve a good deal of writing and re-writing, and students will also participate in the process of editing each other's work prior to posting on the websites. Thus, the course is designed to help students develop expert knowledge on the 1930s and participate fully in the application of research methodologies in creating and presenting new knowledge.

Course Requirements

Full participation in two of the three main course projects (the first, and either the second or third) is mandatory. In addition to the discovery, selection, and presentation of a range of visual, audio and film materials, you will be responsible for producing a body of written text for two of the three macro projects. Active and thoughtful contributions to our discussions of course readings, lectures, projects, and themes is expected, as is attendance in all class sessions, including the field trip.

Project Papers

During the course of the semester every student will complete a written assignment for two of the three course levels: Project 1 (local level—mandatory for everyone); and Project 2 (state level); or Project 3 (national level). Each of these assignments will include approximately 1,500 words of text (5 pages) pertaining to your individual contribution to the project. However, the project writing requirement is just one component of each assignment; all projects will involve the application of research skills acquired in the course workshops—e.g., fieldwork, archival research, oral history, GIS, website building, digital history, etc. Students will work on the assignments in groups, but each participant will be responsible for a clearly defined segment of the assignment's content. More details about the projects and papers will be provided on the course D2L site.

Reaction Papers

Additionally, students will write short reaction papers to all four of the lectures delivered by the distinguished guest speakers. Each of these papers should be approximately 500 words (1½ - 2 pages) and will be due the Friday following the special lectures.

Grading

1. *In Search of the Great Depression and New Deal in Norman and at OU: 30%*

Archival research, fieldwork or oral history research leading to a 1,500 word text accompanied by appropriate images, audio or film clips.

2. *The Federal Writers' Project Guide to 1930s Oklahoma Revisited: 30%*

Archival research, fieldwork or oral history research leading to a 1,500 word text accompanied by appropriate images, audio or film clips.

Or/

Landmarks of Greatness: 30%

Archival research, fieldwork or oral history research leading to a 1,500 word text accompanied by appropriate images, audio or film clips.

3. Reaction Papers: four 500-word papers, each worth 5%: **20%**

3. Class Discussion: 20% of the grade is based upon your contributions to our weekly discussions of course readings and lectures, and participation in workshops. This is a Presidential Dream Course and attendance at all sessions is expected and required, as is careful preparation for every class session.

Course Schedule

We meet twice a week for 75 minutes. On Mondays, Professor Gaddie and/or Wrobel, or one of our four distinguished guest speakers, will deliver a lecture. In the Wednesday slot we will meet in various locations on campus to acquire the requisite skills for work on the projects (above). These projects involve fieldwork, archival research, oral histories, photography, digital mapping and other skills, to prepare you for your individual and group contributions to the course websites.

Locations

CAC: Carl Albert Center (Monet Hall)

HCLC: Helmerich Collaborative Learning Center Classroom (Bizzell Library, LL123)

WHC: Western History Collection (Monet Hall)

FJMA: Fred Jones Museum of Art

Film Series

We are running a film series comprised of five movies: *Scarface* (1932), *Our Daily Bread* (1934), *Modern Times* (1936), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). You are required to attend at least three of the five screenings (or make special arrangements to view the films privately). All screenings are open to the public.

Required Course Readings

Gaddie & Wrobel, *In Search of the Depression & New Deal: A Digital Reader* (2015)

David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War* (Oxford, 1999)

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939, Penguin, 20th-Century Classics, 2006)

Susan Shillinglaw, *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath* (Penguin, 2014)

Works Progress Administration, *Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941):

<https://archive.org/details/oklahomaguidetos00writrich>

A Note on Required Readings

The digital reader is comprised largely of articles and essays by contemporary political scientists and political theorists (secondary works), as well as documents from the 1930s (primary sources), and how-to guides to field and archival research, oral history digital history, and political science research methods. David Kennedy's *Freedom from Fear* (1999) is still the best single-volume study of the Great Depression and New Deal. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma* is one of the most impressive of all the WPA state guides. In addition to Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), we will read his 1936 newspaper articles on the conditions of migrant families in California, "The Harvest Gypsies," and Susan Shillinglaw's excellent short book *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath*.

Distinguished Guest Speakers

Charles S. Bullock, III (Richard B. Russell Chair in Political Science, and Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor, University of Georgia). Bullock is a prolific author of more than ten books on Southern politics, including *The New Politics of the Old South* (1998), and *David Duke and the Politics of Race in the South* (1995). He is also an award-winning teacher, and consultant to state attorney generals and to state and local governments all across the country. Bullock will lecture on Southern Politics During the Depression Years.

http://polisci.uga.edu/directory/faculty_staff/bullock-iii-charles-s

David Kennedy (McLachlan Professor Emeritus, Stanford): “Bending History’s Arc: F.D.R. and the Shape of the Twentieth Century.” Kennedy’s *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* won the Pulitzer Prize and the Francis Parkman Prize. Kennedy is also the author of the Pulitzer prize finalist *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (25th Anniversary Edition, 2004) and of the Bancroft Prize-winning *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* (1970). A renowned public speaker, Professor Kennedy delivered the luncheon address at the 2013 Teach-In at OU on “The Great Depression and WWII.” <http://www.oah.org/lectures/lecturers/view/969>

David Levy (David Ross Boyd Professor of History Emeritus, OU). The University of Oklahoma Press has just published Volume II of Levy’s *History of the University of Oklahoma* this summer. The work provides extensive coverage of the 1930s at OU. Levy, a true OU treasure, has authored biographies of Herbert Croly, and Mark Twain; edited the multi-volume letters of Louis Brandeis; published books on FDR’s Fireside Chats, and on the debate over the Vietnam War. Recipient of several major teaching awards, including the Regents Award for Superior Teaching, Levy will lecture and lead a research workshop on the Works Progress Administration at OU. <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/L/David.W.Levy-1/>

Susan Shillinglaw (President’s Scholar [2012-2013] and Professor of English and Comparative Literature, San Jose State University, and Scholar-in-Residence, Steinbeck National Center): “On Reading The Grapes of Wrath.” Recently honored as the President’s Scholar at SJSU in recognition of her scholarship on Steinbeck, her most recent book, *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath* is a superb guide to the novel for contemporary readers. Shillinglaw is also the author of *A Journey Into Steinbeck’s California* (2006, 2011), and *Carol and John Steinbeck: Portrait of a Marriage* (2013). <http://blogs.sjsu.edu/today/2013/2012-2013-presidents-scholar-susan-shillinglaw/>

POLICIES

Electronic Devices: Laptops, PDAs, and I-Pads will occasionally be needed in the Wednesday seminar sessions. However, we ask that you never use non-course related websites or social media during lectures, workshops, or discussions.

Academic Misconduct: According to the OU Student Handbook (p54) "academic misconduct includes [a] cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement; [b] assisting others in any such act; or [c] attempts to engage in such acts." University policy will apply in such cases.

Disabilities: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact us personally as

soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. The Disability Resource Center provides support services to students with disabilities: see www.ou.edu/drc, or please contact Director Chelle' Guttery at drc@ou.edu, 405-325-3852 voice, or TDD 405-325-4173, or Fax 405-325-4491.

Religious Accommodations: It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students resulting from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Please let us know early in the semester of pending absences.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Students involved in OU official extra-curricular activities should inform me at the beginning of the semester of any known scheduling conflicts.

Class Courtesy: Arrive on time for class. Do not leave early unless you have informed us prior to class that you will need to do so, and then please sit near the door. Treat your peers with the same respect and courtesy you wish to have accorded to yourself.

Attendance: Success in the Dream Course can only be accomplished by being in class. Your presence is strongly encouraged.

Written Assignment Submission: Written papers will be submitted to the D2L drop boxes, and must be submitted in a conventional, readable format (e.g., Word or as a Rich Text or plain text file). Hard copies will not be accepted in lieu of electronic copies. MS Office with Word is now freely available for download to the entire OU community through the IT store at: <http://www.ou.edu/ouit>. Please note that late coursework will not be accepted. The submission deadline for each assignment is Friday at 11:59PM the week they are due.

Tentative Course schedule

- Week 1:** M, Aug 24: Course Introduction (Gaddie and Wrobel); New Deal Transformations (Gaddie); Cultural Transformations (Wrobel)
W, Aug 26: Workshop 1: Norman Geography & the Archives, I (Widener, Reese, & Clayton: WHC)
Readings: Kennedy, Prologue & Chapter 1; *Oklahoma Guide*, Part I: Background; Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 1: Geography & Archival Research
- Week 2** M, Aug 31: Causes of the Depression & Early Responses: Historical Perspectives (Wrobel) & Political Science Perspectives (Gaddie)
W, Sept 2: Workshop 2: Historical GIS Applications (Widener, Clayton: HCLC)
Readings: Kennedy, Chapter 2; *Oklahoma Guide*, Part II: Principal Cities
Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 2: Historical GIS
- Week 3** M, Sept. 7: NO CLASS-LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
W, Sept. 9: Workshop 3: Field Research and Oral History (Carlisle, Wrobel, Gaddie, Widener: HCLC)
Readings: Kennedy, Chapter 3; *Oklahoma Guide*, Part III: Tours, 1-8
Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 3: Conducting Oral Histories
Movie Night: *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), or *Scarface* (1932)
- Week 4** M, Sept. 14: *The New Deal at OU (Levy)
W, Sept. 16: Workshop 4: Archival Research (Levy, Reese: WHC)
Readings: Kennedy, Chapter 4; *Oklahoma Guide*, Part III: Tours, 9-16
Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 4: Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time*, 1-10; Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 9-25.
Reaction Paper 1 Due
- Week 5** M, Sept. 21: New Deal and Nation, I: Relief & Recovery (Wrobel)
W, Sept. 23: Workshop 5: PSC Research Methods (Gaddie, Gerth: CAC)
Readings: Kennedy, Chapters 5-6;
Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 5: PSC Qualitative Research Methods
Movie Night: *Our Daily Bread* (1934)
- Week 6** M, Sept. 28: Populism, Nationalism & Conservatism (Gaddie)
W, Sept. 30: Workshop 6: Creating and Online Collection (Carlisle, Clayton: HCLC); + Project 1 Presentations, Group A
Readings: Kennedy, Chapters 7-8;
Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 6: Introducing Digital Humanities;
- Week 7** M, Oct. 5: *Bending History's Arc: FDR & the Shape of the 20th Century (Kennedy)
W, Oct. 7: Workshop 7: Creating an Online Exhibit (Carlisle, Clayton: HCLC)
+ Project 1 Presentations, Group B
Readings: Kennedy, Chapters 9-11; Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 7: _____
Movie Night: *Modern Times* (1936)
Reaction Paper 2 Due

- Week 8** M, Oct. 12: New Deal and Nation, II: Reform & Decline (Wrobel)
W, Oct. 14: Workshop 8: Curating an Online Exhibit (Carlisle, Clayton: HCLC);
+ Project 1 Presentations, Group C
Readings: Kennedy, Chapters 12 & 13; Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 8: _____
Project 1 Due
- Week 9** M, Oct. 19: Ideology & Demagoguery in State Politics (Gaddie)
W, Oct. 21: Workshop 9: Open Workshop; Discussion of Next Project
(Clayton, Gaddie, Wrobel: HCLC)
Readings: Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 9: _____
- Week 10** M, Oct. 26: *Southern Politics During the Depression Years (Bullock)
W, Oct. 28: Discussion: Regional Politics & New Deal (Gaddie, Wrobel: HCLC)
Readings: Gaddie and Wrobel, *In Search*, Ch. 10: Bullock, _____
Sat, Oct. 31: Field Trip: Following the Guide (Bus Tour)
Reaction Paper 3 Due
- Week 11** M, Nov. 2: Rediscovering America: The Arts in the 1930s (Wrobel)
W, Nov. 4: Fred Jones Museum Tour: Art of the 1930s (White, FJMA)
Readings: *In Search*, Ch. 11: Picturing the Depression
Movie Night: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)
- Week 12** M, Nov. 9: Will Rogers & 1930s Popular Culture (Gaddie)
W, Nov. 11: Open Workshop (Carlisle, Widener, Clayton, Reese, Gaddie,
Wrobel: HCLC)
Readings: *In Search*, Ch. 12: 1930s Popular Culture
- Week 13** M, Nov. 16: *On Reading *The Grapes of Wrath* (Shillinglaw)
W, Nov. 18: Discussion: *The Grapes of Wrath*, I; Landmarks Workshop I
(HCLC)
Readings: *Grapes*, 1-5; Shillinglaw, *On Reading*, Part I;
In Search, Ch. 13: Steinbeck, *Harvest Gypsies*
Movie Night: *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940)
Reaction Paper 4 Due
- Week 14** M, Nov 23: The Negro Leagues & Race Relations (Gaddie);
W, Nov 25: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Readings: *In Search*, Ch. 14: Race Relations in Depression America
- Week 15** M, Nov 30: John Steinbeck's America: The Depression Years (Wrobel)
W, Dec. 2: Discussion: *Grapes*, II; Landmarks Workshop II (HCLC)
Readings: Steinbeck, *Grapes*, Ch.'s 6-19; Shillinglaw, *On Reading*, Part II
- Week 16: M, Dec. 7: Reflections on the Thirties (Gaddie and Wrobel)
W, Dec 9: Discussion: *Grapes*, III; Landmarks Workshop III (HCLC)
Readings: Steinbeck, *Grapes*, Chapters 20-30; Shillinglaw, *On Reading*, Part III
- Finals Week:** T. Dec. 15: Group Presentations, Projects 2 & 3. **Projects 2 & 3 Due**