

Columbia University
History W3649
Fall 1999

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AMERICA, 1918-1945
PROSPERITY, DEPRESSION, AND WAR

This course examines one of the most turbulent periods of modern American history: the era of the great economic boom and cultural revolution of the 1920s; of the Great Depression and the New Deal; and of World War II. It will attempt to give students a sense of both the great public events of the era and of the social, economic, and cultural forces that underlay those events. It is the second of a series of three courses (the others being History W3620, "The Progressive Era," to be offered in fall 2000, and W3651, "America since 1945," to be offered in the spring of 2000) that together consider the history of the United States from the 1890s to the present.

Course Requirements for Undergraduates: Students are expected to attend lectures twice a week; to read the weekly assignments; and to meet in sections once a week to discuss both the lectures and the readings. Each student will also be asked to write a paper of at least 3000 words in length, due the week of November 29 (see assignment below); to take a midterm examination in class on October 20; and to take a final examination in exam period. The paper, the exams, and section participation will each constitute one-third of the grade for the course. The paper will be evaluated for both content (evidence and argument) and style of presentation. Exams should be as well-written as time constraints allow; both argument and evidence are critical there as well. Section participation will be measured by a combination of attendance, preparation, and participation. Students who do not attend sections will, therefore, receive no credit for one third of the course.

This syllabus, along with other information about this course, will be available on the History W3649 home page, which you can access through the history department website on the Columbia web (www.columbia.edu/cu/history).

Course Requirements for Graduate Students: In addition to attending lectures and doing the assigned readings, graduate students in history and Ph.D. candidates in other GSAS programs will be expected to write a historiographical essay of 12-15 pages, due December 6, on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor (see assignment below). They are excused from the undergraduate exams and paper. Graduate students from schools outside the GSAS and non-Ph.D. students in departments other than history may choose between fulfilling the undergraduate or graduate requirements.

Reading Assignments: Specific assignments for discussion sections are noted in the schedule below. All readings are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books (536 West 112th Street, between Broadway and Amsterdam) and on reserve at Butler.

The following assignments should be completed before the hourly examination October 20:

- William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity: 1914-1932*, chapters 3-5, 10
- Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, chapters 1-4
- Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, chapters 5-8, conclusion
- John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, chapters 8-11
- Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion*
- William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, chapters 1-2

The following assignments should be completed before the final examination:

- William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, chapters 3-14
- Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, chapters 5-8, conclusion
- Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*, chapters 1, 6-10
- Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, chapters 1-7, 11, epilogue
- Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War*, chapters 7-10
- John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, chapters 1-7, 11

Course Schedule:

Week of September 6:

W: The Postwar Crisis

Week of September 13:

M: New Era Abundance

W: New Era Inequality

SECTION: Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, chapters 1-4; William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity*, chapters 3-5, 10

Week of September 20:

M: Shaping a New Culture

W: Consumerism, Gender, and the Middle Class

SECTION: Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, chapters 5-8, conclusion

Week of September 27:

M: The Politics of Prosperity

W: The Politics of Race

SECTION: John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, chapters 8-11

Week of October 4:

M: Cultures in Conflict: Fundamentalism

W: Cultures in Conflict: Prohibition and the Klan

SECTION: Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*

Week of October 11:

M: Intellectuals and the New Era
W: Causes of the Great Depression

SECTION: William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, chapters 1-2

Week of October 18:

M: Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression
W: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

NO SECTIONS

Week of October 25:

M: Launching the New Deal
Th: The New Deal and Reform

SECTION: Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, chapters 3-8, 10-11, 14

Week of November 1:

M: ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY
W: The New Deal Welfare State

SECTION: Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, chapters 5-10

Week of November 8:

M: The Rise of Organized Labor
W: The Thirties Left

SECTION: Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, chapters 5-8, conclusion; Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, prologue, chapters 1-5

Week of November 15:

M: Patterns of Depression Culture
W: The Late New Deal

SECTION: Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*, chapters 1-7, 11, epilogue

Week of November 22:

M: The American Road to War
W: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

NO SECTIONS

READING ASSIGNMENT: William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, chapters 9, 12, 13

Week of November 29:

M: America and the War: Mobilizing
W: America and the War: Liberalism

SECTION: Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform*, chapters 7-10

UNDERGRADUATE PAPERS DUE THIS WEEK

Week of December 6:

M: America and the War: Alliances
W: America and the War: Moral Choices

SECTION: John Dower, *War Without Mercy*, chapters 1-7, 11

GRADUATE STUDENT PAPERS DUE THIS WEEK

Week of December 13:

M: Review Session

Undergraduate Paper Assignment:

You are asked to write an essay of no less than 3000 words (approximately 12 double-spaced pages) on a topic of your choice. The paper is due the week of November 29 at a time and place specified by your section instructor. Topics must be discussed with and approved by your section instructor.

All papers must be based in significant part on primary sources, although it is appropriate (and usually necessary) to use secondary sources as well. Primary sources can consist of contemporary published or unpublished materials; film; painting; photography; music; recorded speeches and radio broadcasts; oral histories; or any other artifact of the period examined in this course. A great deal of primary material is available in the Columbia libraries and on the Internet. (The website for this course contains links to many sites from which you might derive sources.)

Although primary sources might suggest a topic to you, they should not themselves be your topic. Instead, you should use your sources to ask, and attempt to answer, a question about the 1918-1945 era that seems to you interesting and important. The evidence you gather should support your argument, not be a substitute for it. At the same time, you should be careful not to choose a question for which no evidence is available or that is too large to be effectively answered in an essay of this length.

Relatively early in the term, your section instructor will ask you to submit a short description of your topic and, a short time later, an example of your sources with a brief analysis of it. This will give you a chance to work out your plans for your paper with some guidance and will help prevent last-minute desperation.

Your sources should be properly cited, and your paper should contain a bibliography.

Graduate Student Paper Assignment:

You are asked to write a paper of 3000 to 4000 words in length, which should be delivered to Professor Brinkley's mailbox by December 6. Your paper should focus on a subject in the history of the period 1918-1945 for which a significant body of scholarship is available. You should familiarize yourself with the scholarship on your topic and write a review essay in which you discuss the arguments in at least three (and ideally more) important sources. The purpose of the essay is not simply to summarize the arguments of others, but to offer your own assessment of the state of the field and the questions still to be answered. You should consult with Professor Brinkley about your topic in the first half of the semester.