

America in the Great Depression and WWII



Faculty Information:

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Bio: PhD (2010) Boston University; MA (2005) Boston University; BA (2001) Vanderbilt University. Specializes in the political, economic, and cultural history of the 20th century U.S., with specific focus on the American South.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Great Depression and World War II wrought dramatic changes on the people, government, and culture of Americans. The country transformed into a world power, modernized its institutions, and developed a dramatically new world of media and consumer identity.

emerged out of this dynamic period, and consider how the years of crisis shaped our modern perspectives, institutions, cultural attitudes, and national imagination. Students will engage in historical inquiry and hone skills of analytical and narrative understanding and communication.

In this course, through both primary and secondary sources, we will consider the cultural and political landscapes that

 COURSE GOALS

In this course students will develop the following skills:

- Construct logical and nuanced arguments making use of evidence
- Read effectively both primary and secondary sources, including:
 - Ability to summarize main point
 - Analyze in historical context and connect to divergent viewpoints
 - Extrapolate key points and significance from primary sources
 - Identify historical arguments and the structure of secondary sources
 - Evaluate historical arguments on the basis of logical flow, use of evidence, and assess implications

- Communicate effectively and elegantly in both written and oral work

Furthermore, students will become familiar with the following historical developments and legacies:

- Development of the modern state and presidency
- Maturation of a consumer society
- The effects of Depression and War on Americans, their government, and their nation's role in the world
- The cultural developments of the era, both from a technological and thematic perspective

Consult this syllabus first, but contact me if you are having trouble, are confused, or just want to discuss the course. All questions welcome.

Students agree to the following when undertaking this course:

- Submit all assignments complete, according to instructions, and on time—no late assignments
- Be prepared for all class discussions by reading and completing all assigned work in advance
- Actively participate in discussions
- Provide and consider constructive evaluations and feedback
- Cooperate with, support, and be respectful of your colleagues and the professor
- Communicate with the professor concerning any issue BEFORE it becomes a significant problem
- Make a full effort on all assignments
- Adhere to Fitchburg State's academic standards including those governing academic honesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or fraud. Serious grading consequences will result for students accused of academic dishonesty and will follow established university policies.

In return, faculty responsibilities include:

- Providing course content that is timely, pertinent, and current based on sound research, not hearsay
- Be on time and prepared for all classes (or discussions)
- Provide consultation, advisement, and/or problem solving time for students
- Provide clear instructions and expectations regarding assignments
- Be prepared to provide and consider feedback
- Honor and respect students
- Demonstrate ethical behavior
- Provide and consider constructive evaluations and feedback
- Return assignments within a timely manner (usually within one to two weeks)

ADA Statement: Fitchburg State encourages the full participation of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of campus living and learning. To support access and inclusion, Fitchburg State offers reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, sensory, etc.). If you require accommodations for this class, please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Agreement as soon as possible so that we can discuss your specific needs. Any information that you share with me will be held in the strictest confidence, unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you require academic accommodations but do not have an Accommodation Agreement, contact Disability Services a.s.a.p. to establish your eligibility: www.fitchburgstate.edu/disability or 978-665-4020.

DISCUSSION DECORUM

*Respectful discussion, debate, and inquiry are at the heart of academic enterprise. Advocating civility does not symbolize a retreat from passionate argument. On the contrary, it acknowledges that meaningful and constructive dialog requires a certain degree of mutual respect, willingness to listen, and tolerance for opposing points of view. Classroom and on-line discussions, like any academic discourse, should follow norms of decency and effective communications. Debates should attack ideas, with attention to the strength of evidence presented and to alternative explanations. Classes that establish norms for respectful dialogue and reasoned debate can empower students to argue constructively and convincingly, to grow through rigorous intellectual exchange, and to prepare them for life in a complex, pluralistic world.**



ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion - 20% Weekly class discussions are essential in the learning process of this course. Because there are no weekly lectures, discussion is where you will process and learn to articulate about the key events and developments of the course. Discussions will be evaluated on the basis of quality and quantity of your contributions, including assessment of your ability to clearly understand and discuss the readings and apply them to the primary source and to indicate broader implications of the developments in the thematic discussions. At the end of the semester you will submit a self-evaluation of your discussion contributions.

Essay 1 - 20% A 4-5 page (approx. 1200 words) essay, details will be distributed in class.

Essay 2 - 20% A 3-4 page (approx. 1000 words) essay, details will be distributed in class.

Short Summaries - 10% These short summaries will accompany class presentations.

Research Paper - 30% In 10-12 pages, you will investigate a historical question raised by one of our discussions or readings. Your research does not have to directly address a particular reading or topic on the syllabus, but rather explore a subject of your choice related to the themes in class through

primary sources. You may extend an author's findings with new research and analysis, or refute some part of an author's findings (in an essay this should not be folly to try to refute the arguments of an entire book; remain focused and specific); you may reconsider a document or set of documents we looked at over the semester; you may also consult . Your paper must make use of at least 6 primary sources and 6 reputable secondary sources. If you do not know what I mean by this, talk to me. *You must submit a research proposal and list of sources by **May 1**, if not you will receive a 5 point penalty on your final paper grade.*

IMPORTANT: Plagiarism—the attempt to pass off another's written work, from any source, as your own in any course setting (discussion or written assignment), without adequate reference or citation—is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism can be found in many forms, so if you are unclear on how to cite, what should be cited, or how to use research in your papers, please see me. The punishment for such an infraction is severe, including likely failure of the course, so please do not make this mistake.

GRADING AND MECHANICS

Essays will be graded on use of evidence, sophistication of analysis, and clarity of perspective. A complete breakdown of expectations for A, B, C, and D level work can be found on Blackboard under Assignments.

Citation, writing clarity, and grammar are important in making your argument effective and understandable. I suggest you visit the following site to review writing skills and techniques: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/index.html>, and also that you make use of FSU's Writing Center to review your work, particularly if you have concerns.

To improve your writing, improve your reading. This includes reading a daily newspaper, either online or in print, such as the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, or *Boston Globe*.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression*.

James Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*.

Recommended: Colin Gordon, ed., *Major Problems in American History: 1920-1945*

Other readings available on Blackboard. Always bring assigned readings to class (either paper/printed or digital copies).

COURSE SCHEDULE, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Assigned readings are to be prepared in advance of the date listed. * indicates reading available on Blackboard. **Again, always bring assigned readings to class.**

Date	DOW	#	Topic	Assigned Reading	Due Dates
1/15/13	Tuesday	1	Introduction to the Uses of the Past		
1/17/13	Thursday	2	Intro to Modern America		
1/22/13	Tuesday	3	Causes of the Great Depression	*Himmelberg Essay (Gordon, Ch. 7)	
1/24/13	Thursday	4	Experiences of Depression	*Gordon, Chapter 9: Agriculture between the Wars: Group 1 Conkin essay; Group 2 Kelley essay	
1/29/13	Tuesday	5	Experiences of Depression	*Gordon Chapter 10: Private Lives in Hard Times: 1) Milkman; 2) Chauncey	
1/31/13	Thursday	6	Politics and Culture of Consumption: Prologue	*Gordon, Chapter 4: Documents and Essay	
2/5/13	Tuesday	7	Culture of Abundance; Introduction to Skills: Reading and Note Taking/Writing Workshop	*Susman, Introduction	
2/7/13	Thursday	8	Advertising in the Great Depression	*Peruse Depression era advertisements from Duke U; Marchand, introduction	Summary
2/12/13	Tuesday	9	<i>Fables of Abundance</i>	*T. Jackson Lears, excerpt	
2/14/13	Thursday	10	<i>Imagining Consumers</i>	Blaszczyk Intro and Conclusion	
2/19/13	Tuesday	11	Liberalism in the 20th Century	*Gerstle Essay, "Protean Character..."	
2/21/13	Thursday	12	The First New Deal	*Jacobs, Intro 1-7, Chapter 3	
2/26/13	Tuesday	13	FDR and the Modern Presidency	*Excerpt from Radio's America: Introduction and Chapter 3 "Radio's Democracy"	Paper 1 due 2/24

2/28/13	Thursday	14	The Second New Deal and the End of Reform	*Gordon, Chapter 11, "Shaping the New Deal" Documents and Kennedy essay*	
3/5/13	Tuesday	15	New Deal Critics	*Gordon, Chapter 13 Documents	
3/7/13	Thursday	16	Court Packing	*Court packing documents	Summary
3/12/13	Tuesday		Spring Break		
3/14/13	Thursday		Spring Break		
3/19/13	Tuesday	17	Iconography of the New Deal and FDR	Bring your cartoon and present to class.	
3/21/13	Thursday	18	Assessing "New Deal liberalism"	*Gordon in Gordon	
3/26/13	Tuesday	19	Diagnosing Depression Culture	Assigned Selection from Dickstein	Paper 2 due 3/24
3/28/13	Thursday	20	Depression Culture (Presentations)	<i>Dancing in the Dark</i>	
4/2/13	Tuesday	21	Depression Culture (Presentations)	<i>Dancing in the Dark</i>	Summary
4/4/13	Thursday	22	America and the World post - WWI World	*Gordon, Chapter 8: Dilemmas of Liberal Internationalism - documents and Costigliola essay	
4/9/13	Tuesday		No Class: Undergraduate Conference and Convocation		
4/11/13	Thursday	23	Debating US Engagement	*Nolan Essay	
4/16/13	Tuesday	24	Home Front: Women and Families	*Gordon Chapter 14, Documents	
4/18/13	Thursday	25	Home Front: Production	*Gordon Chapter 15, Political Economy Documents	
4/23/13	Tuesday	26	Warfare State	Warfare State: Intro and Part I	
4/25/13	Thursday	27		Warfare State: Part II	Summary
4/30/13	Tuesday	28	Ending the War	Gordon, Essays in Chapter 15	

5/2/13	Thursday	29	Did WWII End the Great Depression?	Essays on Blackboard	Research Proposal 5/1
5/7/13	Tuesday	30	Selling the War	Examples of Propaganda	
5/9/13	Thursday	31	The War in American Memory	In pairs: bring a clip from a WWII movie, any era	
TBD	Final Exam Date				Research Paper Due
