

Summer 6-15-2011

ENG 2009G-001: The Great Depression and Recession - An American Tradition

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ENG 2009G-001 – *Labor, Class, and Power: Lessons from the Great Depression*

BLAIR 2165, 1:00 pm-2:45 pm

Office Hours: M-Th 12:00-12:45

Texts

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*

Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*

Nearing, *The Good Life* (handout)

Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*

West, *Miss Lonelyhearts* and *Day of the Locust*

Wright, *Eight Men*

The Great Depression and Recession – An American Tradition. We'll listen to voices from the 1930's compare them to writing and film dealing with the today's Great Recession, and ask ourselves what it all means.

Requirements and Evaluation

Reading Quizzes: I will give about 10 unannounced quizzes (25% of grade).

Film reviews: 200 words relating your response to an aspect of the film, due (in advance of class discussion) by midnight June 19, June 27, and July 17 (25 % of grade).

Presentation and 5-page paper: see below (25% of grade).

Final examination: (25 % of grade).

Agenda

Week of...

June 13

M – Introductory

T – Film discussion: *The Plough That Broke the Plains*

W – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

TH – Film: WPA Photographers and Documentaries

June 20

M – Film discussion: *The American Experience: Riding the Rails*

T – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

W – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Presentation 1

TH – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Presentation 2

June 27

M – Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory*; Film discussion, *The Public Enemy*

T – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Presentation 3

W – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Presentation 4

TH – Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; Presentation 5

July 4

M – (No Class)

T – Wright, *The Man Who Was Almost A Man*; Presentation 6

W – Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*; Presentation 7

TH – Wright, *Big Good Black Man*; Presentation 8

July 11

M – Wright, *Man of All Work*, *The Man Who Went To Chicago*; Presentation 9

T – Film Discussion: *Our Daily Bread*; Nearing, *The Good Life*; Presentation 10

W – Nearing, *The Good Life*; Presentation 11

TH – Nearing, *The Good Life*; Presentation 12

July 18

M – Film discussion: *The Corporation*, *Roger and Me*, *Wall Street*

T – Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

W – Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Chapter 2

TH – Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, Afterword. Conclusions

Film URL's

The Corporation, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxAJ4g84xzE>

Roger and Me, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPxrqks4Rm4&feature=fvsvr>

The Plough That Broke the Plains <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQCwhjWNcH8>

Our Daily Bread <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuNesSxUHDc>

The American Experience: Riding the Rails <http://video.pbs.org/video/1502653730>

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers Project
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

Presentations and five-page papers

The goal is for you to identify a topic of interest and present a focused discussion of it. I am open to a wide range of approaches. You might, for example, focus on a chapter, character or theme in Steinbeck:

Utopias, dystopias, and possible futures
Steinbeck's "Red" Christianity
Machinery and humanity in Steinbeck
People and Boundaries – Geographic, Economic, and/or Psychological
A Typology of Exile: Migrants, Hoboes, Tramps, and Outcasts

If your interests run more to Richard Wright, you could explore his biography or...

From Great Migration to Great Depression
Blues and Plain Speech
Slave Narratives from the Federal Writer's Project

All the works explore the relation of social class to one's view of the world, and the topic comes especially to the fore in Nearing and Ehrenreich. You might want to compare their views to those of Steinbeck or Wright.

Finally, you may want to address either of the books not discussed in class, Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness* or Nathaniel West's *Miss Lonlihearts and the Day of the Locust*.

Your paper is due to my inbox by midnight of the Sunday following the week of your presentation.