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

John Martone
Eastern Illinois University

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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](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxAJ4g84xzE)

Roger and Me, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPxrqks4Rm4&feature=fvsr](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPxrqks4Rm4&feature=fvsr)

The Plough That Broke the Plains [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQCwhjWNcH8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQCwhjWNcH8)

Our Daily Bread [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuNesSxUHDc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuNesSxUHDc)


**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 Lonelihearts and the Day of the Locust.*

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