

The Great Depression and the New Deal

Professor Eric Rauchway

Summer 2025 | Term II

Course Description

In this course the causes and consequences of the economic slump of 1929–1933 are considered together with the economic recovery of 1933–1941 under the New Deal. We will examine the scope and effects of the Depression, particularly how it placed democratic institutions in peril and contributed to the rise of fascist movements. We will then review the New Deal not only as a program for restoring economic prosperity but more importantly as an effort to reinvigorate democratic institutions, concluding with an investigation of the transition from the New Deal into mobilization for World War II. Lectures and reading will focus on the political, social, and economic history of the United States in this period and especially on the policies of the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt during his first two terms in office.

Course Readings

1. Olmsted, Kathryn S. *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism*. New York: New Press, 2015.
2. Rauchway, Eric. *Winter War: Hoover, Roosevelt, and the First Clash over the New Deal*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.

Course Requirements

- Watch all course lectures
- Complete all course readings
- Submit five short papers (500 words each)
- Contribute to five discussion boards
- Participate in at least three Q&As
- Complete a 15-page (~3,750 words) research paper or project of appropriate rigor
- Complete a course evaluation (A survey link will be sent to your Gettysburg email during Week Five of the semester.)

Learning Objectives

1. Students will gain a sense of the scope and duration of the Great Depression, the character of the New Deal and of opposition to it, and the relation between the New Deal and the Second World War.

Class Schedule

Week One: July 10

The Crash

Readings

- Nicholas Crafts and Peter Fearon, "Lessons from the 1930s Great Depression," *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 285–317. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))
- William E. Leuchtenburg, "Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover," in *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 117–142. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))
- Herbert Hoover, "Statement on Muscle Shoals Legislation," February 28, 1931, accessed on UCSB Presidency Project. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))
- Herbert Hoover, "Veto of the Muscle Shoals Resolution," March 3, 1931, accessed on UCSB Presidency Project. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))

The Slump

Readings

- Gerald D. Nash, "Herbert Hoover and the Origins of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46, no. 3 (December 1959): 455–468. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))
- "Disputes Hoover on Employment; Frances Perkins Says Figures in This State Show Steady Decline," *The New York Times*, January 23, 1932, 11. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))
- "'Human' Alien Laws Urged by Governor; Roosevelt Opposes Registering Foreigners," *New York Times*, October 24, 1932, 9. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week One module.](#))

Recommended Reading

- Julia Rose Kraut, "Denaturalization, Detention, Deportation, and Discretion," in *Threat of Dissent: A History of Ideological Exclusion and Deportation in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2020), 90–119.

Assignments

- Discussion Board One: Introduce yourself to your group and list three potential topics for your final paper/project. Comment on one potential topic for each member of your group.

- First post due: Friday, July 11
 - Second post due: Sunday, July 13
 - Final paper/project research question due: Wednesday, July 16
 - In roughly 1–2 pages, outline the question your final paper or project will attempt to answer. This should include a description of the paper or project you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic, a brief description of your research plan, and a justification for why your particular paper or project is worth pursuing.
 - Short Paper One due: Wednesday, July 16
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week One: July 17

The Choice

Readings

- Rauchway, 1–46.
- Eric Rauchway, "The New Deal Was on the Ballot in 1932," *Modern American History* 2, no. 2 (July 2019): 201–213.
- Herbert Hoover, "Address at Madison Square Garden in New York City," October 31, 1932, accessed on UCSB Presidency Project. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Two module.](#))

The Crisis

Readings

- Rauchway, 75–104, 134–163, and 196–22.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat," October 22, 1933, accessed on UCSB Presidency Project. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Two module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Two: Post three potential sources (a mixture of primary and secondary) for your final paper or project. Suggest an additional primary or secondary source for each of the members in your group and explain why you chose that source.
 - First post due: Friday, July 18
 - Second post due: Sunday, July 20
- Revised question and annotated bibliography due: Wednesday, July 23

- Revise your initial proposal to incorporate your section professor's feedback, AND
 - Create an annotated bibliography containing at least five sources. Each of these sources should be followed by a short paragraph describing the source and what it will contribute to your final paper/project.
 - Short Paper Two due: Wednesday, July 23
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Three: July 24

The Dream

Readings

- Meg Jacobs, "'Democracy's Third Estate': New Deal Politics and the Construction of a 'Consuming Public,'" *International Labor and Working-Class History* 55 (Spring 1999): 27–51. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- James Q. Whitman, "Of Corporatism, Fascism, and the First New Deal," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 747–778. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- Upton Sinclair, *I, Governor of California, and How I Ended Poverty: A True Story of the Future* (1933), accessed on Internet Archive. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))

The Works

Readings

- Chad Alan Goldberg, "Contesting the Status of Relief Workers during the New Deal: The Workers Alliance of America and the Works Progress Administration, 1935–1941," *Social Science History* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 337–371. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- Walter B. Hill, Jr., "Finding Place for the Negro: Robert C. Weaver and the Groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement," *Prologue* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 42–51, accessed on National Archives. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- Sharon Ann Musher, "Art and the New Deal," in *The New Deal and the Great Depression*, ed. Aaron D. Purcell (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2014), 111–127. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))
- Robert C. Weaver, "The New Deal and the Negro: A Look at the Facts," *Opportunity* 13, no. 7 (July 1935): 200–202, accessed on VCU Libraries. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Three module.](#))

Assignments

- Discussion Board Three: Post an outline of your final paper/project.
 - Sunday, July 27
 - Paper/project preview due: Wednesday, July 30
 - Paper: Turn in a rough draft of the first five pages of your final paper.
 - Project: Submissions of the project preview will differ from project to project according to type. Determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final project to turn in.
 - Discussion Board Four: Post a 200-word abstract for your final paper/project. Submit the first five pages of your paper (or the portion of your final project submitted to your section professor) to your group members for peer review.
 - Due Wednesday, July 30
 - Short Paper Three due: Wednesday, July 30
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Four: July 31

The Opposition

Readings

- Olmsted, 107–191.
- Herbert Hoover, *The Challenge to Liberty* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 23–35, accessed on Internet Archive. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Four module.](#))

The Land

Readings

- Anthony J. Badger, "How Did the New Deal Change the South?" in *New Deal/New South: An Anthony J. Badger Reader* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 31–44. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Four module.](#))
- Marsha Weisiger, "Gendered Injustice: Navajo Livestock Reduction in the New Deal Era," *Western Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 437–455. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Four module.](#))
- Ernie Pyle, "Norris Dam Amazes Writer," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 22, 1935, 17.
- Ernie Pyle, "TVA to Save Big Area From Death Valley Fate," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 23, 1935, 17.
- Ernie Pyle, "Writer Finds Dams Form Small Part of TVA Rehabilitation," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 24, 1935, 7.

- Ernie Pyle, "'Worn Out' Farm Land Reclaimed," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 26, 1935, 18.
- Ernie Pyle, "40,000-Square-Mile Area Being Revamped," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 27, 1935, 38.

Recommended Reading

- Eric Rauchway, "The Clinch River," in *Why the New Deal Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 41–72.

Assignments

- Discussion Board Five: Return peer reviews to group members as attachments on the discussion board.
 - Due Wednesday, August 6
- Short Paper Four due: Wednesday, August 6
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.

Week Five: August 7

The Landslide

Readings

- Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, "A Chicken in Every Pot: Ideology and Retrospection in the Great Depression," in *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 177–212. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))
- Gareth Davies and Martha Derthick, "Race and Social Welfare Policy: The Social Security Act of 1935," *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 217–235. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))
- William E. Leuchtenburg, "When the People Spoke, What Did They Say? The Election of 1936 and the Ackerman Thesis," *Yale Law Journal* 108, no. 8 (June 1999): 2077–2114. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))
- "Thomas Declines to Back Roosevelt," *New York Times*, February 3, 1936, 1. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))

An Assessment

Readings

- Greg Hannsgen and Dimitri Papadimitriou, "Did the New Deal Prolong or Worsen the Great Depression?" *Challenge* 53, no. 1 (January–February 2010): 63–86. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))

- Jason Scott Smith, "The Triumph of the Mixed Economy: The New Deal Order, Keynes, and the Genius of American Liberalism," in *Capitalism Contested: The New Deal and Its Legacies*, ed. Romain Huret, Nelson Lichtenstein, and Jean-Christian Venel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 59–74. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Five module.](#))

Assignments

- Short Paper Five due: Wednesday, August 13
 - Write a response paper: You can respond to the prompt created by your section professor or to one of your own design.
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Week Six: August 14

The Nine

Readings

- William E. Leuchtenburg, "Comment on Laura Kalman's Article," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1081–1093. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))
- Eric Schickler, "New Deal Liberalism and Racial Liberalism in the Mass Public, 1937–1968," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (March 2013): 75–98. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))
- Chloe N. Thurston, "Policy Feedback in the Public-Private Welfare State: Advocacy Groups and Access to Government Homeownership Programs, 1934–1954," *Studies in American Political Development* 29 (October 2015): 250–267. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))

The War

Readings

- Gareth Davies, "The New Deal in 1940: Embattled or Entrenched?" in *America at the Ballot Box: Elections and Political History*, eds. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 153–166. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Ottawa, Canada," August 25, 1943, accessed on UCSB Presidency Project. ([A link to this reading can be found in the Week Six module.](#))

Assignments

- Final Draft due: Wednesday, August 20
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Course and Program Policies

It is the responsibility of students to know, understand, and abide by course and program policies.

For a full overview of program policies, review the Gettysburg College–Gilder Lehrman Institute Student Handbook.

Course correspondence

Correspondence with faculty and administrators should be formal. Include a subject line, addressee, and closing. Put the name and number of your course in the subject line.

Plagiarism and AI

This program uses Turnitin to check for instances of plagiarism and AI. Plagiarism and papers composed fully or in part by AI will not be tolerated. This includes self-plagiarism. A student caught plagiarizing or composing papers with AI for the first time may receive a zero on the assignment. A student caught plagiarizing or composing with AI for a second time may be permanently removed from the program.

Your section professor will set the policies for use of AI for research or purposes other than composing your papers.

Late work

Assignments should be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the due date unless otherwise specified by your section professor. If you think you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, it is your responsibility to contact your section professor to ask for an extension before the assignment's due date. Late assignments will be docked 5% if less than a week late, 10% if one week late, and an additional 10% for each subsequent week.

Grading scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade	Grade Points
A	95%–100%	4
A-	90%–94%	3.67
B+	87%–89%	3.33
B	84%–86%	3
B-	80%–83%	2.67
C+	77%–79%	2.33

C	74%–76%	2
C-	70%–73%	1.67
D+	67%–69%	1.33
D	64%–66%	1
D-	60%–63%	.67
F	0%–59%	0

Group Work

This course requires students to work in groups assigned at the beginning of the semester. Groups will interact on discussion boards focused on final papers/projects.

Peer Review (discussion boards four and five)

This two-part assignment requires that you a) post an abstract and the first five pages of your final paper/project to your group discussion board and b) review and add track changes to the first five pages of the other members' final papers/projects.

Assignment Descriptions

Short Papers (25% of grade – 5% per short paper)

Students will complete five short papers. Each should be approximately 500 words long. The purpose of these papers is not to merely summarize weekly readings but to demonstrate that you have read them analytically and contextually. Students have the option of responding to a prompt created by their section professor or to one of their own design. Prompts should reflect the themes discussed in course readings. If you need help getting started, you can complete one of the options listed below.

Complete a thesis identification - Select one of your assigned readings and focus on identifying the thesis as well as the evidence the authors use to support that thesis.

Complete a primary source evaluation - Evaluate a primary source from the Gilder Lehrman Collection or elsewhere. Primary sources must be relevant to that week's readings. Keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is the author of this document?
- Who was their intended audience?
- How might both author and audience impact the content of the document?
- For what reason was this document created?

Complete a book review - Focus on one of the secondary sources assigned in this course and critique it. Keep the following questions in mind:

- What is the author's argument?
- Does the author adequately support their argument?
- Are you convinced of their argument? If not, why not?
- How does this source fit into the larger discussion of its topic?

Discussion Board Posts (20% of grade – 4% per discussion board)

Students will interact in five discussion boards in this course. Discussion boards are led by section professors, who will provide specific instructions for participation in their section. You are required to make at least one post to each discussion board and respond to **at least two other students**.

Question-and-Answer Sessions (15% of grade – 5% per reaction)

Throughout the semester the lead professor of each course will conduct four Q&As. Students **MUST** attend at least three of these sessions for each course they are taking. **In order to receive credit for attending each Q&A, you must complete a 1–2-paragraph Q&A Reaction within 24 hours of participation.** Note: If you cannot attend three of the five Q&As, you may receive credit by viewing archived Q&As and completing a 500-word review of topics covered for each missed Q&A. **Makeup assignments must be completed within two weeks of the missed Q&A.**

Final Project/Paper (40% of grade)

For the final assignment of each course, you will choose to complete either a research project or 15-page research paper. Research projects are a public-education tool designed for the general population, teachers, and/or students of varying ages. Sample projects include (but are not limited to) vodcasts and podcasts, documentary editing and transcription, websites, annotated readers, walking tours, or museum exhibits. Lesson plans *will not* be accepted. A 5-page paper narrative must accompany the project. Your section professor must approve research projects.

The research paper can be a traditional position paper that uses original research to prove a thesis statement or a historiography paper that critically examines how American historians have interpreted the same event differently and why shifts in historical debates may have occurred.

Both final assignment options require you to ask an open-ended historical question (something that does not have an easy yes or no answer) that you do not yet know the answer to. You will then use the research process (pulling from a variety of resources, mostly primary source documents) to explore that question and create a thesis-driven answer. Regardless of whether you choose to pursue a project or paper, finals are scaffolded throughout the semester. This method breaks up a large grade into smaller constituent grades and allows time to incorporate instructor feedback into assignments.

Scaffolded Assignments

- Final Project/Paper Proposal (2%)

In roughly 1–2 pages, you should outline the main question, topic, or purpose of your final project or paper. This should include a description of the project or paper you are proposing, some background information and historical context on your topic (answer the questions who, what, where, and when), a brief description of your research plan (this does not need to be super specific, but should outline how many weeks you plan to research, if you need to schedule research trips or if your sources are published or available digitally, and when you plan to begin writing) and a justification for why your particular project or paper is worth pursuing (what is the significance of this topic? What does it add to our historical knowledge? Are you filling a gap that other historians have overlooked such as considering race, ethnicity, or gender?)

- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (4%)

This assignment will give you the opportunity to incorporate the feedback you received on the first draft of your proposal. In addition to incorporating your section professor's comments, you will also submit a proposed bibliography listing five sources you plan on utilizing in your research for your final product. Each of these sources should be followed by a brief summary (3–5 sentences) of the source and what it will contribute to your research process.

- Project or Paper Preview (10%)

This will give you the opportunity to show the progress you have made on your final project or paper and get some early-stage feedback from your section professor. For a final project, determine with your section professor an appropriate portion of your final submission to turn in. For a final paper, this should be roughly the first five pages of what will ultimately be your final submission.

- Final Product (24%):

Final Project: Much like the final paper option, a final project is meant to prove that you have mastered the content covered by this course. We encourage you to be creative in your approach to this project, though it should be equivalent in rigor and workload to a final paper.

Final Paper: Final papers should be at least fifteen pages in length. These can take the form of research papers or historiography papers.