

**New York University  
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development  
Department of Teaching and Learning**

SOCED 0010  
Spring 2013

Prof. Robert Cohen, rpc6@nyu.edu  
W, 2-3:40, 1078 Education Bldg

**Debates in U.S. History: The Great Depression, FDR, The New Deal,  
and World War II**

Those who reached political maturity in the era of the Great Depression and World War II are often idealized as “the Greatest Generation” for the way they stood up to two of the gravest crises in the 20th century. President Roosevelt, who led the US in most of these crises years in the 1930s and 1940s, would come to be regarded as among the greatest of American presidents, and Eleanor Roosevelt as the most activist First Lady in U.S. history. But from both the left and the right has come considerable dissent over the Roosevelt legacy, the rise of the welfare state, and the effectiveness of the New Deal recovery, reform, and relief efforts. There has also been lively debate over the U.S. role in the “good war” itself, especially America’s use of the atomic bomb and other aerial bombings of civilians, the Roosevelt administration’s response to the Holocaust, internment of Japanese Americans, and the persistence of racial segregation in the U.S. armed forces. This course will make extensive use of primary sources to explore many of these controversies, probing the social and political history of the Roosevelt era and seeking to analyze Depression America from both the bottom up and top down.

**Course requirements**

This is a seminar, which means that, with the exception of short lecture segments, our sessions will be discussion-based. So your attendance at our classes and active participation is crucial. The better prepared you are, the richer our historical discussions will be, so be sure to do all the required reading according to the schedule listed below. On weeks where the reading is heavy we will divide up some of the chapters and articles to keep the workload manageable. Since this course is designed to prepare you to teach history it is essential that you learn to articulate your ideas about history and ground them in historical evidence from the primary source documents and secondary sources – which is why class participation is so important (everyone should expect to share their thoughts about the history we are studying every session). So class participation is worth 20% of your course grade. There will be a mid-term exam (30%), and a final paper and oral presentation (50%). We have a class field trip to the FDR Library and Museum at Hyde Park. You should also plan on going together or individually to the FDR Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island since the final project for the class will involve re-designing that FDR memorial based on what you will be learning this semester.

**Required books**

Paul Conkin, *The New Deal*

Robert S. McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal: A History in Documents*  
 Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*  
 Robert Cohen, *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression*  
 Raymond Arsenault, *The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and Concert That Awakened America*  
 Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*  
 Verne Newton, *FDR and the Holocaust*

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Jan. 30 Introduction: Debating the New Deal**

- The liberal defense of the New Deal (William Leuchtenburg & Paul Krugman – and the Great Compression); The conservative attack on the New Deal (Amity Shlaes); The New Left Critique of the New Deal (Barton Bernstein).
- Social Protest in Depression America: The Turbulent Years (Irving Bernstein) vs. The “Not So Turbulent Years” (Melvyn Dubofsky)
- The New Deal’s Legacy – The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order
- FDR & the Second Bill of Rights: America’s Unfinished Revolution (Cass Sunstein)

#### **Feb. 6 FDR, ER, Hoover, and the early Depression Years**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 13-39, 157-160  
 Conkin, *The New Deal*, 1-20  
 Terkel, *Hard Times* 15-60, 259-264, 390-395

#### **Feb. 13 The 100 Days and the Genesis of the New Deal**

Conkin, *The New Deal*, 21-53.  
 McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 41-54  
 Terkel, *Hard Times*, 219-264

#### **Feb. 20 Thunder on the Left: Mass Protest in Depression America**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 69-100  
 Terkel, *Hard Times*, 102-145, 185-204, 259-265, 274-318, 386-389  
 Read any two student activist autobiographical essays on line at  
<http://newdeal.feri.org/students/autobios.htm>

#### **Feb. 22 \*\* Special Event: Trip to FDR Library, Museum, and Home Hyde Park (on Hudson), NY**

#### **Feb. 27 Hissing Roosevelt: Conservatism in the New Deal era**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 59-68  
 Terkel, *Hard Times*, 61-82, 206-211, 266-273, 319-325, 405-407  
 (e-mail your reflections on the Hyde Park trip)

#### **March 6 The Second New Deal and the Rise of the Welfare State**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 169-179  
 Conkin, *The New Deal*, 54-82

**March 13 Mid-term exam**

**March 20 Spring Break**

**March 27 Gender and the Family in Depression America/Up from Isolationism? FDR and the Roots of US involvement in World War II**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents* 101-114

Christopher Bigsby, *Arthur Miller*, 38-76.

Alan Brinkley, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, 63-99.

**April 3 Eleanor Roosevelt and the Youth Crisis of the 1930s**

Robert Cohen, *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression*, 3-34, 237-244. and either chapter 1,2,3. or 4.

**April 10 A Cultural Revolution? The Arts in the Depression era**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 139-156

Terkel, *Hard Times*, 339-357

Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits*, 121-139

**April 17 A New Deal for Blacks? Civil Rights in Depression America**

McElvaine, *The Depression and the New Deal... Documents*, 115-128

Terkel, *Hard Times*, 398-403

Raymond Arsenault, *The Sound of Freedom*, 94-187 (1-93, optional)

**April 24 The End of the New Deal? America in the late 1930s/ History and Memory: Assessing the FDR memorials in Washington, DC and New York City**

Conkin, *The New Deal*, 83-106

Lawrence Halprin, *The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial*

*Four Freedoms Park: A Memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt*

**May 1 The Good War? Japanese Internment, the Holocaust, and the American Memory of World War II**

Greg Robinson, *By Order of the President*, 73-258

Verne Newton, *FDR and the Holocaust*, 41-50, 109-174, and either chapter 11, 12, or 13

David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust*, xiii-xvi.

311-340 or screen PBS documentary film, "America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference," DVD 21056, in Bobst Library

**May 8 Oral presentations -- your redesign of NYC FDR Memorial**

**May 15 Final papers due**