

HIS 389-002  
 Topics in U. S. History:  
 America between the Wars, 1919-1941

Spring 2015  
 Dr. Burton Peretti  
 Robinson B104  
 T 7:20-10:00pm

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 I will check the GMU email weekdays around 1pm and during office hours  
 Office hours: Tuesdays 6-7pm, Robinson B334  
 703-993-1250 office hours only; please do not leave voicemails

An in-depth exploration of United States history in the years between World Wars I and II, with a focus on social and cultural transformations and the debates they stimulated.

**Our goals** are to:

- go well beyond the standard descriptions of the 1920s and 1930s found in freshman US history surveys;
- explore a range of primary sources (written, visual, and aural) pertaining to the era;
- try to develop our own fresh interpretations of what was going on in these years; and
- enhance our abilities to discuss this topic, orally in class and in written assignments.

Students' interaction with our weekly class meetings, assigned readings, and Blackboard materials will lead to their production of course assignments and their increasing sophistication as historians. This is not a research seminar, though we will be doing small research projects throughout. There are essay assignments and shorter written think pieces, but no traditional examinations. This is not a reading- or pro-seminar, though we will discuss readings regularly. The course is designed for junior History majors, but is open to all interested students.

**Books:** All are required and may be purchased at the GMU bookstore, online, and/or in electronic form:

- Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*
- Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*
- Alan Lawson, *A Commonwealth of Hope: The New Deal Response to Crisis*
- Nathan Miller, *New World Coming: The 1920s and the Making of Modern America*
- Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940*
- Lynne Olson, *Those Angry Days: Roosevelt, Lindbergh, and America's Fight over World War II, 1939-1941*

**Course grade at a glance:**

- 20 % participation at Tuesday evening class meetings (and perhaps via office hours also)
- 20% four Blackboard response pieces (5% each) (two before Spring break, two after)
- 60% four essay papers, due in class 2/10, 3/3, 4/7, and 5/5 (of varying weight)

**Components of the course grade:**

**Participation:** Thoughtful contribution to our activities and discussions in class. Includes completion of participation assignments I'll give out occasionally. I give credit for relevant communications with me via email or office hours. I'll read the roster a few times to learn your names, but I will not take attendance. It will be difficult for you to participate, though, if you don't attend! I will update you on sessions you miss only if you present a documented excuse for absence(s) (e.g. re: medical or family emergency) or if you are observing a religious day. Please inform me in advance about such days. If we have a snow cancellation, I will inform you via email on how we'll make it up.

**Blackboard response pieces:** These are short, informal writing assignments (2-5 paragraphs, plus possible multimedia material) posted on the class Blackboard site, involving a mixture of our class readings, lecture topics, and outside multimedia sources on the era. They are usually due within one week of the assignment's posting.

**Essay papers:** Longer think pieces (3-6 pages double-spaced) on our readings and material. These will vary in length and in weight of grade somewhat—they won't be all equal. Paper assignments will be posted and given out two weeks in advance.

**Honor code:** Do your own work and no one else's, or face harsh academic sanctions. Familiarize yourself with plagiarism and how to avoid it. Assignments will be checked for plagiarism, and if it is detected the student will be penalized heavily. Please refer to the University Honor Code for more information.

**Disability accommodations:** If you have a disability that may affect your performance in the course, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of Disability Services on campus, obtain a letter of classroom accommodation, and show it to me as soon as possible.

**Use of email:** As a state employee, I am required to use my GMU email for all work communications. I am providing my personal email as a courtesy in case you have difficulty reaching me otherwise. You are required to use your GMU email for all communications related to your courses. This is done to protect your privacy and the security of information related to your education.

**Diversity statement:** George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

**Schedule:** Subject to change, especially due to winter weather:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic(s)</i>	<i>Reading to complete by the following Sunday</i>	<i>Assignment due today</i>
<b>1</b> 11/20	Introduction; World War I	Murdock through chapter 3	
<b>2</b> 1/27	1919: a very bad year	Miller through chapter 5	
<b>3</b> 2/3	1920s society; Prohibition	Murdock, chapter 4 to end	
<b>4</b> 2/10	Business, technology, and culture	Miller chapters 5-12	<b>Essay 1</b>
<b>5</b> 2/17	Music and the movies	Boyle through chapter 5	
<b>6</b> 2/24	North and south, black and white	Boyle chapter 6 to end	
<b>7</b> 3/3	Politics, economics, and the Crash	Miller chapter 13 to end	<b>Essay 2</b>
<i>Spring break – no class on March 10</i>			
<b>8</b> 3/17	Anatomy of the Great Depression	Lawson chapter 1, Egan through chap. 6	
<b>9</b> 3/24	Depression society; government response	Egan chaps 7-13; Lawson chaps 2-6	
<b>10</b> 3/31	FDR and the New Deal	Egan chaps 14-20; Lawson chaps 7-9	
<b>11</b> 4/7	American culture in the 1930s	Egan chapter 21 to end; Lawson chapters 10-12	<b>Essay 3</b>
<b>12</b> 4/14	The late 1930s and the coming of war	Lawson chapter 13 to end	
<b>13</b> 4/21	American neutrality, 1939-1941	Olson through chapter 10	
<b>14</b> 4/28	1941; conclusion	Olson chapters 11-20 or beyond	<b>Essay 4 due 5/5</b>