

**George Mason University
Department of History and Art History**

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Tues., 1:30-4:10 p.m.
Innovation Hall 133

History 499, section 004: The Depression and New Deal in Virginia

History 499 is the capstone course for the History Major. In this seminar, students are expected to build on knowledge and skills they have developed in previous coursework, especially History 300, to conduct research in both primary and secondary sources and write a substantial paper of 20-25 typed, double-spaced pages, plus footnotes and bibliography. Students will do some readings in common, then pursue individual topics within the framework of a certain time and place: the Depression and New Deal era (defined expansively from about 1929-1948) in Virginia. Taking advantage of sources available locally or nearby, students will gain a better understanding of the interaction between local, national and perhaps international events and historical contexts. They will also improve their abilities to define a viable research topic, work independently, provide and receive peer review, and organize, write and revise a final paper.

This course meets the University General Education program's Synthesis requirement, which encourages students to draw on the knowledge and skills they have developed in General Education courses and to demonstrate advanced critical thinking and communications skills in both written and oral forms. In other words, this is your opportunity to pull together the elements of your college education by applying the research, analytical, and writing and speaking skills you have learned to a particular project. I would like to see each of you produce the best--most personally directed, most fully developed, and most polished--work of your college career.

Required books:

Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Additional required reading:

Ronald L. Heinemann, "Alphabet Soup: The New Deal Comes to the Relief of Virginia," *Virginia Cavalcade* 33 (Summer 1983), 4-19.

A. Cash Koeniger, "The New Deal and the States: Roosevelt Versus the Byrd Organization in Virginia," *Journal of American History* 68 (March 1982), 876-896.

Course requirements and grading:

Class contribution (20 points=10%)

The success of this seminar depends on the active and thoughtful participation of every student as well as the instructor. Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and to present ideas, ask questions, and work through problems that you and your classmates have encountered in completing reading, writing, and research assignments. **Attendance is vital. Any student who misses a class or a scheduled appointment will lose 10 points (5%) from his or her final course grade for each instance.** If you must miss class or cancel an appointment for a valid reason, contact me *in advance*.

Research and prewriting assignments (10 points or 5% each for a total of 25%)

See below for specifics, but in general the short assignments in this course are designed to:

- get you thinking about the variety of primary sources available to historians
- encourage you to take an analytical approach to both primary and secondary sources
- help you break down the research process into manageable parts as you work toward a final product

For the class to function effectively, you must turn in all assignments on schedule. **I will deduct points for lateness and will not accept short assignments more than 2 days late.** The assignments that fall into this category include:

1. First short assignment, due 9/6
2. Second short assignment, due 9/20
3. Third short assignment, due 9/27
4. Research proposal, due 10/4
5. Outline and revised bibliography, due 11/1

All submissions for this class, including the final paper, should be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-pt. font with one-inch margins. Two exceptions are bibliographies and endnotes, which should be single-spaced. Some assignments are due in hard copy and some by email attachment, sent to my email address *from a GMU email address*. If you send an email attachment from a non-GMU address, I will not open it. Make sure to follow the course schedule below to keep track of which assignments are due in hard copy. Please staple hard copies and make sure to number the pages of any multipage submission. (In Microsoft Word, page number is under the Insert menu). Name, date, and some kind of title or heading are also *de rigeur*.

Peer review (20 points=10%)

Each student will serve as a peer reviewer for two other students. I will forward electronic copies of rough drafts to assigned reviewers. Your review will be due in duplicate hard copy in class on 11/22.

Oral presentation (10 points=5%)

Each student will give a 10-15 minute oral presentation during one of our last two class meetings on 11/29 and 12/6. Presentations are graded according to the following criteria:

- Clarity and organization
- Ability to respond to questions from the audience
- Time management to allow completion within allotted time
- Ability to engage and maintain audience attention

Final paper (100 points=50%)

A rough draft is required but not graded. I expect final papers to be polished in addition to complete and well constructed. I will grade the final papers according to the following criteria:

- Clarity and originality of the paper's thesis
- Use of primary sources in support of the paper's thesis
- The degree to which the paper is situated appropriately in the existing scholarship (that is, the relevant secondary sources produced by historians and other scholars)
- Use of diverse sources and sophistication of historical analysis
- Organization and logical flow of the written narrative
- Attention to the "so what?" question of why the work matters in relation to larger political, social or cultural issues
- Use of knowledge and skills acquired in other disciplinary contexts, as appropriate
- Clarity and correctness of the written narrative

Final papers are due by email attachment by 5 p.m. on Dec. 9. **Late submissions will be penalized by a minimum of one letter-grade.**

Course policies and other information:

Honor code: Students in this course are bound by George Mason University's Honor Code, which states: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." I will pursue any concerns about academic dishonesty and will report suspected students to the University's Honor Board for disciplinary action, including a failing grade in the course. On plagiarism, see <http://classweb.gmu.edu/WAC/EnglishGuide/Critical/plagiarism.html>.

Excused absences: If you expect to miss class or reschedule a due date because of a University-approved absence (i.e., varsity athletics, religious holiday), you must make arrangements with me by **Sept. 6**.

Accommodations: Students who require academic accommodations should contact me and make arrangements through the Office of Disability Services (ods.gmu.edu; 703-993-2474).

Incompletes: University policy states that instructors should assign an IN only if the student has a very limited amount of work to complete and there is a non-academic reason that prevents them from completing the work within the semester. An incomplete cannot be used to avoid a poor grade.

Useful information:

Writing Center (writingcenter.gmu.edu): A114 Robinson Hall, 703-993-1200

Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu): 703-993-2380

Last day to add or drop with no tuition penalty: **Tuesday, September 6**

Last day to drop (with tuition penalty): Friday, September 30

Selective withdrawal period: Monday, October 3 - Friday, October 28

Course schedule: (subject to revision)

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| 8/30 | Course introduction | Begin reading Sullivan, <i>Days of Hope</i> for discussion on 9/13 |
| 9/6 | Meet at Fenwick Library, Room A-214 | First short assignment due (hard copy) |
| 9/13 | Meet in classroom to discuss Sullivan book, then go to Special Collections & Archives @ 2:45 | |
| 9/20 | Meet in the Virginia Room of the City of Fairfax Regional Library, 10360 North Street | Second short assignment due (hard copy) |
| 9/27 | Meet in classroom for discussion and to schedule individual meetings for 10/4-10/7 | Third short assignment due (hard copy) |
| 10/4 | No class; individual meetings this week | Research proposal with bibliography due by email attachment by 9 a.m. on 10/4 |
| 10/11 | No class; attend Monday classes | |
| 10/18 | Meet in classroom to discuss topics and Chicago-style citation (bring your research notes) | |
| 10/25 | No class | |

- 11/1 Meet in classroom for small-group work and to schedule appointments for 11/16-11/18
Outline and revised bibliography due (hard copy AND email attachment by class time)
- 11/8 No class
- 11/15 No class; individual meetings this week
Rough draft due by email attachment by 9 a.m. on 11/15; I will forward to peer reviewers
- 11/22 Meet in classroom to discuss peer reviews and schedule oral presentations
Peer review comments due (TWO hard copies)
- 11/29 Meet in classroom for **oral presentations**
- 12/6 Meet in classroom for **oral presentations**

Final papers are due by email attachment on Friday, December 9 by 5 p.m.

First short assignment (2-page essay plus reference page, due 9/6)

This assignment is designed to get you thinking about 1930s Virginia and about top-down vs. bottom-up approaches to historical research and analysis.

Read Ronald L. Heinemann, "Alphabet Soup: The New Deal Comes to the Relief of Virginia," *Virginia Cavalcade* 33 (Summer 1983), 4-19. You can find this article by searching the GMU online catalog by journal title. However, older issues of *Virginia Cavalcade* are in off-site storage so I made a copy of the article and put it on reserve at the JC Library. Another option is to go to the City of Fairfax Regional Library, which has *Virginia Cavalcade* on the shelf in the Virginia Room.

Take notes on the article, making sure to get the bibliographic information down, in addition to main points and subjects that might be interesting to research further. (See suggested template below).

Next, go to <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/newdeal/>. I want you to check out this site because I think it could be helpful in a variety of ways. For this assignment, I particularly want you to read through the "About the WPA Life Histories Collection" page and explore some of the life histories themselves. Think about what interested you in the Heinemann article, then search on keywords and browse through the full-text pages of the life histories until you find one or more that will give you a good basis for a short comparative essay. For example, suppose you were interested to learn that the WPA employed women in sewing rooms as a work-relief measure. What might we learn about those sewing rooms from oral history sources vs. what we learned from Heinemann's article? Keyword searches on "sewing" or "women and WPA" might be places to start. Or say you are curious about how the New Deal relief programs affected a particular county. You can search the life histories for that county and see what you find, then compare your findings to what you read in the Heinemann article.

How you approach the life histories and what you choose to write about in the essay are up to you. My main requirement is that you engage in a thoughtful comparison of Heinemann's essay and one or more individual life histories. You should provide as much information as you can about the person or people whose stories you are retelling. **Your short essay should also be organized, with an introduction and thesis statement** explaining what you saw in the comparison and body paragraphs that draw on the Heinemann essay and the life histories for evidence. **On a separate sheet, provide correct, Chicago-style citations for each source in two different forms: one for an endnote and one for an entry in a bibliography.** For help, see Turabian, pp. 145 and 195.

Second short assignment (2-page essay plus reference page, due 9/20)

Although Patricia Sullivan's *Days of Hope* focuses on the whole South rather than specifically on Virginia, I assigned it as our major reading for this class because I think it presents a compelling and still-current interpretation of politics and race relations in the New Deal era. We'll discuss the book in its entirety in class on 9/13. For the second short paper, due on 9/20, I want you to go beyond Sullivan by reading a scholarly article that explores similar political issues in the Virginia context:

A. Cash Koeniger, "The New Deal and the States: Roosevelt Versus the Byrd Organization in Virginia," *Journal of American History* 68 (March 1982), 876-896 (available on J-Stor).

In what ways are Sullivan and Koeniger's accounts compatible and where and how do they diverge? What explains the similarities and the differences? For your 2-page essay, I'd like to see you devote at least a page to comparing and contrasting the history presented in the book vs. the article. I also want you to read Koeniger's and skim Sullivan's notes and devote at least a paragraph to discussing the nature and extent of their source material. If you see sources you want to explore yourself, say so and explain why. Finally, if you see a potential topic or at least some questions for research emerging from these readings, spell that out as well. So, although I'm calling this a "2-page essay," it may really be a page of comparison/contrast followed by a paragraph each on sources and potential topics--adding up to two pages, but less organized around a thesis statement than I expect the essay for the First Short Assignment to be.

On a separate sheet, provide correct, Chicago-style citations for each source in two different forms: one for an endnote and one for an entry in a bibliography. Use your Turabian style manual for help.

Third short assignment (2-page research report plus endnotes, due 9/27)

This assignment is designed to get you working in one of the most important primary sources historians use: newspapers. You'll begin with the most frequently examined newspaper of record, the *New York Times*, which is available on microfilm at Fenwick. Then you'll explore local papers available in the Virginia Room at the City of Fairfax Regional Library. So be forewarned that this assignment is going to require not only time, but also advance planning to visit both libraries.

Although it is tempting to rely on keyword searches alone, serious researchers really need to *browse* newspapers and other sources for their topics. This assignment asks you to do some browsing and some searching so that you can see the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. It is also designed to help you find a research topic, especially if you are still struggling.

First, go to the microfilm in Fenwick to browse the *New York Times* for your birthday and the six days after it in your assigned year: _____

Take notes as you read, being careful to record all the information you need to cite individual articles. This information includes: author (if stated), article title, newspaper title, date, page number, and (if applicable) section number or letter. See the Turabian style guide for help.

Once you've done your browsing, ask yourself the following questions: What do you see as the single most interesting or important event or issue covered in your assigned week? What other issues, events, people, etc. received significant coverage and might make interesting topics for further research? Could any of these potential topics have a Virginia angle? When and how did Virginia make it into the news?

These questions are designed to help you come up with keywords for the next phase of this assignment: targeted searching in both the *New York Times* and the local Historical Newspaper Index. To search the *Times*, go to <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/nytarchive.html>. To search the local papers, go to

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/branches/vr/newsindex/>. (Note that I hope to get some advice on the coverage and best search terms to use with this Index when we go to the Virginia Room on 9/20).

After searching both the *Times* and the Historical Newspaper Index for the keywords you are interested in (and don't forget obvious ones like "Virginia" and names of people, counties, New Deal programs, etc.), start tracking down the relevant articles themselves. There are full-text options from the *Times* website, but they generally require a subscription and you can always go back to the Fenwick microfilm instead. For the local newspapers, you will have to visit the Virginia Room in person. As you take notes on articles, make sure to record the necessary bibliographical information, as explained above.

For your 2-page research report: You can make this report a summary of your efforts or you can focus it more specifically on a topic that may become the topic of your larger project. I want to hear about what you found in the *Times* and in the local papers and how the coverage was similar and different. I want you to go into depth on at least five individual articles, explaining why they are relevant and interesting and citing them properly in endnotes. Finally, I want you to reflect on what you have accomplished and where you see your research heading. How is your topic shaping up, what questions do you have, and what next steps do you envision?

Research proposal and bibliography (3-4 pages, due by email attachment by 9 a.m. on 10/4)

Your proposal should be a short essay that includes:

- An overview of your topic and why you chose it, including the central historical question you hope to answer in your final paper.
- A discussion of where you have already looked for sources (Mason online catalog, other library catalogs, *America: History and Life* and other databases, the sources we used in the three short assignments, etc.) and what, in general, you have found.
- A research plan or schedule with dates. In what order will you read your sources? Where will you need to go to complete your research and when will you go there? How will you break down the process into manageable steps? When do you hope to be ready to start writing?
- A preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources that you know are available on your topic. Use the Turabian style manual to make sure you provide correct and complete bibliographical entries for each source. Remember that future bibliographies should include only sources you have actually used, while this one can be aspirational.

Suggested templates for reading notes worksheets for books and articles:

You may find it helpful to make yourself some fill-in-the-blank worksheets to facilitate your note-taking. Here are some suggested headings to help you make sure to record the necessary bibliographical information for each source, in addition to main ideas. Keep the Turabian manual handy as you take notes on primary sources so you will have the information to cite them properly when the time comes.

Author:
Title:
Publication info (place, publisher, date):
Number of pages:
Call number:
Author's main point or thesis:

Related subjects or keywords

Author:
Article Title:
Journal Title:
Volume and date of publication:
Page range of article:
Author's main point or thesis:

Related subjects or keywords: