

HISTORY 642
Wednesdays 4:10-6:55
<http://bss.sfsu.edu/tygiel/hist642/>

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& by appt.

PROSEMINAR: CALIFORNIA IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Proseminars represent the culminating experience for history majors, a chance to bring together the skills that you have developed in the history courses that you have taken during your undergraduate career. The ultimate outcome of the proseminar is a research paper based on primary source research placed within the context of the secondary writings available on the subject. Students will be exposed to the writings of other historians on a topic and conduct research in newspapers, periodicals, and archival resources. They will also present that research orally and in writing and critique the work of their fellow students.

The topic of this Proseminar is *California During the Great Depression* (1929-1941). The Depression ravaged California as it did the rest of the nation, causing widespread unemployment and social unrest. As Kevin Starr writes in *Endangered Dreams*, the Depression experience brought into question the premise of the "California Dream" that had underscored the state's growth in previous eras. The state witnessed some of the most dramatic and significant events of that decade: the violent struggles to organize farm workers; the 1934 San Francisco General Strike; Upton Sinclair's 1934 EPIC campaign; the rise of the Townsend Plan for old-age pensions; the spread of utopian and cooperative movements; the deportation of Mexican workers; and the Okie migration. The 1930s, however, were not just a decade of strife, but one of great creativity as well. Federal New Deal programs like the WPA encouraged the arts and environmental development. The Depression produced a great and distinctive literature ranging from the novels of John Steinbeck to the hard-boiled detective fiction of Raymond Chandler. Photographer Dorothea Lange pioneered a new form of documentary imaging. Hollywood continued to turn out movies. Professional and collegiate sports flourished in California. Los Angeles hosted the 1932 Olympics; San Francisco the Golden Gate International Exposition. Public works programs allowed the completion of major water projects, the Boulder Dam, and the Golden Gate and San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridges.

Thus a study of the Depression years in California offers a wide variety of opportunities for research into political, social, economic and environmental issues as well as issues affecting women and ethnic groups in the state.

TEXTS: Robert McElvaine, *The Great Depression*
Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams*
(These books are available at the campus bookstore and in the library reserve room. There may be additional readings posted online or on electronic reserve.)

PREREQUISITES: Completion of English 214 and HIST 300 and upper-division status. Enrollment priority will be given to senior history majors, history honors students, and history graduate students.

E-MAIL: All students are **required** to have e-mail accounts. If you do not yet have an e-mail account you may acquire one from the university. It is **imperative** that class members complete the assigned readings prior to each class session and arrive in class prepared to discuss them. All students **must** post discussion questions on the course Blackboard site by 6 p.m. on the day **before** the class. Students should check the questions submitted by other students prior to the class each day. This is a course requirement, not an option. See the handout [Asking Questions](#) for guidelines.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

There are several essential components to this seminar. They include both written assignments and class participation.

Written Assignments

- 1) Book Review of *Endangered Dreams* (October 11)
- 2) Proposal for Research Paper (October 18)
- 3) Historiographical Essay (6 pages, November 8)
- 4) Research Paper (Due December 20)

Students who need assistance for their writing should work with the on-campus tutors at [CARP](#) (HSS 219). They provide excellent guidance in grammar and organization.

Class Participation

All students must:

- 1) contribute weekly e-mail questions based on course readings;
- 2) present preliminary progress reports to the class;
- 3) present their papers to the class on schedule;
- 4) read and comment on other students papers.

The final grade will be based on the following criteria:

a) **Class Participation** (25%)--CLASS PARTICIPATION IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF ANY SEMINAR. All students are required to do the weekly class readings, come prepared to discuss them, and submit weekly e-mail questions. Students must also read the preliminary drafts of other student papers and be prepared to discuss them.

b) **Essays** (25%)—All students must hand in a book review of *Endangered Dreams* (October 11) and a historiographical essay (November 8). In some instances these papers may be incorporated into the major research paper.

c) **Research Paper** (50%)--At the end of the semester each student will complete a 15-25 page research paper based on some aspect of California during the Great Depression. **Papers must be based on primary research.** All students must present a written proposal for the paper on October 18 and a first draft of these papers for class discussion sometime between November 15 and December 13. Graduate students be forewarned, you will be required to present first on November 15.

A further discussion of these papers may be found in additional handouts or on the course webpage: <http://bss.sfsu.edu/tygiel/hist642/default.htm>

You must complete the preliminary assignments en route to your final paper in timely fashion. Failure to complete the paper proposal, historiography, or to be prepared for the class presentation of the first draft of your paper will impact your final grade.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AND CRITIQUES

You will be expected to present your paper to the class in draft form during one of the four final weeks of class. At that time your paper should be as close to completion as possible. Your paper must be posted on the Blackboard site no later than noon on Friday for Tuesday presentations and noon on Monday for Thursday presentations.

All students are required to read and critique these research papers. One student will be assigned as the primary critic to lead the discussion. The critique should include an assessment of the author's thesis, methodology, writing, and conclusions.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS SCHEDULE

August 30	Introduction Selecting a Topic Primary vs. Secondary Sources
September 6	California: 1929-35. Readings: Starr, Preface, Chapters 3-7; McElvaine, Chapter 10 Resources at the San Francisco Public Library Using the Internet/California Online/ Online Primary Sources
September 13	California: 1936-41 Readings: Starr, Chapters 7-13 Visit Labor Archives (Meet at The Labor Archives and Research Center, 480 Winston Drive)
September 20	The Depression Experience Readings: McElvaine, Chapters 1-4, 8-10. Online: The Fed's Depression , http://www.policyreview.org/AUG01/roberts.html
September 27	Individual Meetings (No Class)
October 4	The New Deal Readings: McElvaine, Chapters 5-7, 11-15
October 11	Historiography/Taking Notes Readings: Hamby, Alonzo L. "THE NEW DEAL: AVENUES FOR RECONSIDERATION" <i>Polity</i> 1999 31(4): 665-681. (Available on Online Reserve. Go to http://eres.sfsu.edu/courseindex.asp or link to Electronic Reserves at http://www.library.sfsu.edu/ . Select History 642 and give the password. The password is case sensitive.) Book Review of <i>Endangered Dreams</i> Due. Footnotes and Annotations Plagiarism
October 18	Progress Reports Research Proposal Due

October 25 November 1	Individual Meetings (No Class) Progress Reports
November 8	Individual Meetings (No Class) Historiographical Essay Due
November 15	Research Presentations (Graduate Students)
November 22	Thanksgiving Recess (No Class)
November 29	Research Presentations
December 6	Research Presentations
December 13	Research Presentations
December 20	Research Papers Due in Duplicate