The Culture Wars of 1930s America
Kenneth Burke wrote of the early 1930s that it was "a time when there was a general feeling that our traditional ways were headed for a tremendous change, maybe even a permanent collapse." At stake, then, for Burke and writers and activists of the Depression era was nothing less than the fate of the country. This course examines the culture wars of the 1930s: the rich rhetorical and literary practices of Marxists, fellow travelers, liberals, and conservatives as they battled over questions not only of what direction the country should take politically and economically, but also of how "the good life" might be defined and, even more importantly, what kind of writing—and by whom and in what places (in novels? poems? plays? political speeches? pamphlets? music?)—would help bring this good life into being. Our goal will be to collectively learn as much as we can about the cultural conversations of the 1930s and to understand how all kinds of texts emerge from and respond to those conversations.

In addition to the major texts for the course, you’ll have the opportunity to study the music of Woody Guthrie and Billy Holiday, to read the fiery speeches of FDR and Huey Long and the cultural/literary criticism in popular New York magazines, to reflect on the haunting images of Dorothea Lange.

Texts:
**Buy these at the bookstore:**
Jack Conroy, The Disinherited
Langston Hughes, The Ways of White Folks
Katherine Anne Porter, Flowering Judas
John Steinbeck, Harvest Gypsies: On the Road toward the Grapes of Wrath
John Steinbeck, In Dubious Battle

**These books and other articles are in the library:**
Sidney Hook, ed., The Meaning of Marxism: A Symposium (reserve)
Langston Hughes, Four Political Plays (e-book)
Edmund Wilson, The American Jitters (reserve)

N.B.: We’ll be reading lots of book chapters and essays on reserve, so get used to the idea of visiting the library and set aside some money for xeroxing/printing.

Finally, you will also need access to a handbook that illustrates MLA citation style. The English Dept. recommends The Little, Brown Compact Handbook which has been adopted university-wide.
Course Requirements:
1. Reading quizzes/homework, 15%

2. History Presentation/Paper, 15%
   Because I’ve assumed that most of you have little or no historical knowledge of the decade we’ll be reading about or of the rhetorical situation facing the authors, each of you will be responsible for providing helpful background material for your classmates. This assignment has two parts: a formal group* oral presentation and an individually written paper.

3. Rhetorical history project: The Culture Wars
   A substantial contribution to the class’s collaboratively written “book” on the important cultural conversations in the 1930s by radical, conservatives, and everyone in between as they debated the future of the U.S. and the means to get there. This includes:
   • Part I: Introductory essay on some cultural text that we otherwise won’t have a chance to study together. (Chances are good that you can research something related to your major – history, music, education, painting, film, politics, migrant workers, labor relations, magazines, and, of course, fiction and poetry.) 25%
   • Part II: Analytic essay discussing how this artist or event both responds to and is shaped by the on-going conversation in the “rhetorical parlor” of 1930s America. 30%
   • Part III: Final exam, 15%

Class Policies:
1. Attendance and Participation:
   • You’ve got to be here. This course assumes that we will collectively construct a good deal of the knowledge to be gained in the course. You need to be in class to make that happen. No one escapes entirely from life's little emergencies, and you will not be penalized for an occasional absence due to illness, car trouble, etc., BUT excessive unexcused absences will lower your final grade. Students who accumulate six unexcused absences will automatically fail the course. Only official university absences (for athletic events, concerts, etc.) are excused. Present or not, you are responsible for everything that goes on in class. Call a classmate or email one of us to find out what you missed and come prepared.
   • You've got to do the reading. Carefully and actively. You can't skim your way through these works and expect to get anything out of them.
   • You've got to participate. Much of the responsibility for the success of this course rests with you. The rhetorical, political, and literary issues that we'll be dealing with are enormously interesting but also enormously complex: we'll need to help, challenge, and inspire each other. Needless to say, this is not a lecture course. Come prepared to make some contribution (express confusion, if nothing else).

2. Office hours: I consider my office an extension of the classroom. Feel free to use office hours to discuss any aspect of the assignments. This time is strictly yours and may be your best chance to get the help you need. Use it.
3. **Submitting papers**: We will be having a draft workshop for each of the major writing assignments; attach your rough draft to your paper when you turn it in for a grade (no papers will be accepted without a rough draft). Your final drafts should be typed (double-spaced) with standard margins; make sure your name and mine are on the paper and that your final draft is labeled as such. It's also a good idea to keep an extra copy until the paper is returned.

4. **Late work**: is bad for all of us. Turn in your essays in class, on time, unless you have some emergency or have made PRIOR arrangements with me for an extension. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade for each class period beyond the due date. Reading responses and other short assignments will not be accepted late at all (except, again, in emergencies), so pay attention and keep up.

5. **Grades**: are meant to reflect my best and fairest judgment of the overall quality of your arguments. Style is a part of argumentation, as is clear and effective organization, but certainly the core of it is thought: reasoning and the selection and handling of salient evidence. To earn a grade of "average" -- a "C" -- your essay must present an organized, fairly well-supported argument that reflects awareness of the terms of our discussion. If we have difficulty discerning the presence of an argument, or if careless style or lack of organization significantly impede our ability to discern your argument (even if the argument itself is good), your grade will be less than a "C." A well-presented, well-reasoned, and insightful argument will earn a "B" while an argument of exceptional excellence in its reasoning, handling of evidence, and presentation will earn an "A." An "A" paper does the difficult thing well -- that is, it examines the text at hand in its complexity, with careful attention to telling details, and discusses them with clarity and grace.

6. **Tutoring**: I encourage you to seek additional help on your papers at the William L. Adams Writing Center [Student Center basement]. The Writing Center endorses the following Statement of Ethics:
   - A text should reflect the student's own work and efforts; thus tutors do not write any portion of a students paper.
   - For the same reason, tutors do not proofread what a student has written.
   - Tutors do not guarantee a particular grade or even suggest what grade a student is likely to receive on an assignment.
   - Tutors do not criticize an instructor's assignment.
   - Tutors do not assist students with take-home exams or final portfolios.

**N.B.**: Students in English 30253 who receive tutoring, formal or informal, from individuals or programs other than the William L. Adams Writing Center are responsible for assuring that the tutoring adheres to these ethical standards. Students whose tutoring does not meet these ethical standards violate the university's code on academic misconduct and are subject to its penalties.

7. **Academic Misconduct**: The Department of English expects its students to adhere to the university's code of student conduct, especially as it pertains to academic misconduct. (For the university's policies on academic misconduct, see §3.4 of the Code of Student Conduct, which is reproduced in the TCU Calendar Handbook.) The following explanations and departmental policies are intended to help you interpret the university's code as it applies to work in English classes:

   - **Ghostwritten papers**: In English classes, ghostwriting is defined as the appropriation, theft, purchase, or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one's own offered for credit. The unacknowledged use of "study guides" such as Cliffs Notes or Monarch Notes in the
preparation of English papers is a form of ghostwriting. (Even when acknowledged, such study guides are too rudimentary to be appropriate secondary sources for a college paper, and, thus, will typically result in a reduced grade for the paper.) Cases of ghostwriting will be referred to the Dean of the AddRan College with the recommendation that the student be removed from the course with a grade of "F."

• **Insufficient citation:** Quotations or paraphrase from another's work requires citation, and direct quotations also require quotation marks. Papers that quote or paraphrase without citation and papers that quote directly without supplying quotation marks may receive a range of responses, including a reduced grade; a required, ungraded revision; an "F" for the paper; or the recommendation to the Dean of the AddRan College that the student be removed from the course with a grade of "F."

• **Unacknowledged collaboration:** Students are expected to cite both written and oral sources; when others (tutors, classmates, friends, etc.) collaborate on their papers, the author of record should acknowledge those collaborators' contributions. Papers that do not cite or acknowledge oral collaboration will be classified as inadequately cited papers and will be subject to the same range of penalties.