

English 30243: Rhetorical Practices in Culture
Fall 2011

Professor Ann George/Joel Overall

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Hours: George: M 11-1, R 10-11, and by apt/Overall: MW 1-5 [W hrs in NMWS]

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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 artists 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, more importantly, what kind of texts—and by whom and in what forms (novels? plays? speeches? photographs? paintings? music?)—would help bring this good life into being.

We'll study some of these texts, and when we do so, we'll be reading them *rhetorically*—that is, with an eye to analyzing how language (and symbols, more generally) create effects on audiences. Of course, understanding how texts work was just one more thing that rhetorical and literary theorists in the 1930s didn't agree on (and they still don't). We'll read a number of competing theories, but we'll emphasize the work of the foremost American rhetorical theorist, Kenneth Burke. Our goals will be to collectively learn as much as we can about the cultural conversations of the 1930s, to understand how all kinds of texts emerge from and respond to those conversations, and to expand our ideas about how texts persuade us to attitude and action.

Course Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze diversity within (or) across cultures. [Cultural Awareness outcome]
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use writing as a means of gaining and expressing an understanding of discipline-specific content. [Writing Emphasis outcome]
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the cultural conversations of 1930s America by discussing and writing about assigned texts.
- Students will use the rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke to explain the rhetorical nature of all texts and to analyze how 1930s texts shape and are shaped by their cultural scene.
- Students will compose a multimodal presentation that provides historical/cultural background about key events or institutions of Depression-era America.
- Students will synthesize and integrate the ideas of others into a rhetorical history project, balancing their own voices with other sources and using standard MLA citation style.

Texts:

Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited* (1933)

Langston Hughes, *The Ways of White Folks* (1933)

Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty* (1935)

John Steinbeck, *Harvest Gypsies: On the Road toward the Grapes of Wrath* (1936)

John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle* (1936)

You will also need access to a handbook that illustrates current MLA citation style.

N.B.: We'll be reading lots of book chapters and essays on reserve/eCollege, so get used to the idea of visiting the library and set aside some money for xeroxing/printing (unless you go paperless).

Course Requirements:

Our work this semester will be a **Rhetorical History Project** on the 1930s Culture Wars. Each student will contribute substantially to the class's collaboratively written "reader's guide" to the important 1930s cultural conversations by radicals, conservatives, and everyone in between as they debate the future of America and the means to get there. This includes:

•**Part I: Introductory essay** (Agent): Researched essay introducing the class to a cultural figure of your choice. In-process writing on class blog. **20%**

•**Part II: Collaborative Multimedia History Project** (Scene): A collaborative mini-documentary film focusing on one aspect of 1930s history (**20%**) + an individual explanation of the film's rhetoric (**5%**)

•**Part III: Rhetorical analysis** (Act within a scene): An essay discussing how a text by your cultural figure both responds to and is shaped by the on-going conversation in the "rhetorical parlor" of 1930s America. **30%**

•**Part IV: Final evaluative experience:** A brief oral presentation of the main points from your rhetorical analysis (Part III). **5%**

•**Travel Guides:** Five brief (2 pp.) contributions to our historical, cultural, textual knowledge about the 1930s. (5@ 4% each) **20%**

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 nine unexcused absences will automatically fail the course. Absences under the three-week maximum can still affect your grade adversely. Only official university absences (for athletic events, concerts, etc.) are excused. It's your responsibility to keep track of your own absences. Present or not, you are responsible for everything that goes on in class.** Email a classmate to find out what you missed and come prepared. Quizzes missed due to unexcused absences (even if you're sick) cannot be made up.

- You've got to be here on time. Students who are tardy (ten minutes late or more) are a distraction to the whole class. Three tardies will equal an absence for the course. In addition, reading quizzes will be given at the start of class, so lateness will mean lower quiz scores.

- You've got to be here in mind as well as body. Please turn cell phones off and put them away during class. If a true emergency requires you to keep your phone on, please let us know before class starts. There may be times when you need a laptop to access a reading or writing assignment, but those are the only reasons for being on your computer. Texting, checking Facebook, etc. from your phone or computer means you're not engaging in the daily activities of our course. If you are using your electronics during class, it will be marked in the gradebook, and we'll notify you after class or via email; two violations will equal an absence for the course, and each additional violation will accrue another absence.

- 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. Class Conduct

Our classroom is a place for the free exchange of ideas in an environment of mutual respect. Students whose behavior distracts or disrespects others will be asked to leave and will be counted absent.

3. Contacting us:

- Professor George's Office Hours: I consider my office an extension of the classroom. Feel free to use my office hours to discuss any aspect of the assignments. This time is strictly yours and may be your best chance to get help. Use it. (Note: I will be in my office at times other than office hours. If my door is open, I'll be happy to talk with you. If it's closed, please respect my work time.)
- Email is the best way to reach us outside of class. Professor George checks email twice a day—once in the morning (after class) and once in the late afternoon. She seldom checks email in the evenings or on weekends. She'll answer your emails as quickly as she can, but please allow 24 hours for a reply. We do not read drafts or discuss grades over email; both of those are best done during office hours.

4. Submitting Assignments:

We will be having a draft workshop for each of the major writing assignments—you'll need a complete, legible hard copy of your draft for that class. Your final drafts should be typed (double-spaced) with standard margins and in a standard 12-point font. Attach your rough draft with peer comments to your final paper. **N.B. We will not read a paper without a rough draft! If you miss the draft workshop, you will still need to submit an earlier draft with your final paper.**

5. **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 us 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.

6. Grades

Simply fulfilling the minimum requirements of the assignments and the course warrants an average grade (*i.e.*, a C). Coming to class every day and doing assignments is not something that earns “extra credit” or an automatic A; it’s an expectation for being in the course. A higher than average grade will be based on: 1) your active engagement in understanding and collaboratively creating our 1930s rhetorical parlor; 2) your ability to articulate and apply the rhetorical theory we study; 3) your ability to compose rhetorically effective texts that handle complicated subjects with precision and nuance; and 4) a willingness to take risks by exploring new subjects, genres, and techniques. Below is a breakdown of how final grades are calculated.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Quality of Work
A	93-100	Outstanding
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	Exceeds Expectations
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	
C	73-76	Meets Expectations/Average
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	
D	63-66	Below average/needs work
D-	60-62	
F	59 or less	Unacceptable/Incomplete

Please note that, due to privacy and legal issues, we will not be using the eLearning gradebook. We will, however, provide you with the information you need to calculate your own grades at any point in the semester.

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 Student 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 Sparks Notes 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 receive an “F” for the course.

- 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 that the student receive an "F" for the course.

•**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.

TCU Disability Statement (verbatim from [TCU catalog](#))

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 11. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-7486.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. *Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator.* Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

Books on reserve for this course—assigned readings and general reference texts:

Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left*
Berenice Abbott, *Changing New York and Photographs*
James Agee (and Walker Evans), *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*
Laura Browder, *Rousing the Nation*
Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*
Sharon Corwin, *American Modern: Documentary Photography by Abbott, Evans, and Bourke-White*
Malcolm Cowley, *The Dream of the Golden Mountains*
Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front*
Theodore Dreiser, et al. *Harlan Miners Speak*
David Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*
Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time*
Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations*
Michael Folsom, ed. *Mike Gold: A Literary Anthology*
Fleischhauer and Brannon, eds. *Documenting American, 1935-42*
Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art and National Culture*
Henry Hart, ed. *American Writers' Congress*
Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the American Left*
Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*
Judy Kutulas, *The Long War*
Kyvig and Blasio, eds. *New Day/New Deal: A Bibliography of the Great Depression*
David Madden, *Proletarian Writers of the Thirties*
Robert McElvaine, ed. *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*
Richard McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists*
Nekola and Rabinowitz, eds. *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1930-40*
Cary Nelson, *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory*
Richard Pells, *Radical Visions and American Dreams*
Katherine Anne Porter, *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*
John Raeburn, *A Staggering Revolution*
Walter Rideout, *The Radical Novel in the U.S.*
Franklin Roosevelt, *On Our Way*
Arthur Rothstein, *The Depression Years* (photography)
Alan Wald, *Trinity of Passion; The New York Intellectuals; Exiles from a Future Time*
William Carlos Williams, *Selected Essays*
Edmund Wilson, *The American Jitters*

COURSE CALENDAR (subject to change)

Unless otherwise indicated, all short texts (i.e., not our class books) are available on eCollege.

Week One

8/22 Introduction to 1930s Rhetorical Parlor

8/24 Decade overview: *The Century: America's Time with Peter Jennings* (Volume 2: The '30s). ABC News in association with The History Channel. Buena Vista. 1999. VHS.

8/26 **Getting Our Bearings: 1930s Cultural Criticism**

- Kenneth Burke, "Waste—The Future of Prosperity"
- Helen Keller, "Put Your Husband in the Kitchen"
- **Assign Rhetorical History 1.**

Week Two: Getting Our Bearings: Rhetorical Theory [via What is America?]

8/29 Epideictic rhetoric, the 3 appeals.

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1st Inaugural Address (web)

8/31 Identification and the range of rhetoric:

- Foss, Foss, and Trapp introduction to Kenneth Burke
- Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*: Introduction; "Identifying Nature of Property," "Identification and the 'Autonomous,'" and "Rhetoric of 'Address'"
- Margaret Bourke-White, "The American Way of Life" (photo)
- "This is America" (photo)

9/2 Radical epideictic rhetoric:

- Keller, "Thoughts That Will Not Let Me Sleep"
- Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again"
- Woody Guthrie, "This Land Is Your Land" (web)
- **Last day to choose your parlor figure.**

Week Three

9/5 Labor Day Holiday

9/7 **Getting Our Bearings: The 1930s Literary Wars. Blogging the 30s.**

- Literary Wars handout on eCollege

9/9 Library Research (Ammie Harrison). **Meet in Library, Rm 219. TG 1 due**

Week Four: Steinbeck—Fiction vs. Nonfiction

9/12 John Steinbeck, *Harvest Gypsies*

- **Draft of blog on parlor figure due**

9/14 *In Dubious Battle* through Ch 4

9/16 *In Dubious Battle* through Ch 7

- **Parlor figure blog with links due**

Week Five

9/19 *In Dubious Battle* through Ch 11

9/21 *In Dubious Battle* through Ch 13

9/23 *In Dubious Battle* in the parlor

- Finish *In Dubious Battle*
- *In Dubious Battle* reviews
- Sample RH 1 paper

Week Six: How does Art persuade? What is the role of the artist?

9/26 On the Left—Michael Gold:

- “Proletarian Realism”
- “Go Left, Young Writer”
- “Why I am a Communist”
- Sampler of “Red” poems
- **TG 2 due**

9/28 First American Writers’ Congress (1935):

- Call for An American Writers’ Congress
- Jack Conroy, “Worker as Writer”
- Edwin Seaver, “What is a Proletarian Novel?”
- Edmund Wilson, “The Case of the Author”

9/30 Burke vs. Tate

- Burke, “Revolutionary Symbolism in America”
- Allen Tate, “Poetry and Politics”

Week Seven

10/3 **Draft of RH 1 due for peer review**

10/5 Harlem Renaissance: Hughes and Hurston

- Hughes, “To Negro Writers” (eCollege); “Cora Unashamed” and “The Blues I’m Playing” (*Ways of White Folks*)
- Hurston, “Art and Such”

10/7 **RH 1 DUE. Assign RH 2: Collaborative Mini-Documentary**

- “Passing” (*Ways of White Folks*)—bring books and we’ll read it in class

Week Eight: Getting Our Bearings With Multimodal Texts

10/10 FALL BREAK

10/12 Example mini-documentaries

- Hughes, “Red-Headed Baby” (*Ways*)
- **TG 3 due**

10/14 Utilizing images, oral text, visual text, music, and sound effects

- Richard Lanham (Title TBA)

Week Nine

10/17 Finding and citing images (**in NMWS**)

- 30s photos TBA, depending on your parlor figures

10/19 Finding sound effects and music (**in NMWS**)

- Suzanne Langer (Title TBA)
- 30s songs TBA, depending on your parlor figures

10/21 Using Photoshop (**in NMWS**)

Week Ten

10/24 Using iMovie or MovieMaker (**in NMWS**)

- **TG 4 due**

10/26 Group workday (**in NMWS**)

10/28 Group workday

Week Eleven

10/31 **Rough draft of movie due for peer review**

11/2 Hughes, “Home” and “Little Black Fellow” (*Ways*)

11/4 **RH 2 DUE: Movie Day!**

Week Twelve: A Proletarian Novel

11/7 **Individual documentary analyses due. Begin RH 3**

11/9 Conroy, *The Disinherited*

11/11 *The Disinherited*

- **TG 5 due**

Week Thirteen: Proletarian Drama

11/14 Finish *The Disinherited*

11/16 Work with thesis and claims for RH 3

11/18 Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty*

Week Fourteen

11/21 *Waiting for Lefty*

11/23 & 11/25 THANKSGIVING

Week Fifteen: Rhetorical History Revisited

11/28 **RH 3 draft due for peer review**

11/30 Work on RH 3

12/2 **RH 3 Due. Begin prep for Final Evaluative Experience**

Week Sixteen

12/5 Prep for FEE

12/7 Final things

FINAL EVALUATIVE EXPERIENCE: Friday, Dec. 16, 8:00-10:30 am. Graduating seniors will need to do their presentations no later than noon on Wednesday, Dec 14.

