

THE NEW DEAL AND AMERICAN POLITICS

Department of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University
AS.190.425, Spring 2024
Wednesdays, 1:30 PM
Latrobe Hall 120

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10:00-11:30AM or by appointment

Course Description

Almost a century on, the New Deal still casts a long shadow over American politics. As Leon Keyserling wrote in 1984, half a century after he drafted the National Labor Relations Act, “National policies have largely been New Deal and anti-New Deal policies.” Understanding the substance and structure of contemporary debates about the purposes of government and the possibilities requires making sense of the New Deal’s achievements and limits.

Few historical periods have inspired such a theoretically rich set of studies. For generations of scholars, the New Deal has posed deep questions about state action in a capitalist society. In recent decades, political institutions and race have also assumed central importance. We sample from across this literature, along with some key primary sources – and a novel with a methodologically impressive conceit. This course is interdisciplinary by design. Historians should learn how to think about events through structural categories, and political scientists about the ways that past choices affect future possibilities. We consider carefully how authors’ analytic frameworks affect the questions that they ask, and the answers they get.

We begin by touring the Depression and the Roosevelt response, then examine in detail its two most important policies: the Social Security Act and, in the context of working-class mobilization, the Wagner Act. We next turn to party politics and the limits of presidential power. A week on race follows. We then spend a week in a counterfactual Lindbergh presidency before examining wartime politics as they actually played out. The civil rights movement and the Great Society took up the New Deal’s unfinished business – but also exposed its contradictions, and added some of their own. We conclude by asking how the Rooseveltian inheritance has, and has not, continued to influence American politics down through Ronald Reagan, who as a young man voted four times for FDR, and beyond to the present day.

Grading

Participation: 20 percent.
Short Papers: 30 percent.
Term Paper: 50 percent.

Books Ordered

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
Susan Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013).
William E. Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).
William E. Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Barack Obama*, 4th ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
Eric Rauchway, *Why the New Deal Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).
Philip Roth, *The Plot against America* (New York: Vintage, 2005).

You are welcome to find used or library copies (the public library and Interlibrary Loan are extremely helpful). All other readings will be available on electronic reserve.

Disability Accommodation

Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

Academic Honesty

Cheating is wrong. Cheating hurts our community by undermining academic integrity, creating mistrust, and fostering unfair competition. The university will punish cheaters with failure on an assignment, failure in a course, permanent transcript notation, suspension, and/or expulsion. Offenses may be reported to medical, law, or other professional or graduate schools when a cheater applies.

Violations can include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments without permission, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse.

Although you are encouraged to talk about the material with other students – indeed, a successful course will stimulate frequent dialogue outside the classroom – every single word you write must be your own. You may discuss your papers with other students and seek help from the Writing Center, but you must acknowledge all assistance you receive.

For more information, see the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board web site (<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/>).

Short Papers

Before two class meetings (once weeks 2 through 6; once weeks 7 through 12, except for week 9), write a 4-5 page paper addressing key themes in the readings. Sign-ups the first day. Avoid summary, and do not feel compelled to address every single item on the syllabus. Instead, think through and build an argument about what the readings have to say about larger theoretical issues. The first set of papers (weeks 2-6) will be written individually. For the second set of papers (weeks 7, 8, 10-12), you may write jointly with up to two other students. Papers are due in my inbox at 8AM (let me repeat: 8 o'clock in the morning) on the day of class.

In addition, you and the other writers in any given week will begin class with a brief presentation, giving some context and offering issues for us to discuss. Even when you are writing papers individually, you should meet with your fellow presenters to plan what you want to say. Your presentations should be professional. Don't just summarize your paper or the readings. Use hand-outs or multimedia presentations, if you wish. Your presentations will figure importantly in the participation grade for the course.

Term Paper

The final paper asks you to conduct some kind original research on some aspect of New Deal politics. The choice of topics is yours. The only requirement is that you do some kind of work with primary sources, whether in an archive or simply at the library. You may profile an interesting politician (Maury Maverick, Hamilton Fish, Phil La Follette, Ed Kelly, Vito Marcantonio, Pat Harrison), administrator (Harry Hopkins, Robert Weaver, David Lilienthal) or other public figure (A. Philip Randolph, John Raskob, Molly Dewson); explain politics in a particular city or state; look at a climactic campaign or event; write about a particular policy area (housing, trade) or piece of legislation (Public Utilities Holding Act of 1935; Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938); or, if you're feeling ambitious, look at similar policies overseas, with the Anglosphere forming particularly apt comparison cases.

Just like the readings, your papers should both establish a clear and convincing narrative and then link what you have found to broader theoretical questions. What does your particular case tell us about important issues? What interpretations does the evidence support – or not. Why should we care about what you have found? What difference does it make?

This all may sound scary, but the only thing you have to fear is fear itself! That said, you will have to undertake some serious research in the library, so it would behoove you to get started early. Please stop by my office hours to bounce off ideas for a topic! Papers should be properly annotated using a standard citation method. Please keep any notes and outlines, as well as a hard copy of anything you hand in to me, until I return your graded paper. Submit the marked-up draft copies from me and your peer along with your final paper. Suggested approximate length is 15-18 pages (double spaced; standard font and margins).

Topic due March 13. Annotated bibliography due April 10. Full draft due April 24; I'll take a look, and you'll also exchange papers and written comments with a classmate. Final paper due via email at 2PM on May 14, which is when the registrar has scheduled the final exam.

Course Schedule and Readings

WEEK 1-INTRODUCTION (January 24)

Eric Rauchway, *Why the New Deal Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 1-39.

WEEK 2-CRISIS AND THE FIRST NEW DEAL (January 31)

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 213-249.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address on Progressive Government at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, California," September 23, 1932, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88391>.

William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 1-94.

Eric Rauchway, *Why the New Deal Matters*, 43-72.

WEEK 3-THE SECOND NEW DEAL (February 7)

William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, 95-196.

Thomas Ferguson, "Industrial Conflict and the Coming of the New Deal: The Triumph of Multinational Liberalism in America," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*, eds. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 3-31.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Acceptance Speech for the Renomination for the Presidency," June 27, 1936, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15314>

WEEK 4-SOCIAL SECURITY & THE WELFARE STATE (February 14)

Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking, 1946), 278-301.

Theda Skocpol and G. John Ikenberry, "The Road to Social Security," in Theda Skocpol, *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 136-166

Robert C. Lieberman, "Race and the Organization of Welfare Policy," in *Classifying by Race*, ed. Paul E. Peterson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 156-187.

Gareth Davies and Martha Derthick, "Race and Social Welfare Policy: The Social Security Act of 1935," *Political Science Quarterly* 112 (1997): 217-35.

Karen M. Tani, "The Unanticipated Consequences of New Deal Poor Relief: Welfare Rights, Empowered States, and the Revival of Localism," in *Capitalism Contested: The New Deal and Its Legacies*, ed. Romain Huret, Nelson Lichtenstein, and Jean-Christian Vinel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 97-111.

WEEK 5-OPENINGS TO THE LEFT (February 21)

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 251-368.

Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 119-151.

WEEK 6-PARTISAN REALIGNMENT & ITS LIMITS (February 28)

Susan Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 1-73, 81-106, 113-4, 152-178, 191-268, 275-7.

Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 150-175.

WEEK 7-RACE & THE SOUTHERN IMPOSITION (March 6)

Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013), 133-194.

Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 209-35.

Rauchway, *Why the New Deal Matters*, 75-100.

V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1949), 644-663.

WEEK 8-DEMOCRACY IN WARTIME (March 13)

Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 276-363, 403-466.

Robert A. Dahl, "Atomic Energy and the Democratic Process," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 290 (1953): 1-6.

WEEK 9-FASCISM (March 27)

Philip Roth, *The Plot against America* (New York: Vintage, 2005), entire.

WEEK 10-THE POSTWAR SETTLEMENT (April 3)

William E. Leuchtenberg, *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Barack Obama*, 4th ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 1-62.

Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 364-402.

Arnold R. Hirsch, "'Containment' on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* 26 (2000): 158-189.

Daniel Schlozman and Sam Rosenfeld, *The Hollow Parties: The Many Pasts and Disordered Present of American Party Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024), 109-127.

Week 11-CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE SIXTIES (April 10)

Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 48-69.

William E. Leuchtenberg, *In the Shadow of FDR*, 121-160.

Michael K. Brown, *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 205-208, 235-292.

Schlozman and Rosenfeld, *The Hollow Parties*, 127-144.

WEEK 12-BACKLASH AND BEYOND (April 17)

William E. Leuchtenberg, *In the Shadow of FDR*, 209-247, 280-284, 291-295, 313-315.

Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 95-131.

Schlozman and Rosenfeld, *The Hollow Parties*, 182-219.

Rauchway, *Why the New Deal Matters*, 175-178.

WEEK 13-PAPER PRESENTATIONS (April 24)