

NEH Summer Institute: The New Deal Era's Federal Writers' Project: History, Politics, and Legacy

Note: For the most part, specific chapters of books will be required in light of the limitations of a four-week institute. A final, more detailed list of required reading will be posted by mid-February.

Required Reading

Allson, Jon. "[The Enduring Lessons of a New Deal Writers Project](#)." *CJR*, 22 Dec. 2020.

Bascomb, Lionel C., ed. *A Renaissance in Harlem: Lost Essays of the WPA, by Ralph Ellison, Dorothy West, and Other Voices of a Generation* Amistad Harper-Collins, 2001.

Bowen, Betsey. "Reading Slavery/Writing Freedom" Research from the Federal Writers' Project. <https://sites.google.com/student.fairfield.edu/readingslavery/home>.

Carter, Shannon and Deborah Mutnick. "Writing Democracy: Notes on a Federal Writers' Project for the 21st Century." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-14.

DeMasi, Susan Rubenstein. *Henry Alsberg: The Driving Force of the New Deal Federal Writers' Project* McFarland, Inc., 2016.

---. [Bibliographic Essay]. "[The Federal Writers' Project: A Legacy of Words](#)" *Choice*. 2012.

Dolar, Brian, ed. *The Negro in Illinois: the WPA Papers*. U of Illinois P, 2015.

Ellison, Ralph. *Flying Home and Other Stories*. Random House, 1996.

Epps-Robertson, Candace. *Resisting Brown: Race, Literacy, and Citizenship in the Heart of Virginia* U of Pittsburgh P, 2018.

Greer, Jane, and Laurie Grobman. Eds. *Pedagogies of Public Memory: Teaching Writing and Rhetoric at Museums, Memorials, and Archives*. Routledge, 2018.

Hathaway, Rosemary. "Native Geography: Richard Wright's Work for the Federal Writers' Project in Chicago." *African American Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2008, pp. 91-108.

Hirsch, Jerrold. *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* U of North Carolina P, 2006.

---. "Rediscovering America: The FWP Legacy and Challenge." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2012, pp. 15-31.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Go Gator and Muddy the Water!: Writings by Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project*. Ed. Pamela Bordelon. W.W. Norton, 1999.

Jolliffe, David A., Christian Z. Goering, James A. Anderson, and Krista Jones Oldham. *The Arkansas Delta Oral History Project: Culture, Place, and Authenticity*. Syracuse UP, 2016.

Jones-Rogers, Stephanie E. *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*. Yale UP, 2019.

Le Sueur, Meridel. *Ripening, Selected Work Second Edition*, edited by Elaine Hedges, The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1993.

- Mangione, Jerry. *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943*. Syracuse UP, 1996.
- Mutnick, Deborah. "Toward a Twenty-First Century Federal Writers' Project," *College English* vol. 77, no. 2, 2014, pp. 124-45.
- Rutkowski, Sara. *Literary Legacies of the Federal Writers' Project: Voices of the Depression in the American Postwar Era*. Palgrave, 2017.
- Schulten, Susan. "How to See Colorado: The Federal Writers' Project, American Regionalism, and the 'Old New Western History.'" *The Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2005, pp. 49-70.
- Stewart, Catherine. *A. Long Past Slavery: Representing Race in the Federal Writers Project*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Tidwell, John Edgar and Mark A. Sanders, eds. *Sterling A. Brown's, A Negro Looks at the South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007
- West, Dorothy. *The Richer, the Poorer: Stories, Sketches, and Reminiscences*. Anchor Books, 1996.
- Wright, Richard. *12 Million Black Voices*. 1941. Basic Books, 2008.
- . "A Survey of the Amusement Facilities of District#35." 1937. *African American Review*, vol. 42, no.1, 2008, pp. 96-108.
- . *Uncle Tom's Children*. 1938. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.

Recommended Reading

- Banks, Ann. *First-Person America*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
- Blassingame, John W. "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems." *The Slave's Narrative*, edited by C. T. David and H. L. Gates, Jr. Oxford UP, 1985, pp. 77-98.
- Bold, Christine. *Writers, Plumbers and Anarchists: The WPA Writers' Project in Massachusetts*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2006.
- Butts, J.J. "New World A-Coming: African American Documentary Intertexts of the Federal Writers' Project." *African American Review*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2011, pp. 649-666.
- Carter, Shannon. "East Texas Activism (1966-68): Locating the Literacy Scene through the Digital Humanities." *College English*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2013, pp. 152-70.
- . "In Possession of Community: Toward a More Sustainable Local." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2012, pp. 82-106.
- Couch, W.T. "Preface." *These Are Our Lives*. Federal Writers' Project. Kingsport Press, 1939.
- Fox, Daniel M. "The Achievement of the Federal Writers' Project." *American Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1961, pp. 3-19.

- Goldblatt, Eli, and David A. Jolliffe. *Literacy as Conversation: Learning Networks in Urban and Rural Communities*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2020.
- Griswold, Wendy. *American Guides: The Federal Writers' Project and the Casting of American Culture*. U of Chicago P, 2016.
- Grobman, Laurie. "‘Engaging Race’: Teaching Critical Race Inquiry and Community-Engaged Projects." *College Composition, and Communication*, vol. 80, no. 2. 2017, pp. 105-132.
- . "‘I’m on a Stage’: Rhetorical History, Performance, and the Development of the Central Pennsylvania African American Museum." *College Composition, and Communication*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2013, pp. 299-23.
- . Interview with Ed Ayers. "Rallying Behind Racism: The Women Behind White Supremacy." *Backstory*, podcast audio, October 18, 2019. <https://www.backstoryradio.org/shows/rallying-behind-racism/>
- Knochel, Aaron, & Selfe, Dickie. "Spaces of the Hilltop: A Case Study of Community/Academic Interaction." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2012.
- Le Sueur, Meridel. *The Girl*. 2nd ed. West End Press, 2006.
- Mutnick, Deborah. "Inscribing the World: An Oral History Project in Brooklyn." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2007, pp. 626-647.
- . "Pathways to Freedom: From the Archives to the Street." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 60, no. 3, 2018, pp. 374-401.
- . "Write, Persist, Struggle’: Sponsors of Writing and Workers’ Education in the 1930s." Special Issue, "Engaged Infrastructures." Ed. V. House, S. Meyers, and S. Carter. *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2016, pp. 10-21.
- Tracy, Steven C., and John Edgar Tidwell, editors. *After Winter: The Art and Life of Sterling A. Brown*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Turner Trice, Dawn. "A Book That Binds Black History in Illinois: Historical Volume Was More Than 70 Years in the Making." *Chicago Tribune*. 24 May 2007, n.p.
- Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. 1940. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005.
- Young, Melvina Johnson. "Exploring the WPA Narratives: Finding the Voices of Black Women and Men." In *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women*, edited by S.M. James and A.P.A. Busia. Routledge, 1993, pp. 55-76.

Films

- "The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers at Woodson Regional Library in Chicago, Illinois." C-Span2 Book TV, Chicago, 16 Nov. 2013.
- Soul of a People: Writing America's Story* Directed by Andrea Kalin, Smithsonian Networks, 2010,
- Enough to Live On: The Arts of the WPA* Directed by Michal Maglaras, 217 Films, 2015.
- Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives*. Directed by Mark Jonathan Harris, HBO Video,

2004.

Federal Writers' Project Primary Sources

“American Guide Series: The WPA Federal Writers' Project.” Research Guides.¹ Rowen University Libraries. Accessed February 20, 2020.

American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1940. Library of Congress Collection.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection/>.

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the FWP, 1936-1938. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/>.

Colorado: American Guide Series (1941) <https://archive.org/details/coloradoguidetoh00hans>.

Federal Writers' Project. New Deal Programs: Selected Library of Congress Resources
<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fwp.html>.

Massachusetts: The American Guide Series (1938)
<https://archive.org/details/massachusettsgui00federich/mode/2up>.

New York Panorama: Essays from the 1930s. 1938. New York: Dover Publications, 2018. <https://archive.org/details/newyorkpanoramac00federich/page/vij>.

Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State. Austin, Texas: Texas State Highway Commission, 1940.
<https://archive.org/stream/texasguidetolone00writrich#page/n1/mode/2up>

WPA Children's Books (1935-1943)

Other Primary Sources

Carter, Shannon. Project: Remixing Rural Texas: Local Texts, Global Contexts (funded, in part, by an NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant, 2011).

Mutnick, Deborah, Project: Pathways to Freedom: Mapping Civil Rights Oral Histories in Time and Space (funded, in part, by an NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant, 2012)

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Local Libraries and Archives

Center for Brooklyn History

[New York City Municipal Archives](#)

New York Historical Society

New York Library

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, NYPL

¹ List of WPA state guides provided in advance of the institute from which participants will select a publication to present during the first week of the Institute.