

# THE SOURCE



## The Economics of Teaching History

A Publication of the California History-Social Science Project - Fall 2011

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## 2011 Fall Calendar

### OCTOBER

October 13, **TAH—Igniting Freedom's Flame: Land, Labor & Community in the 19th-Century**, San Juan Teachers, Grades 4, 5, 8

October 14&15, **Fall Conference** in Conjunction with California Council for History Education\*

October 15, **North State History Teacher's Learning Collaborative**

October 18, **Teaching with Primary Sources II—Immigration & Migration**,

Sacramento City Teachers, Grades 4, 5, 8, 11

October 18, **TAH—Legacies of Liberty: Land, Labor & Community in the 19th-Century**, Sacramento City, Grades 4, 5, 8, 11

October 19, **TAH - The Revolutionary Era through a Global Lens**, Solano County

October 20 & 26, **Blueprint Focus Groups**, Oakland & Mt. Diablo

October 29, **Art and Power in Colonial India**, Grade 10, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco\*

October TBA, **Understanding American Citizenship**, Grades 9-12\*

### NOVEMBER

November 1, **Teaching American History - Social Movements**, Glendale-Burbank

November 2, **Southern California Modern: A Scholar Series on Living in the Golden State in the Mid-Twentieth Century**\*

November 2, **The Declaration of a Foodist: The Importance of Food in History**, UC Irvine\*

November 5, **Building Academic Literacy through History**, Grades 4-12, UC Berkeley\*

November 10, **TAH - The Enlightenment**, Moorpark-Oxnard-Mupu

November 16, **India Book Club**\*

November 19, **Ancient Civilizations for the Sixth Grade Curriculum**, San Francisco\*

November 30, **Bowers Museum "Warriors, Tombs, and Temples" exhibit tour and workshop**, Grade 6

### DECEMBER

December 6, **TAH - Andrew Jackson**, Glendale-Burbank

December 7, **Southern California Modern: A Scholar Series on Living in the Golden State in the Mid-Twentieth Century**\*

December 7, **Food and Drink in the Ancient World**, UC Irvine

December 8, **India Book Club**\*

December 8-Spring 2012, **North State World History Online Seminars**\*

**\*Asterisk denotes program open to registration**

**For information about any of these programs and events, please contact  
California History-Social Science Project**

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Front Cover Image: Migrant pea pickers camp, in the rain. California. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1936. Library of Congress.

Back Cover Image: Toward Los Angeles, California. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1937. Library of Congress.

# Context in the Great Recession

by Nancy McTygue, Executive Director, California History-Social Science Project



Washington, D.C. Government Charwoman. Photo by Gordon Parks, 1942. Library of Congress.

economy, both private, and more recently, public. With revenues down, private industry and government institutions alike have been forced to cut expenses, with employee salary and benefits a popular target.

Classroom teachers are keenly aware of the impact of this economic crisis. More than one in five American children live below the poverty line, with children of color shouldering a disproportionate share of the hardship. Many studies have documented the negative impact of poverty upon student performance and most teachers can provide detailed evidence from their own classrooms to support this research.

Just as obvious as the recession's impact upon our children is the effect on our public schools. Years of budget cuts have severely reduced or in some cases, eliminated, special programs for children struggling to learn, funding for field trips, classroom supplies and equipment, copy paper, textbooks, professional development, busses, and regular building maintenance. Class size reduction has been eliminated in many districts, along with crime prevention and adult education. Many schools have eliminated arts and sports programs, and reduced the time children spend in class each year. Teacher layoff notices are a regular springtime occurrence now – a conservative estimate is that the state of California has shed more than 30,000 teachers in the last four years.

The teaching of history, as one of my colleagues reminded me, "...is all about context." We teach children to consider the perspective of historical actors in order to better

understand their actions. We also have to admit, if we're honest, that our own view of historical events is colored by our own perspective, our own history. I first studied the Great Depression in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in 1983, when the country was emerging from two years of recession. I remember reading Steinbeck, seeing the pictures of Dorothea Lange, and lists of acronyms under the heading "New Deal" programs. Both of my parents lived through the Depression – and told me many stories of what it meant to be a child living in poverty and the toll it took on their own parents. Intellectually, I think I understood the basic events of the era, but I have to admit that the suffering all seemed very foreign and separate from my own American experience.

If the principal context of this time is economic crisis and sacrifice, what will our students learn about their own time? When seemingly every resource is expendable, what expectations can we rightly place upon our children? In our own discipline, what can we expect them



President Ronald Reagan, 1981. Library of Congress.

to learn of our history? This issue of *The Source* is devoted to the complex and often ignored relationship between history and economy. As historian David Igler, who we've interviewed for this edition, argues, "...it's extremely hard to understand any period of history or any set of historical conditions without, at the very least, a basic understanding of the surrounding economic climate."

As you read this edition, we encourage you to think about this important and inseparable relationship. What impact has this had upon your classroom? Your teaching? Your students? Then, share your thoughts with us on our Facebook page or write to us at [chssp@ucdavis.edu](mailto:chssp@ucdavis.edu).



## A Scholar's View on Economics and History: Q & A with UC Irvine Professor, David Igler

David Igler is Associate Professor of History at UC Irvine, specializing in the history of California and the American West, Environmental History, and Pacific History. His 2001 book, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the American West, 1850-1920*, examines the economic, social, and environmental changes brought by industrial agriculture beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Currently, Igler is investigating the emergence and transformation of the "Pacific world" during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, exploring how commerce, environment, and cultures linked the future American Far West to the eastern Pacific Basin, as well as to larger global exchanges. CHSSP asked Igler to share his thoughts on studying and teaching the economics of history.

*CHSSP: How can studying economic history shed light on social, political, and environmental conditions of the past?*

**Igler:** I would say it's extremely hard to understand any period of history or any set of historical conditions without, at the very least, a basic understanding of the surrounding economic climate. In the United States for instance, can we even attempt to understand the 1870s, the 1890s, the 1930s, the 1970s, or our current time, without a basic knowledge of the contemporary recessions or depressions? I would say no. As a teacher and writer, I want to know about these conditions not so much because I'm really interested in economics per se, but because I'm interested in the social conditions of the times. In fact, I only have a rudimentary understanding of how the economy works in whole or parts, and yet I'm extremely interested in how those larger economic forces trickle down to the everyday lives of workers, employers, and children. Of course what we find is that economic conditions are directly connected to the political climate, social circumstances, and yes, even environmental concerns.

*CHSSP: How does California's position in the West and along the Pacific, as well as its wealth of natural resources, make studying economics integral to understanding the state's history?*

**Igler:** California's leading position in the West since the times of the gold rush is very well documented in the literature. For a quick introduction to this history, look at some of the essays in *A Companion to California History*. The essays by Richard Walker, Doug Sackman, and Art Verge are especially important to this question. In my California course, I never teach the state's history as if it exists in isolation from the larger context of the region, the nation, and even the world. California has always revealed these overlapping scales of history (the state, region, nation, world) and that's what makes it so interesting. My current research (and book manuscript) focuses on the eastern Pacific Basin and is very much oriented around the ocean. It's set in an early modern time period, basically the 1770s to the 1840s. And even back then, Alta California had perhaps its strongest connections to the Pacific Ocean in terms of trade, traffic,

human migrations, as well as terrible things, like the spread of European diseases to indigenous peoples.

*CHSSP: Can economic history be about the individual - in California especially, where large industries shape the economy?*

**Igler:** Oh yes. I teach California history almost every year and economic history plays a large role in my course. I don't necessarily present my material as economic history, more frequently I attempt to show how individuals thrive or decline economically during given moments in history. I will frequently draw examples from my 2001 book *Industrial Cowboys*, which focuses on industrial agriculture, labor, and environmental issues during the late nineteenth century. The book contains many examples of people who succeeded and many more examples of laborers who barely survived during this age of early western industrialization. The powerful corporations of this period certainly shaped the economy, filled the legislature with friendly politicians, and helped write the laws to facilitate their businesses. That's one side of the story. But the other side is equally important and sometimes more interesting: individual employees, wage laborers, migrant "bindle stiffs," and union organizers. Our students need to hear about these ordinary people if they are going to remain interested in history.

*CHSSP: What would you recommend for a good treatment of economic history of California, or within the field of World History?*

**Igler:** I already mentioned some of the essays in *A Companion to California History*, which unfortunately only exists in hardback and is quite expensive. Richard Orsi's textbook of California history *Elusive Eden* does a very good job with economic issues. Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*--now almost a classic in the literature--is a radical take on the political economy of southern California in the 20th century. In the field of world history, the most accessible and teachable book is *The World That Trade Created* by two of my colleagues, Ken Pomeranz and Steven Topik. It's simply marvelous for undergraduates and secondary school teachers because it draws examples from all around the world. It's a fun read to boot.



# Resources for Teaching Economic Crises

Emma Hipolito and Mary Miller, UCLA History-Geography Project

During the summer of 2009, the UCLA History-Geography Project co-sponsored a 3-day workshop with the UCLA Anderson School's CIBER program focused on the Recession of 2008. We called the workshop "Crisis and Response: An Economic View of Current Events" and our principal goal was to assist teachers in understanding the economic downturn so that they could make connections to students' lives. As we were putting this program together, we identified some resources that we think are still useful today.

Much of our planning was influenced by Paul Krugman's *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*. In fact, we were so impressed by the author's ability to break down the financial crisis in language that the general public could understand that we purchased copies of his book for our participants and assigned several chapters for them to read. Krugman is a Princeton Economist and op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*. In *The Return of Depression Economics* Krugman explains how today's crisis parallels the Great

Depression and details what steps can be taken to avoid future financial collapse.

Another helpful book is Roger Farmer's *How the Economy Works: Confidence, Crashes and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*. Dr. Farmer is an Economist at UCLA and we were lucky enough to hear him speak on the economic downturn. You can get a preview of the ideas that he presents in his book if you follow this link to an interview he gave to



UCLA Economist Roger Farmer,  
*UCLA Today*, 29 March 2010.

UCLA Today: <http://www.today.ucla.edu/portal/ut/10-questions-economist-roger-farmer-155965.aspx>. On his faculty website, <http://farmer.sscnet.ucla.edu/>, you will find video links to various other presentations that he has given as well as to some of his op-ed pieces.

If you are searching for a video that is accessible to students, we found PBS's Frontline "Inside The Meltdown" to be engaging. The whole program is available online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/meltdown/view/>,

where you will also find other video clips that provide insight into our current economic crisis. Prior to viewing the video it is important for students to be introduced to the following terms: bubble, shadow banking system, and subprime borrower. Additionally, it would be helpful for students to have a graphic organizer to follow along. For our purposes our graphic organizer focused on the key individuals discussed in the video--Henry Paulson, Ben Bernanke, and Timothy Geithner. As always, we recommend stopping the video after ten or fifteen minutes or so to debrief content with students.

Some of you may be familiar with the workshops offered by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco or perhaps you have taken a field trip to one of the banks. However, did you know that they recently updated their website to include material on the economic crisis? This section of the Federal Reserve website is called "Crisis and Response" and includes information on causes of the financial crisis, what the Federal Reserve did in response, and much more. If you go to <http://www.frbsf.org/education/> and click on "Crisis and Response" under "Teacher Resources," you will find a tutorial that will give you highlights of the site as well as a video clip of 60 Minutes correspondent, Scott Pelley, interviewing Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke. Our participants thought Part I of this segment could be used in a high school classroom. Similarly, our teacher participants received copies of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis' curricular unit on the Great Depression. You can now download this curriculum free from their site. The link is <http://www.stlouisfed.org/greatdepression/curriculum.html>

A final suggestion is to look beyond university Economics Departments for experts. During a UCLA institute this summer, for example, Professor David Rigby of the Geography Department gave a very interesting talk on "Globalization and Geography" in which he commented on why globalization has not (as sometimes predicted) significantly benefitted Africa despite the availability of a low-wage workforce. He noted that multi-national corporations often look for both workers and markets, and not only do those markets not yet exist in Africa, but many nations there have strict limitations on imports, thus helping us conceptualize additional aspects of the global economy. Exploring economic interactions and conditions in United States and World History courses provide students with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of a given era and place, while providing them insight into current events as well.

# History Project Fellow, Brian Riley, on Economics and History

Brian Riley teaches economics and history at Vacaville High School where he is chair of the Social Science Department. His first event with the History Project was in 1994, and he has been a History Project Fellow since 2001. In the 2010-11 school year he co-coordinated the Solano County Teaching American History (TAH) grant-funded program. Currently, Brian is the Lead Teacher in “America on the World Stage,” the second Solano County TAH grant focused on a global approach to US history.



*CHSSP: Has the 2007-present downturn in the US economy, what some call the Great Recession, impacted your teaching?*

**Riley:** Absolutely! The students see this issue on a daily basis; many have experienced an unemployed parent, a foreclosure, and a general belt tightening when it comes to spending. As a result, this is a very personal issue to many students, and there are few issues that capture the interest of students more than those that directly impact them. They are curious about the causes, why it happened, when will it get better, and comparisons to the Great Depression. In turn, I have focused more attention on business cycles, banking, credit and its importance, as well as the markets.

*CHSSP: What impact has the Great Recession had on students' interest in economics?*

**Riley:** They are living it and as a result they want to understand the hows and the whys. They have a lot of anger at politicians and the banking industry over the near collapse of the system. They see it as threatening their future.

*CHSSP: What impact has it had on your colleagues?*

**Riley:** Quite a bit. We have focused on collaboration and sharing resources now more than ever, in large part due to the student interest in the tough economic times we are experiencing and the fact that we usually don't spend as much time and effort on recessions and depressions.

*CHSSP: Do you or your students draw any classroom comparisons between the Great Depression and the Great Recession?*

**Riley:** Yes, the students are very curious about the difference between the two and whether or not we will experience things in the same way. It fosters great discussions about social programs and the concept of safety nets.

*CHSSP: Has the Great Recession influenced you to teach any content that you had not taught before?*

**Riley:** Yes! One of the things I try to show is the current debate over how to handle a recession and what strategies are most effective at curbing the depth and misery of them. That debate is reflected in the thinking of Keynes and Hayek, which in turn is part of our national debate.

## Federal Funding for History Education Update

On September 21, 2011, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S.1599, which includes \$46 million in Teaching American History Grant (TAH) funding for the Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) budget. On September 29, 2011, the House Appropriations Committee released a draft of a bill that would eliminate TAH funding in FY12.

The future of TAH funding is part of a larger issue – reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), or, in its most recent form, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. TAH is a discretionary grant program funded under Title II-

C, Subpart 4 of ESEA. Reauthorization of ESEA has been delayed, given competing visions for the role of the federal government in public education, the ongoing budget crisis, and a focus on competing domestic and international issues.

In March of 2010, the Obama Administration released its “Blueprint for Reform,” its plan to consolidate TAH with a number of other US Department of Education (DOE) programs. In June of 2010, TAH's leading advocate, Senator Robert Byrd of North Carolina, passed away at the age of 92. By the fall of 2010, history organizations lobbied Congress, in the hopes that ESEA's reauthorization would include TAH funding as a specific line-item in the DOE's budget.

With funding uncertain, DOE officials still invited applications for TAH proposals from schools for new funding in February of 2011. In April, Congress reduced funding by \$72 million, a 61% cut from the previous year's allocation. In response to this cut, the DOE suspended the 2011 competition, but provided continuation funding for 2008 grantees who had previously been promised five years of support.

According to its website, TAH is, “... designed to raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of and appreciation for traditional U.S. history.” Since 2001, TAH has awarded 1,153 grants across the country, including 130 in California.



# Teaching Economic History

by Lauren Weaver, MDUSD TAH Grant Coordinator

UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project

The state of our nation's economy is a central theme in daily news stories and in conversations between friends, but how often do teachers focus on economic history in the U.S. History classroom? Teachers of grades 4, 5, 8, and 11 in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District faced this question last year as they tackled "Economic History" for their Teaching American History Grant's yearly theme. This grant, which partners Mt. Diablo with the UC Berkeley History-Social Science Project, focuses on providing teachers with content lectures from university professors, workshops on historical thinking, reading and writing skills in history, and collaboration time to create classroom lessons that feature historical content and academic literacy strategies.

Hannah Farber's talk, "The Economy of the Early Republic," inspired 5th grade teachers to create a lesson on the rise of homespun manufacturing prior to the American Revolution. In this lesson, students analyze primary sources as they gather evidence to answer the lesson focus question, "How was consumption and production a response to the Townshend Acts?" Other notable presentations included "Jackson and the Bank" by UC Berkeley Professor Robin Einhorn and "Reorganization of the Southern Economy after 1865" by UC Davis Professor Clarence Walker. These talks informed the 8th grade teachers as they developed a lesson around the question: "How did the development of the cotton gin impact the economy of the agrarian south and lead to the increased dependency on slavery?"

With the focus on economics, grade 4 teachers developed a lesson about the expansion of the railroads, which was driven by the question: "How did the growth of railroads affect California's economy in the late 1800s?" Students analyzed passages from the textbook and deconstructed the political cartoon, "The Curse of California," (see image) which features Leland and Stanford as the eyes of the railroad monopoly octopus. This rich image allows students the opportunity to discuss all the groups who were impacted by the railroads.



G. F. Keller. *The Curse of California*. *The Wasp*. 19 August 1882.

An 11<sup>th</sup> grade team of teachers created a lesson around the focus question, "How did the economic costs of the Vietnam War impact Lyndon Johnson's Great Society?" After examining President Lyndon Johnson's "guns and butter" plan to fund a military engagement abroad while also funding domestic Great Society programs at home, students investigate the economic pros and cons of the mounting expenses for Vietnam and Great Society programs from a finite amount of resources.

Once completed, these economic-infused lessons were field tested in the teachers' classrooms. Teachers then examined student work and prepared final revisions. The grant's theme has shifted to "Cultural and Intellectual," for

2011-2012, but our year examining "Economic History" proved to the teachers that economic historical narratives are anything but dry.

For access to all MDUSD TAH grant-created lessons, visit the grant website at: [www.tah4all.org](http://www.tah4all.org)

# Teaching the Great Depression

by Dave Neumann, Co-Site Director, CSU Long Beach-Dominguez Hills

Students typically view the Great Depression as a vast drama, but they often struggle to adequately understand the economic and statistical elements of the tragedy. Though textbooks attempt to explain these factors, students still find these abstract concepts challenging. But without clear

and again after that, for 130 weeks.” While this too boggles the mind, it also helps to make the scale real to students, as they can identify with a sports stadium crowd and extrapolate outward week after week for over two and half years to glimpse just how many people were involved.

## *Causes of the Depression*

But what was the cause of all of this suffering? While the origins of the Great Depression would seem a vitally important topic, textbook accounts tend to be undeveloped. The popular text *The Americans*, for example, devotes just over 100 words to a list of four bulleted factors identified as “Causes of the Great Depression”: foreign economic policies, farm problems, the availability of easy credit, and an



*Three families camped on the plains along U.S. 99 in California. They are camped behind a billboard which serves as a partial windbreak. All are in need of work. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1938. Library of Congress.*

understanding of causation and scale the era becomes less intelligible. This article explores how to help students make the scale of the Depression more tangible, to understand causes of the Depression, and to link those causes to the proposed solutions of the New Deal.

## *The Scale of Unemployment*

Teachers typically do a good job discussing the human dimension of the Great Depression, making use of outstanding resources like oral histories, the images of Dorothea Lange, and text and film versions of *The Grapes of Wrath*. But students often struggle to understand the scale of the human toll. Students need some grasp of the number of people who suffered unemployment, so they don't just see the personal accounts as merely anecdotal. In his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Freedom From Fear*, David Kennedy offers a thought experiment that I regularly used with students to convey the sheer number of unemployed. Imagine, he says, that as a capacity crowd of 100,000 was leaving the Rose Bowl on January 1, 1931 “the loudspeakers announced that every person in attendance that day had just lost his or her job...Then imagine that this spectacle was repeated at the Rose Bowl...the following week—and the week after that,



*Rural rehabilitation. Tulare County, California. Arkansas mother came to California for a new start. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1938. Library of Congress.*

uneven distribution of income. Arguably, however, the larger eight-page section where these factors are listed teases out each factor and how it contributed, which students can make sense of with some support. I created a simple handout for students that placed these factors in individual boxes and offered the overarching concept of “overproduction” as a way to unify these individual factors. I asked students to reason through the causal sequence of each factor from beginning to end through discussion and close reading of the text. After modeling one example, I set them in groups to talk through the logical chain of events. University of Michigan educator Bob Bain observed this lesson once and pointed out later that my routine engagement with students (which included regularly interrupting them) had a familiar



refrain: “And then?” Rather than providing answers for students, I pushed them to think through the process step by step, confident they could understand.

### *Exploring New Deal Solutions*

While “overproduction” may not be the only way to understand the Depression, it is one viable way; and, indeed, the way FDR & his advisors construed the calamity. David Kennedy explains that Brain Truster Rexford Guy Tugwell “urged upon Roosevelt an ‘underconsumptionist’ explanation of the Depression,” the “natural reciprocal” of which was “‘overproduction.’” Consequently, in asking students to study individual New Deal programs and agencies, I tried to avoid simply asking them to provide descriptions of two dozen programs. Instead, I targeted a few illustrative programs and asked students to identify what problem the program targeted, how that problem might be construed as a problem of overproduction, how the program proposed to remedy that problem, and what evidence of the program’s success was provided by the text. Some programs sought to intentionally reduce production, in both industry (NIRA) and agriculture (AAA). Others that attempted to increase income (NIRA, the Wagner Act, and Social Security) or employ people (PWA, WPA, CCC) functioned in part to increase consumption. Students came to recognize the logic to previously-confusing New Deal efforts. Even when they

couldn’t find definitive answers, they engaged in high-levels of critical thinking that required them to apply economic analysis to historical information.

Students are capable of thinking in economic terms. In fact, they do it all the time. They engage in cost-benefit analysis, wrestle with opportunity costs, and experience the dynamics of supply & demand. They just don’t know the label that economists use to identify these crucial and ultimately accessible phenomena. But they should be challenged to apply these kinds of analysis explicitly when investigating key historical moments like the Great Depression that are unintelligible in key ways without such analysis. Given the ubiquity of economic issues in all aspects of life, economic analysis ought to be a systematic element of history instruction.



## NEW DEAL AGENCIES AND THEIR PRIMARY FUNCTION

**AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ACT (Recovery)** Created in 1933, the AAA paid farmers for not planting crops in order to reduce surpluses, increase demand for seven major farm commodities, and raise prices. Farm income rose, but many tenants and share-croppers were pushed into the ranks of the unemployed. In 1936 the Supreme Court voided the AAA.

**WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION (Relief)** Established in 1935, the WPA lasted until 1943 and employed at least 8.5 million people at an average of \$2 a day. They built thousands of roads, bridges, schools, post offices and other public construction projects. In addition, under the WPA's Arts Program, thousands of unemployed writers, musicians, artists, actors, and photographers temporarily went on the federal payroll, producing public projects ranging from murals to national park guidebooks.

**PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION (Relief/Recovery)** Established in 1933, the PWA was intended both for industrial recovery and unemployment relief. Eventually over \$4 billion was spent on 34,000 construction projects including public buildings, highways, bridges (e.g., San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge), and dams for water and power.

**NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION (Reform)** The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 created the NRA to promote economic recovery by ending wage and price deflation and restoring competition. The NRA set business codes and quotas. Under its symbol of a blue eagle and slogan ("We Do Our Part"), the NRA temporarily restored investor confidence and consumer morale, but it failed to stimulate industrial production. In 1935 the Supreme Court declared the NIRA unconstitutional.

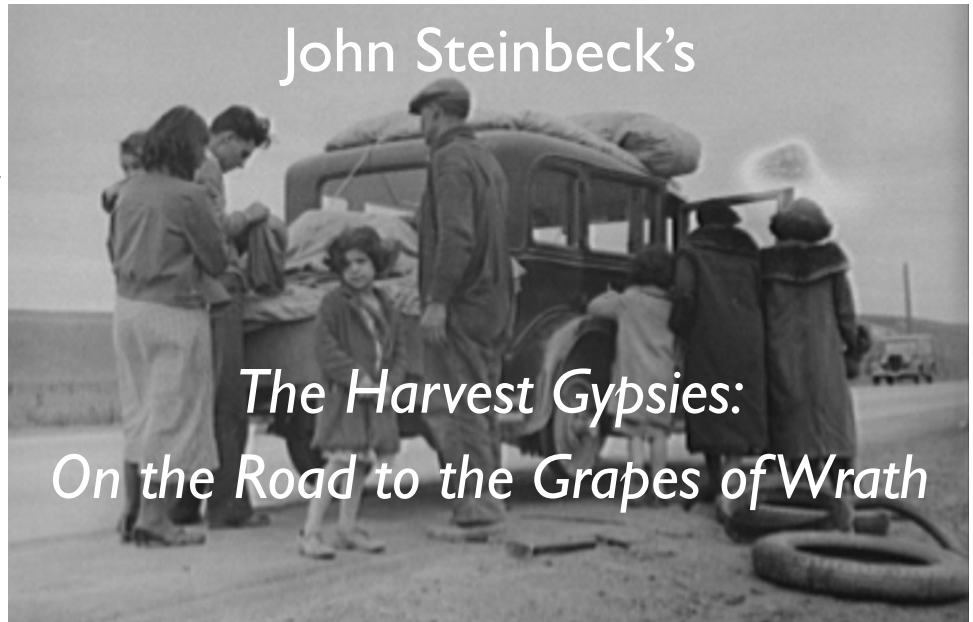
**CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (Relief)** Created in 1933, Roosevelt intended this as a peacetime army of unemployed young men working to prevent erosion and destruction of the nation's natural resources. CCC workers planted three billion trees from 1933-1942, helping to break the wind in the Dust Bowl region, hold water in the soil, and the soil in place. Men earned \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent directly to the families at home. At its height, the CCC employed 500,000 men in 2,600 camps located in every state.

# A Primary Source to Consider:

by Shelley Brooks, Communications Coordinator  
California History-Social Science Project

Most famous for his book, *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck first traveled through the Central Valley reporting on migrant laborers and their travails before turning these compelling stories into a work of fiction. *The Harvest Gypsies: On the Road to the Grapes of Wrath* is a compilation of Steinbeck's articles written for the *San Francisco News* in 1936, detailing the conditions of migrant workers who escaped the dust bowl to search for work in California during the Great Depression. His investigations led him to a friendship with Tom Collins, the manager of a federal migrant labor camp, and the basis for the character Jim Rawley in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Collins encouraged Steinbeck to advocate for more federally-sponsored labor camps where residents could count on such amenities as toilets and bathing facilities, and decent housing – a stark contrast to the numerous thrown-together squatters' camps where laborers bathed and drew drinking water from the same streams, often contaminated from nearby makeshift toilets. As a result, dysentery became a common and dangerous illness within these squatter camps. Upon meeting one family recently settled into a squatters' camp, Steinbeck wrote:

**“Here, in the faces of the husband and his wife, you begin to see an expression you will notice on every face; not worry, but absolute terror of the starvation that crowds in against the borders of the camp. This man has tried to make a toilet by digging a hole in the ground near his paper house and surrounding it with an old piece of burlap. But he will only do things like that this year. He is a newcomer and his spirit and decency and his sense of his own dignity have not been quite wiped out”** (*Harvest Gypsies*, 27).



## John Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies: On the Road to the Grapes of Wrath*

*Migrants, family of Mexicans, on road with tire trouble. Looking for work in the peas. California. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1936. Cover photo, The Harvest Gypsies. Library of Congress.*

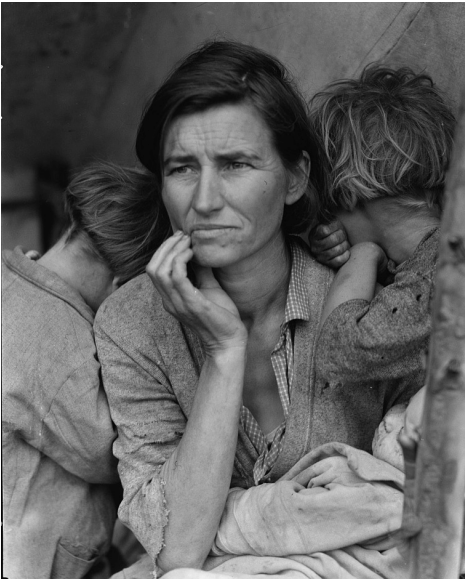
Steinbeck ventured beyond the migrant camps to the nearby towns where he observed the wider community reaction to these newcomers. Despite their shared American heritage, locals tended to treat migrants as outcasts who drained scarce local resources and posed a health threat to the community.

**“Thus, in California we find a curious attitude toward a group that makes our agriculture successful. The migrants are needed, and they are hated...for the following reasons, that they are ignorant and dirty people, that they are carriers of disease, that they increase the necessity for police and the tax bill for schooling in a community, and that if they are allowed to organize they can, simply by refusing to work, wipe out the season's crops. They are never received into a community nor into the life of a community. Wanderers in fact, they are never allowed to feel at home in the communities that demand their services”** (*Harvest Gypsies*, 20).

*The Harvest Gypsies* provides valuable insight into the plight of the hundreds of thousands of dust bowl migrants who sought a new life in California during the 1930s. As the federal government forced the repatriation of many Mexican and Filipino laborers during the Great Depression, Steinbeck believed the Okies were the future of migrant labor in California. The outbreak of World War II, however, brought many of these field hands into the military or better paying factory jobs. In response to the shortage of agricultural laborers in the 1940s, the federal government established the Bracero program to contract Mexicans to harvest crops in American fields, a program lasting until the 1960s. The articles penned by Steinbeck provide insight into a brief and distinct period of American labor in California's agricultural heartland. The issues Steinbeck raises, however, are by no means contained to the 1930s; these primary source accounts from the Great Depression era still resonate today.

# Historical Investigation with Photographs

by Shelley Brooks, Communications Coordinator, California History-Social Science Project



*Destitute peapickers in California; a 32 year old mother of seven children. February 1936. Photo by Dorothea Lange. Library of Congress.*

**she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it."**

Lange, "The Assignment I'll Never Forget: Migrant Mother," *Popular Photography*, February 1960.

Florence Owens Thompson, the woman in the famous photo, was a Native American from Oklahoma who had migrated to California in the mid 1920s. Her daughter later recalled that Florence felt the photo misrepresented their plight; while appearing hopeless and dejected, Florence was active in pursuing rights for farm workers throughout the 1930s. As merely a snapshot of a life, a photograph can only provide insight into a given moment - the job for teachers is to frame such images in the proper historical context. Looking at the social, economic, and political conditions surrounding such photos provide students with a more nuanced understanding of an image and its historical significance. Here are some questions to guide an investigation of a historical photograph:



- Who are the people in the photo? What are they doing?
- What objects are in the photo?
- What is the setting for the photo?
- Is there anything about the photo that surprises you?
- Who took the photo, and why?
- When and where was the photo taken?

*Migratory workers harvesting peas near Nipomo, California. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1937. Library of Congress.*

Undoubtedly you've seen this image before - a migrant mother in California during the Great Depression. Likely you've heard of the photographer, Dorothea Lange, who was on assignment from the Resettlement Administration to document the impact of the economic crisis on American men, women and children. The photograph conveys the devastation wrought on families who lost homes and jobs during the course of the 1930s. What you may not know, is what led Dorothea Lange to seek out this shot, and how the mother in the photo later responded as the image of her suffering became an icon of this era. Information such as this, and other Lange photos from Nipomo, California, provide valuable context for understanding how to use photographs as primary sources.

In 1960, Dorothea Lange recalled meeting this woman and her family:

**"I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember**



*Migrant agricultural worker's family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California, 1936. Photo by Dorothea Lange. Library of Congress.*



*Camp of single men by the roadside. They have come in to work in the pea fields. Nipomo, California. Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1935. Library of Congress.*



# Economics in the History Blueprint

by Shennan Hutton, Program Coordinator, California History-Social Science Project

The discipline of economics and the study of economic conditions offer powerful tools to history teachers at all levels. Not only is economics one of the basic analytical categories of our discipline, but it also helps us explain past perspectives which seem so foreign today. Consider how difficult it is for students to understand that anyone ever thought that slavery was a good idea. The notion that some educated, reasonable people in the past thought that slaves were happy because they had no responsibilities, while abolitionists were crazy zealots, makes little sense to a child brought up in the twenty-first century.



*The History Blueprint Team: from left to right - Beth Slutsky, CHSSP; Shennan Hutton, CHSSP; Jah-Yee Woo, Oakland USD; Mark Ennen, Long Beach USD; Kristi Peckham, Orange USD; Angela LaTorre, Mt. Diablo USD; Amy Hale, Orange USD; Jasmin Brown, Lymwood USD; Lisa Hutton, CSU Dominguez Hills.*

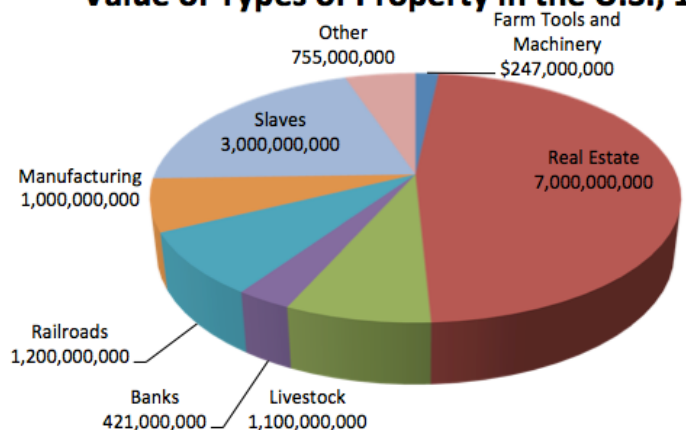
In our work on the first *History Blueprint* unit for the Civil War (standard 8.10), we came face-to-face with this issue. As our teacher leaders Kristi Peckham and Amy Hale explained, 8<sup>th</sup>-graders think of the Civil War in moral terms. The Northerners were the good guys, fighting to end the moral evil of slavery, and the Southerners were the bad guys, who knew they were doing evil things while they held millions of people in slavery. Angela La Torre said that it was especially difficult for her students to understand the complexity of perspectives within both the North and the South. Another teacher leader, Jasmin Brown, pointed out that she teaches her students about the Grimke sisters and other individuals who didn't fit into Northern or Southern stereotypes. Teacher Leader Jah-Yee Woo added that is a struggle to get students to understand that the modern view of slavery was a perspective in 1860 held only by a small, radical group of Abolitionists and by the slaves themselves.

Consider how economics can help. Every 8<sup>th</sup>-grader can understand the concept of economic self-interest. We can approach this question by having students look at the value

of slaves as property. Following the advice of Mark Ennen, I made this chart using figures provided by Clarence Walker, professor at UC Davis, and the Excel chart wizard. After I guide students through reading the chart, they should recognize that slaves (worth roughly \$750 each) were the second most valuable type of property in the nation (not only in the South.) Slaves were an investment of capital that exceeded the combination of manufacturing, railroads and banks, the vaunted industrial economy of the North. When the real estate figure is broken down by regions, the total value of real estate in the South equals \$2.4 billion. In the South, therefore, slaves were the most valuable form of property. The economic self-interest of Southern slave-owners is clear. Giving up their slaves meant losing very valuable property, perhaps the most valuable property they owned. I would ask students how they would feel if they were asked to give up valuable property – their house, or their car, perhaps.

Analyzing who profited from the cotton boom can help students understand that all Northerners were not opposed to slavery either. The Northern textile manufacturers, bankers, and shippers who profited from the cotton trade did not want abolition. The strongest opposition to the extension of slavery to the West came from those who did not want economic competition from slave labor, not from those who argued that slavery was morally wrong. “Free soil and free labor” was fundamentally an economic argument.

**Value of Types of Property in the U.S., 1860**



While we rightly emphasize the political, military, cultural and moral aspects of the Civil War, a brief sojourn in economic territory helps students understand why the struggle was so difficult. Because even young students can appreciate economic self-interest, they can begin to see how complex and competing economic interests help shape political life in the U.S. and the world.



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

**Matt Henderson, Orange High School Teacher and History Project participant, shares his favorite history/economic lesson.**

My favorite units to teach are Industrialization and the Great Depression. The Industrialization unit comes on the heels of my unit on European immigration, and I enjoy tying together the social and economic history of this period. While in New York with the History Project, I visited the Tenement Museum and was able to bring materials and primary sources back to my classroom, such as video, pictures (mostly from Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives*) and song, to build a connection between my students and the immigrants who sustained the industrial movement of the era. The Industrialization era continues to lend itself to social history as we trace it through the back yards of Chicago and *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, to the rise of the big cities and urbanization of America. I do not think, nor do I try, to label the industrialization unit as solely an economically or socially exclusive historical topic. I believe that each perspective



holds valuable lessons for students, and they respond well once those personal connections are made.

The Great Depression is another unit that I infuse with both economic and social overtones, especially the lesson on the Dust Bowl. Although a natural phenomena, the drought and ensuing dust storms of the 1930s had an immense effect on

the nation's economy, thus prolonging economic hardship on millions of Americans. The UCI History Project has given me numerous resources and curricula to use in the classroom, such as the document based question, "What caused the Dust Bowl?" Students are able to use primary and secondary sources to connect with individual Americans of the era who were both directly and indirectly affected by the natural disaster. Additionally, students learn how the agricultural industry affected the national and local economies. The Great Depression was unlike any other financial situation the United States had seen previous to 1929 because of the industrialization and urbanization that had

occurred in the decades leading up to the depression. I want students to understand this fact, but to also understand that what we see and know today was not necessarily common knowledge then. This idea of inevitability is often hard for students to grasp because hindsight is always 20/20.

## California History-Social Science Project Updates

**Advisory Board Member Wins Book Award.** On August 26, 2011, CHSSP Advisory Board Member Amanda Podany's 2010 book, *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East*, won the Norris and Carol Hundley Award from the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. Dr. Podany is Professor and Chair of the Department of History at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. For more information, visit the Pacific Coast page at <http://pcb.cgu.edu>.

**Blueprint Project Moves Forward.** Work on the History Blueprint Project continued this summer, with six CHSSP teacher leaders joining Shennan Hutton, Beth Slutsky, and Lisa Hutton at CSU Long Beach for a week-long institute dedicated to the development of the first Blueprint unit, focused on the Civil War. Their initial draft was released in July and revisions are underway in anticipation of a second draft this October. For updates on the Blueprint project, visit <http://blueprintforhistory.wordpress.com>.

**Literacy Policy and Curriculum Development.** Following more than a decade of research and development, CHSSP leadership will release a policy statement designed to provide guidance for educators working to improve student literacy and learning in history. This initial policy will be supplemented by specific examples of instructional materials and student work samples in the coming months. For updates, visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for California History-Social Science Project.

**More than 500 Fans Like CHSSP Facebook Page.** This spring, we launched the latest version of our Facebook page, in the hopes of providing more frequent updates to the history education community and an opportunity to engage with colleagues around the state. As of October 4, 547 history educators "liked" the CHSSP page, taking advantage of Facebook-only updates, book reviews, tools for teaching, and articles on history education. To join in the conversation, visit [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for California History-Social Science Project.

# 2011 SUMMER



State Senate Floor. Former State Legislator and Secretary of Education, Gary Hart, leading tour of State Capitol for "Developing Freedom in America" Tulare Summer Institute.



"Sites of Encounter in the Pacific World" Institute, co-sponsored by UC Irvine and CSU Long Beach and Dominguez Hills.



Director of the Jewish Studies Program, Diane Wolf, introduces Historian Clarence Walker at UC Davis' "History and Memory of the Holocaust" Seminar in July.



Kathryn McNair-Lim, Reece Mahood, Beverly Black, and Charlotte Sanchez work to break secret codes to see how close a Spanish Expedition gets to stopping Lewis and Clark's westward journey. UC Davis' "America on the World Stage" TAH Seminar.



Ferry ride to Angel Island, "Developing Freedom in America" Tulare Summer Institute. Left to right: Justin Paredes, Gina Nelson, Marsha Ingrao, Fadra Kiehn, Laurel Souza



# INSTITUTES



In August, participants in UC Davis' Solano County TAH "America on the World Stage" Seminar collaborated with guests from their sister project at the University of Virginia in preparation for the upcoming school year program. Virginia high school teacher Nikki Shrader shares her experiences analyzing primary sources.



Michael Baradat, Kathy Dove, and Susan Guinta-Zimmerman - part of a group of 63 teachers from Sac City and San Juan Unified School Districts on field study in New Orleans in June. They are in the pantry of the Laura Creole Plantation.



Carrie Lester reviewing a primary source at the "Sites of Encounter in the Pacific World" Institute, co-sponsored by UC Irvine and CSU Long Beach and Dominguez Hills.



Holocaust survivor, Louis de Groot, shares his experiences with teachers at UC Davis' "History and Memory of the Holocaust" Seminar in July.



Simon Fellowes, teacher leader from UC Irvine, presents at the "Sites of Encounter in the Pacific World" Institute, co-sponsored by UC Irvine and CSU Long Beach and Dominguez Hills.





The California History-Social-Science Project (CHSSP) is one of nine disciplinary networks that make up the California Subject Matter Projects, administered by the University of California, Office of the President. Headquartered in the Department of History (Division of Social Sciences) at the University of California, Davis, CHSSP sites can be found at the following universities throughout California: UC Davis, UC Berkeley, CSU Fresno, UCLA, CSU Long Beach and Dominguez Hills, and UC Irvine. For more information about the CHSSP, or to find out how to subscribe to *The Source*, contact the CHSSP Statewide Office ([chssp@ucdavis.edu](mailto:chssp@ucdavis.edu): 530.752.6192) or visit us online at <http://csmp.ucop.edu/chssp>.

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*The Source* is published four times a year. The newsletter is available to all CHSSP sites in the state of California, and is designed to provide information on upcoming events and updates. History-Social Science education, and profiles of CHSSP teacher-leaders and faculty. *The Source* welcomes comments from our readers. Please send your questions or feedback to [chssp@ucdavis.edu](mailto:chssp@ucdavis.edu).  
-Shelley Brooks, Editor