



“We're the people that live. They can't wipe us out; they can't lick us.
We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cause we're the people.”

--Ma Joad, in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the 1940 film adaptation
of John Steinbeck's 1939 novel

EN 8573: STUDIES IN LITERATURE SINCE 1900
Fall 2015 ○ Dr. Ted Atkinson ○ Wednesdays, 5:00-7:30 PM

Realism for the People: *The Popular Front in American Literature and Culture*

This course will focus on the resurgence of realism in American literature and culture energized by the Popular Front during the 1930s. As an international political strategy, the Popular Front formed in response to the rise of fascism in Europe. Proponents envisioned a broad coalition of groups working to promote social equality and economic justice. The aims of this movement found aesthetic expression in a new “realism for the people” that captured the American imagination through literature, film, music, and other media. We will investigate this moment in cultural history through the work of key figures: John Steinbeck, Langston Hughes, Ernest Hemingway, Lillian Hellman, Richard Wright, Nathanael West, Margaret Walker, John Ford, and Preston Sturges. We will consider how they responded to the call to represent “the people” and to address the issues that the Popular Front made relevant.

