**Biographies of the Charismatic:**

**Populism from the Progressives to the Tea Party**

**Prof. Huskey**

**Junior Seminar MW 4:00-5:15**

**POLI 391J Elizabeth Hall 316**

This seminar will be an extended discussion of the origins, values, goals, and tactics of American populist movements and politicians. It assumes that populist politics speaks to ordinary people who feel themselves to be at the mercy of larger political, economic, and social forces, classically Big Banks, Big Corporations, and/or Big Government. It also assumes that moments of financial crisis in American history, such as the 1890s, the Great Depression, and the Great Recession, have awakened and nurtured populist impulses that are never far beneath the surface in American life. These impulses feed on concerns about equality, inequality, and social justice, themes of this junior seminar, though the interpretations of these concepts are remarkably diverse and can relate to questions of race and gender as well as class. Populist solutions to injustice vary as well, ranging from individual action and collective self-help to states' rights and federal government intervention. The course also assumes that each populist wave is, to a surprising extent, a product of the dominant communication technologies of the day, whether the railroads and telegraph of the late 19th century, radio in the 1930s, TV in the 1960s, or the internet and social media in the current era.

In keeping with the values of the junior seminar program at Stetson, the course will not be taught as a traditional class in history or the social sciences. It will approach the subject matter largely through the biographies of individual populist leaders, which will encourage students to use life stories to understand how personal history and character, technology, economic context, the rules of the political game, and chance come together to shape the development of American populism. One of the main goals of the course is to foster integrative learning, a trendy term in higher education that in this course will mean the ability to place oneself in multiple positions in the competition of ideas and values surrounding the study and practice of populist politics. This means in part learning how different disciplines, different practitioners of those disciplines, different citizens, and you yourself value and evaluate populism. The seminar also departs from traditional courses by involving the students in novel forms of learning, for example, class debates and direct participation in or observation of populist events.

The following books for the course may be purchased in the Bookstore.

Alan Brinkley, *Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*

Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*

Jack Newfield, *RFK: A Memoir*

Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision*

Nancy Unger, *Fighting Bob LaFollette*

The remainder of the reading is available on Blackboard.

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Assessment in the course will be based on four 5-page writing assignments that link course themes to particular populist leaders (40%); a final examination (30%); and class attendance and participation (30%). Each student will lead one class session and participate in at least one debate, which will require collaboration with peers. Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on Monday and Wednesday from 3 to 4 and Tuesday and Thursday from 1:30 to 2:30 in Elizabeth Hall 332. I should also be available immediately after my 2:30 Tuesday/Thursday class, which means at 3:45 those days. My telephone extension is 7576 and the e-mail address is "ehuskey@stetson.edu".

Statement on Plagiarism. Stetson has an official policy regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in the Student Code of Conduct, and plagiarism in this class will bring serious sanctions, which may lead to a failure for the course and the reporting of the

violation to the University Honor Council. If you use someone else's work - their words, ideas, art work, music, web pages, software, or some other expression - you must acknowledge the author or creator. Failure to do so is **plagiarism**.

Statement on Accommodations. If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, and if you determine that disability-related accommodations are necessary, please register with the Academic Resources Center (822-7127; [www.stetson.edu/arc](http://www.stetson.edu/arc)). You and the ARC staff can plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.  You may notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations, but are not required to do so.

**I. The Origins of Modern American Populism: 1890-1928**

1. Farmers, Women, Laborers, and Cranks

Assignment: Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (entirety)

2. William Jennings Bryan and the "Cross of Gold"

Assignment: Text of "Cross of Gold" speech

Michael Kazin's C-Span Talk on his biography of Bryan, *A Godly Life*

Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine* (November 1964), pp. 77-86.

3. Wisconsin's "Fighting Bob" La Follette

Assignment: Nancy Unger, *Fighting Bob LaFollette* (entirety except chapters 1, 2, 4, and 10)

Video of LaFollette on Wealth and Power (YouTube)

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**II. Populism in the Great Depression: 1929-1939**

1. Huey Long: "Every Man a King, but No One Wears a Crown"

Assignment: Alan Brinkley*, Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, pp. 3-81.

Video of Share the Wealth speech by Long (YouTube)

2. Father Coughlin: The Radio Priest

Assignment: Alan Brinkley*, Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*, pp. 82-268.

Video of Father Coughlin speaking against Federal Reserve (YouTube)

**III. Not Just Class Anymore: The Rise of Cultural and Racial Populism: 1939-1969**

1. J. Brailey Odham and Claude "Red" Pepper: Florida Populists

Assignment: Michael Hoover, "Turn your Radio On: Brailey Odham's 1952 "Talkathon" Campaign for Florida Governor," *The Historian*, vol. 66, issue 4 (2004), pp. 701-729.

# Alex Lichtenstein, “The End of Southern Liberalism: Race, Class and the Defeat of Claude Pepper in the 1950 Florida Democratic Primary" (Paper presented at the University of California, Santa Cruz, 2008).

Great Floridians Video Series, Claude Pepper Parts 1 and 2

2. George Wallace: Southern Populist

Assignment: Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage* (entirety)

Video excerpt from Wallace's 1958 Gubernatorial Race (YouTube)

Video excerpt from Wallace's Segregation Forever Speech (YouTube)

3. Bobby Kennedy: Reluctant Populist

Assignment: Jack Newfield, *RFK: A Memoir* (entirety except Book Two)

Video of Kennedy speech announcing death of Martin Luther King (YouTube)

Video of Kennedy speech, Mindless Menace of Violence (YouTube)

**IV. Keeping the Populist Flame Alive (Barely): 1970-2008**

1. Fred Harris' "New Populism"

Assignment: Richard Lowitt, *Fred Harris: His Journey from Liberalism to Populism*, pp. 129-153, 215-230

Fred Harris, *The New Populism* (excerpts)

Fred Harris, Jim Hightower introduction of Fred Harris (YouTube) mins. 4:00-7:30

Fred Harris Video comments (YouTube) mins. 2:20 to end

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2. Jim Hightower: Texas Populist

Assignment: Molly Ivins, "Jim Hightower, Best Little Populist in Texas," *Utne Reader* (March/April 1987), pp. 71-79.

Jim Hightower video tour of his collection of papers at Texas State University.

Jim Hightower video, Thieves in High Places (YouTube)

3. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition

Assignment: Marshall Frady, Outsider series on Jesse Jackson, *The New Yorker*, February 3, 10, and 17, 1992.

Video of Jesse Jackson speech to Democratic National Convention, July 19, 1988 (C- Span)

**V. The Great Recession and The Rekindling of American Populism: 2009-Present**

1. The Leaderless Movements: The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street

Assignment: Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 9, issue 1 (2011), pp. 25-43.

Marc Greenberg, "In Zuccotti Park," *New York Review of Books*, November 10, 2011.

Hector R. Cordero-Guzman, Mainstream Support for a Mainstream Movement (Unpublished paper, October 2011)

2. Pat Buchanan: Traditional, "Paleo-", or Populist Conservative?

Assignment: Review of Timothy Stanley, *The Crusader: The Life and Tumultuous Times of Pat Buchanan*

Video of Pat Buchanan on C-Span discussing his book, *Suicide of a Superpower*

3. Elizabeth Warren: Establishment Renegade

Assignment: Rebecca Traister, "Heaven is a Place Called Elizabeth Warren," *New York Times Magazine*, November 18, 2011.

Daniel Indiviglio, "Why Business Should Fear Elizabeth Warren," *The Atlantic*, September 23, 2011. Please watch YouTube video attached and comments below article.

Video of Elizabeth Warren on YouTube (Health Care and Bankruptcy)

4. What, after all, is populism? What encourages populist movements and politicians? What is the relationship of populism to social justice?

**Final Examination**

**Saturday, May 5, 11am-1pm**