

# The Living New Deal: Remarkable Past, Possible Future

Richard Walker and Living New Deal team

**SYLLABUS, Winter 2019 term**  
**Tuesdays 1-3 pm, Magnes Collection**

## General Description

The New Deal transformed the United States under the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt. The accomplishments of that remarkable decade, 1933-42, are being mapped by the Living New Deal Project, which has amassed a huge collection of photographs, documents, and other supporting information. Living New Deal team members will discuss the legacy of the New Deal in terms of public works, politics, ethics, economics, architecture and more, and how the project is going about recovering and documenting the era. They will also emphasize the relevance of the New Deal today, when the country is crying out for political redirection, economic reconstruction and a collective sense of purpose.

### Week 1 (Jan. 29) - Richard Walker, Director, Living New Deal

We begin with an introduction to the New Deal of the 1930s and what it accomplished. This lecture will discuss the political and economic situation that faced the country in the Great Depression and how the Roosevelt Administration responded. In addition to laying out the many programs of the New Deal and their accomplishments, we will discuss the political strategy of FDR, the economic recovery and the debates over the pros and cons of this revolutionary period in American government.

### Week 2 (Feb. 5) - Gray Brechin, Founder & Project Scholar, Living New Deal

Dr. Brechin will speak on "The Lost Ethical Language of Washington, D.C.'s Public Works". Perhaps no other major city is so much Franklin Roosevelt's town as our nation's capital which, during the Great Depression, was transformed within a decade by New Deal public works. As elsewhere, the buildings, parks, monuments, and other public works of that time are attempting to speak to us of a value system radically different than what we have come to accept as normal, yet nowhere else are they so dense. They constitute an invisible matrix which the Living New Deal is making visible so that we can understand, once more, what they are saying.

Week 3 (Feb. 12) - Susan Ives, Communications Director, Living New Deal

Susan Ives will speak on the history and achievements of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) – the first and the most popular of the New Deal work relief programs. The CCC employed young men to work in national parks, state parks, national forests and rural areas in general. The CCC grew out of Roosevelt's deep belief in conservation, which also led him to create several national parks and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Week 4 (Feb. 19) - Harvey Smith, Pres. of National New Deal Preservation Association

Harvey Smith will provide "A Brief Survey of New Deal Architecture". The class will survey some architectural gems of the New Deal and include a few major local Bay Area architects. The diversity of style goes much beyond the stereotypical WPA Moderne. New Deal buildings included public art, both on the interiors and exteriors. Construction also reflected the New Deal emphasis on the democratization of education, culture and recreation. Civic pride was expressed in public buildings and innovation shown in the design of planned communities. The public infrastructure of the New Deal presents important lessons for today.

Week 5 (Feb. 26) - Richard Walker

This session will discuss what the Living New Deal has accomplished in terms of mapping New Deal public works, and how we go about our research and documentation. This is a practical session on how to look for New Deal sites and where to look for supporting information, and then how to submit discoveries to the Project. We hope to recruit some of you as Living New Deal enthusiasts, searching out new sites as you travel around country and joining our wonderful band of volunteers for this historical treasure hunt.

Week 6 (March 5) - Richard Walker

In our final session, we will discuss the potential for a *New New Deal* today. Can the country return to the kind of Social Welfare/Social Democratic policies of the New Deal/Postwar era, after a half-century of erosion under Neoliberal/Neoconservative attacks from Reagan to Trump? The opportunity is there: crumbling infrastructure, shredded social safety nets, the popular demand for universal health care, the large swaths of the country suffering from economic decline and social despair. But so are the obstacles: the deep suspicion of government, a federal budget ravaged by tax cuts, the howling right-wing press and social media, the power of the monied class, and more.