

EN 8333: Studies in Southern Literature

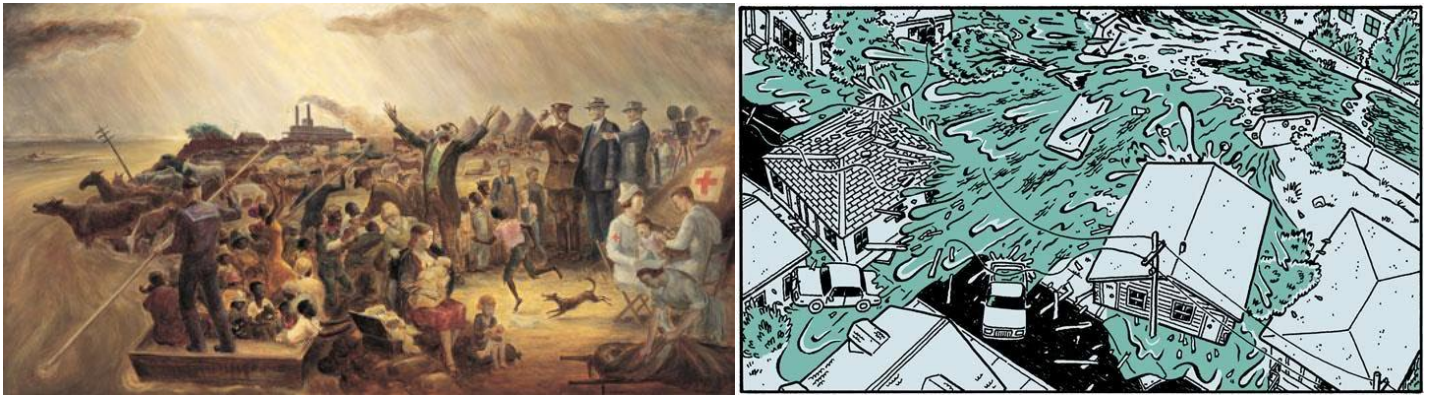
Deep Souths:

Modern and Contemporary Flood Narratives

Fall 2014

Mondays, 5:00-7:50 p.m.

Dr. Ted Atkinson



This seminar will focus on selected works of modern and contemporary literature and film that depict major floods in the U.S. South. We will use region as a framework for examining narratives in which the causes and consequences of floods affect southern locales but register with national and global implications. We will study depictions of floods that are purely imaginative, as well as those based on historical events – the Great Flood of 1927, the formation of the Tennessee Valley Authority under the auspices of the New Deal, and Hurricane Katrina. Several questions will inform our approach to the texts: How do authors and filmmakers adapt elements of archetypal flood stories to inundated southern spaces and places? How might cultural representations of floods bring chronic problems in southern societies, economies, and ecologies to the surface? How do floods destabilize or reinforce established social structures and categories? What do we make of the uncanny images and psychological traumas that come with rising tides? What happens to the distinctions between natural and human-made disasters when we delve deeply into flood narratives?

List of possible texts:

- William Faulkner, "Old Man" (novella)
- Richard Wright, "Down by the Riverside" (short story)
- Eudora Welty, "At the Landing" (short story)
- Robert Penn Warren, *Flood* (novel)
- Josh Neufeld, *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge* (graphic novel)
- Natasha Trethewey, *Beyond Katrina* (nonfiction and poetry)
- Michael Farris Smith, *Rivers* (novel)
- Beth Ann Fennelly and Tom Franklin, *The Tilted World* (novel)
- Pare Lorentz, *The River* (documentary)
- Elia Kazan, *Wild River* (film)
- Bill Morrison, *The Great Flood* (documentary)
- Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke* (documentary)
- Benh Zeitlin, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (film)