

EN 8333: Studies in Southern Literature

# *Deep Souths*

Fall 2020

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

Dr. Ted Atkinson



This seminar will focus on flood narratives in literature and culture of the U.S. South. Region will serve as a framework for examining works in which the causes and consequences of flooding affect southern locales but register with national and global implications. We will spend a significant amount of time studying cultural representations of historical events: the Great Flood of 1927, the formation of the Tennessee Valley Authority under the auspices of the New Deal, and the levee failures in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Several questions will inform our approach to the material: How do archetypal elements of flood narratives figure in depictions of inundated southern spaces and places? How might cultural representations of floods bring chronic problems in southern societies, infrastructures, economies, and ecologies to the surface? What do we make of the uncanny images, psychological traumas, and material losses caused by rising tides? What happens to the distinctions between natural and anthropogenic disasters when delving deeply into flood narratives?

*List of possible works:*

- Richard Wright, "Down by the Riverside" (short fiction)
- William Faulkner, "Old Man" (novella)
- Sarah M. Broom, *The Yellow House* (memoir)
- Natasha Trethewey, *Beyond Katrina* (memoir and poetry)
- Tom Franklin and Beth Ann Fennelly, *The Tilted World* (novel)
- Pare Lorentz, *The River* (documentary film)
- Caleb Johnson, *Treeborne* (novel)
- Elia Kazan, *Wild River* (fiction film)
- Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke* (documentary film)