Course Description: The Great Depression is wreaking havoc across the planet. Liberal democracy is in crisis. On the rise is a wide spectrum of ideologies ranging from anarchism to fascism, all promising solutions to the afflictions of people all over the globe. Spain, July 1936: a right-wing military coup attempts to overthrow a democratically elected left-wing coalition government. All eyes turn toward Spain.

Though largely eclipsed by subsequent catastrophes—World War II, the Holocaust, the Cold War—, for a brief window of time, the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) occupied the center of attention of people all over the world. From American cultural figures like Ernest Hemingway and Dorothy Parker, through Latin American writers like Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz and Nicolás Guillén, to European intellectuals such as WH Auden, André Gide, or George Orwell; the conflict in Spain spawned a vast library of reflections and analyses, and has continued ever since to haunt the memory and imagination of the West.

This seminar will be centered on NYU’s Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA), a vast collection of materials that chronicle the lives of the 2,800 Americans who, between 1936 and 1939, volunteered to fight fascism in Spain. We will explore the place occupied by Spain and the Spanish Civil War in American culture from the 1930s forward, how journalists, writers, artists, and citizens reacted to the war in Spain, and how the legacy of the war has affected U.S. culture over the last seventy years.

As we undertake this historical and cultural inquiry, we will also experience and discuss the challenges and opportunities of working with archival materials. How does history get written based on primary sources? What can we learn from handling actual historical artifacts—handwritten letters, collected objects, etc—that would be unavailable to us if we were handling transcriptions or summaries or other kinds of secondary accounts?

Instructor: JAMES D. FERNÁNDEZ is Collegiate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. His research interests include the literature, history, and culture of modern Spain; autobiography; cultural relations between Spain and Latin America; and visions of Spain in the United States. He served as the inaugural director of NYU’s King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center from 1995 to 2007, and as Chair of his department from 2003 to 2007. He is the Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, and co-editor of the collection of essays Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War. He is the author of Apology to Apostrophe: Autobiography and the Rhetoric of Self-Representation in

Course materials: The primary “textbook” for this course is the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, which are located in Tamiment Library, on the 10th floor of Bobst. The main books of the course (Carroll, Carroll and Fernández, and Graham) can be purchased at the NYU bookstore. Other texts will be made available as .pdf files via NYU Classes.

Responsibilities: Students must conscientiously complete all readings and film viewings on time, and come to class ready to discuss the assignments in depth. Students will complete two small research projects, based on individual Lincoln volunteers (roughly 5 pp. each). Finally, each student will complete a major research project (20 pp) based on the holdings of ALBA. The projects will be presented at a research symposium held on the last day of class.

Grading criteria: participation 25%; mid-term exam 25%; biographical projects 10%; final research project and presentation 40%.
Syllabus

Week 1
Introduction to the course
*Viewing and discussion of “The Good Fight” (98 mins)

Week 2
Background of the Spanish Civil War

Before class
*View: Granada television series, episodes 1-6
http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/spanish-civil-war/

In class:
*Discussion of the background of the Spanish Civil War

Week 3
Context: US in the 1930s

Before class
*Read: Peter Carroll, Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Parts I and II

In class
*Discussion of the background of US involvement in the Spanish Civil War
*Assign essays from “Facing Fascism” to be presented on September 27
*Introduction to the archive

Week 4
Anti-fascist mobilization in NY

Before class:
* Suggested archival collections for consultation: Danchik (33), Lardner (67), Greenfield (249), Sigel Friedlander (192), Polon (159); Schwartz (273).

In class:
*Each student will be responsible for presenting one or two of the essays in the book “Facing Fascism”
*View and discuss videos from Fascism DVD: “New Yorkers Remember the Spanish Civil War.”

Week 5
African Americans in the fight against fascism
Before class:
*Read: Robin Kelly, “This Ain’t Ethiopia, but It’ll Do” (.pdf on Blackboard)
  “Testimonies” from same volume (.pdf on Blackboard)
*View: Invisible Heroes: African American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War
*Recommended collections: African American Volunteers, ALBA research file (ALBA, 143); Vaughn Love (ALBA 243), Douglas Roach (vertical file); Frank Edward Alexander (vertical file).

**Week 6**
*Women in the Fight Against Fascism*

Before class:
*Work on definition of possible research topics for final project
* Recommended collections: Mildred Rackley Simon (ALBA, 97); Edward Barsky (ALBA 125); Esther Silverstein Blanc (vertical file); Fredericka Martin (ALBA)

In class:
*View and discuss Into the Fire: American Women and the Spanish Civil War
*Preliminary discussion of topics for final research paper

**Week 7**
*Veterans*

Before class:
*Read: Peter Carroll, Read Odyssey, Part 3
* Recommended collections: Alvah Bessie (024); Archie Brown (207); Harry Fisher (039); Osheroff (vertical file);

In class:
*Discussion of postwar experiences of volunteers
*View and discuss “Forever Activists”; “You Are History, You Are Legend” “Souls Without Borders”

**Week 8**
*Mid-term exam, in class.*
Multiple choice and short essay questions, testing assimilation of primary readings and viewings.

**Week 9**
*“Adopt a Volunteer” Project*
Each student will write up a biographical profile of two volunteers that will be assigned to him or her.
**Week 10-14**
From this point forward, the class will be run as a research workshop, with individuals and groups developing assignments and making presentations related to their ongoing research project.

**Week 15**
Symposium: students will turn in final paper (20 pp) and present findings in a 10-minute conference style talk.