B2 *Grapes of Wrath* Seminar #1

John Geyer: First question… what argument about his own time period. I thought about migration as dehumanizing. Intercalary chapters. Motif of killing animals (185: Killing animals; 280: Killing a rattlesnake; 235: Turkey Shooting; another snake, pig), nonchalance in response. Echoed how big organizations look at each other.

* Noah: I agree with the whole “big countries looking down,” but perhaps the migrants wanted to feel more powerful, more worthy.
* John Geyer: Committee in Weedpatch.
* Nicholas Wright: One thing they can’t control. The dog…but snakes… no feeling, one way or another.
* James: The patterns weren’t dehumanizing…it was other humans. For the “animal thing”: At the same time, they killed the rabbit, the pigs.
* Noah Worobetz: More survival… ?
* James: Okies don’t have a mindset of thinking beyond survival
* Nate Fowler: Animals / livestock… they had to eat.
* Nick Wright: Eating the rabbit.
* John busted in: They didn’t do anything with the animals. There were far more times when they killed the animal.
* Liam: Tries to kill them.
* Noah: Domesticated animals versus pests
* John Geyer: Animals who are undomesticated
* Jacob Menke: Tom did let the turtle go.
* Noah: He was giving it as a present.
* James: Intent on those killings.
* Liam: Al missed…
* Eble: Gopher snake—bad luck.
* Nicholas Spuzzillo: Motif of survival, Okies…
* Luke Weber: Only the kids cared… hope for the future.
* Mitch Poch: Turtle keeps going in the same direction; Tom picks it up, sets it down… it keeps going. No matter what gets in the way of the Joads, they keep truckin’ along.
* Nick Wright: Brokenness of Okies… breastfeeding of old guy. No matter how broken people are, they can still do something. Looking back at that generation: They were tough.

Noah Worobetz: More of a matter of sticking together. Future in unity…

* Jacob Menke: Before, Rose of Sharon was a girly-girl; then, she becomes real.
* Luke Weber: While the mysterious smile?
* James: Ignored… human resilience…
* John Geyer: Pessimistic view. Transient characters. Noah, Casy, Baby, Connie… breastfeeding = we have nothing, let’s just…
* Nick Fendinger: Smile = hope
* John Geyer: Delusional…
* Fendinger: New child?
* Nick Wright: Finally has something to offer
* Noah: Rose of Sharon’s only happy moments = thinking of the future.
* Andrew Olinger: Baby gone = move on…
* Nick Fendinger: RS occupied with negatives with the child…
* Marshall Eippert: Worried about sin… also a desire to be a mother…

Noah: Religious tolerance?

* Menke: Rawley, the government keeper, was a great guy, but he was an atheist?
* Fendinger: Lizabeth Sandry… attributed it to sin…
* Menke: She said he didn’t have a god
* Eble: She was Westboro Baptist style
* James: Views humans as positive… with a choice, people chose something good. The only instances in which people hurt others were when they were in positions of power.
* Eble: Organized religion… comment?
* Noah: Casy portrayed as a preacher. People need to work together.
* Geyer: Foreshadowed his later involvement with strikes.
* Luke Weber: How does RS help to show what sin is? God doesn’t intervene in human affairs?
* James: Joads are transient, simple, easy to understand. RS = metaphor for the entire journey. Didn’t sin, but something awful happened, and she helped.
* Fendinger: Her sin—she never put the group first until the end. Narcissistic. Winfield, the skitters—she wanted milk first.
* Drew Scott: She still changed…
* Fendinger: Weird change…
* Nicholas Spuzzillo: Burgeoning motherhood.
* James: The priest is the other dynamic character. Takes the punishment for them. Whereas before, he tumbled in the grass.
* Nick Wright: Has a faint smile… both realize a purpose, achieve a sense of happiness.
* James: What kills him is a brand-new pickax… new killed old… weapon can be turned against them, like Tom.
* Connor Peed: Biblical—much like Jesus sacrificing himself to save humanity.
* James Harper: Peter = Tom…
* Marshall: Back to Connor’s point… Tom was Casy’s first follower…
* Jared Diesslin: Tom killed a person to go to jail… back with family, he helped them. Back to Jesus… Paul, who persecuted Christians.
* Noah Worobetz: Tom—would you do it again? Changes at the end… move, motivate people for a change…
* Nicholas Spuzzillo: “Be nice” = thesis of the text
* John Geyer: Don’t be greedy
* James: Cyclical nature—farmers get workers there, people don’t like workers… more workers…
* Noah Worobetz: Okies = greedy people.
  + Nick Wright (after a furor): Necessity…
  + Liam: Man going back… the Joads went anyways…
  + Harper: They needed a goal or they would have fallen apart. GPA didn’t want to go—he died; GMA died; Connie left; Noah left… when goals are lost, people stop.
  + Marshall: Back to origin… Okies from Oklahoma. I’m going to go die with people who love me.
  + Eble clarifies.
  + Geyer: Willingness to adapt. He wanted to stay… Rose of Sharon adapted…
  + Eble talked.

James: Capitalism… good or bad?

* Fendinger: Inherently evil. “The whole shebang” broken by capitalism.
* Menke: Guy on tractor not doing anything wrong.
* Fendinger: He broke down their houses.
* Liam
* Nick Wright: Doing what he had to do…
* John Geyer: Non-capitalists = reds… Steinbeck took a one-sided view…
* Spuzzillo: Never shows the top of the food chain
* Noah
* Geyer: Strawberry fields, Schlosser…
* Liam: People working just to get bread…
* Harper: Another worker man who does treat his workers fairly. Capitalism where people don’t have to suffer.
* Geyer: Steinbeck—referring to characters as “reds,” he makes it seem like a capitalistic society without an exploited underclass is unavoidable.
* Eble: Thanks, Chomsky…
* Noah Worobetz:
* Geyer: Radical capitalists… into making money…
* Wright: People on top called them reds…
* Harper: Fine with having a boss, but just wanted a job, wanted to be employed.
* Marshall: Steinbeck’s wife was a registered communist.
* Mitch: Cited *The Jungle*… Jurgis’s life gets better. Joads are considered being reds…
* Noah: Common goal…

Harper: (shifted the focus) Who has a voice, doesn’t have a voice? The contractor scene…

* Eble: So… influence… ?
* Harper: The voice…
* Menke: you do have a voice, but you have to speak up and use it.
* Fendinger: Going with Menke—the one step forward, a half-step back. A bit of progress…
* Nate Fowler: Unions, trying to unionize
* Drew Scott: Wages / 5 cents versus 2.5 cents…
* Nate: Company was letting price stay up…
* Eble: Scabs…
* Harper: A just wage?
* Eble: Chapter 25…
* Harper: Rotting fruit, grapes of wrath growing swollen and heavy with rage.
* Eble talked…
* Hank: Shows how far the Okies have come… they are strong (the unions) enough so that the owners can’t give them money…
* Harper: Keep them desperate…
* Eric: building up tension… unifying them… overpower the contractors, landowners… will have to give them a fair living wage…