

Protest and Disorder

History 615, section 2. George Mason University. Fall 2009.

Mondays, 7:20 – 10 pm. Robinson Hall B442

Course Blackboard site: <http://courses.gmu.edu>

General advice: <http://www.schrag.info/teaching>

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5 pm, and by appointment.

While I greatly enjoy meeting students individually, department meeting and other commitments sometimes force me to cancel scheduled office hours, so individual appointments generally work better. If you would like to meet with me, please send me an e-mail with two or three proposed times. I am also happy to answer questions by e-mail, and to try the chat function of Blackboard.

Course Description

Natan Sharansky defines a free society as a place where “a person [can] walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm.” If this is the case, then the United States has never been wholly free. Federal and state governments have dispersed crowds considered riotous, using the threat of arrest, imprisonment, or physical harm against those who disobeyed. They have also punished the expression of views considered seditious. The same Constitution that guarantees the rights of free speech, a free press, and peaceable assembly also guarantees the states protection against “domestic violence,” and many a town square has been forcibly cleared of citizens expressing their views. Moreover, private actors have organized to crush dissent. This seminar will explore this tension between freedom and order in three critical periods: the Gilded Age, the long 1920s, and the 1960s. Students will also investigate topics of their own choosing in an original paper.

The seminar offers no stable definitions of its central terms: protest and disorder. Rather, it will investigate how Americans have understood those terms over the course of their history, and how historians have used them in their own work.

Administrative information

All assignments are governed by the George Mason University **honor code**, online at <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/unilife/honorcode.html>. You are expected to work independently and to acknowledge all sources, including assigned texts and materials found online. Gordon Harvey's *Writing with Sources* should answer most questions about **citation**, but ask me if you need clarification. In general, any sentence in your work that can be traced to a single sentence in someone else's work should bear a footnote. Any collaboration, such as consultation with the Writing Center, should also be acknowledged. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to the administration and may result in grade penalties, including failure of the course.

All work for this course must be original. You may not submit work based whole or in part on work you have done for credit in **other courses** without written permission of the instructor.

In case of **inclement weather**, please call the main switchboard at 703-993-1000 or consult the main web page at <http://www.gmu.edu/> to see if classes are cancelled. I expect to cancel class only when the university cancels all classes.

If you are a **student with a disability** and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

All students are expected to check their **gmu.edu** e-mail regularly and are responsible for information sent to their GMU addresses.

Please do not send **Microsoft Works** (.wps) attachments; I cannot open them. Please post your longer assignments in .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf formats.

Readings

Smith, Carl. *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*, Second Edition. University of Chicago Press (2007), Edition: 2nd, Paperback, 407 pages.

Stowell, David O. *Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877*. University Of Chicago Press (1999), Paperback, 189 pages.

Keller, Lisa. *Triumph of Order: Democracy and Public Space in New York and London*. Columbia University Press (2008), Hardcover, 368 pages.

Capozzola, Christopher. *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. Oxford University Press (2008), Hardcover, 352 pages.

Gage, Beverly. *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror*. Oxford University Press, (2009), Hardcover, 416 pages.

Feldman, Glenn. *Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949*. University Alabama Press (1999), Paperback, 456 pages.

Chafe, William H. *Civilities and Civil Rights : Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*. Oxford University Press (1981), Paperback, 304 pages.

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* Oxford University Press (2007), Hardcover, 360 pages.

Flamm, Michael W. *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*. Columbia University Press (2007), Paperback, 312 pages.

Course Organization

Online Components

This course is designed to be paperless; all assignments should be posted on Blackboard, <http://courses.gmu.edu>. You will also receive comments electronically.

Small Groups

In mid-September, I will assign you to groups of three or four based on your chosen topics for individual papers. You will spend two class sessions discussing the work of your group, and you will act as a panel for the presentations.

Assignments

Discussion participation (20 percent)

The success of this seminar depends on students' critical reading of assigned texts and challenging both the texts and their colleagues' reading of those texts. Students are expected to come to class with questions and to participate actively in class discussions.

Basic classroom rules

- Bring the books we are discussing to class each week.
- Do not eat in the classroom, before or during class.
- Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other noisemakers.

Mini-Responses (1 percent each, 8 percent total)

For each week that reading is due, each student not presenting a primary source will write a **three-sentence** response. Nine responses are assigned, but only eight required. The responses are designed to get you thinking about the books in ways that will provoke discussion, and to give me a chance to get some of your thoughts ahead of the class meeting.

Please post your response on the Discussions section of Blackboard by **10am** each Monday. Formal footnotes are not required, but please provide page numbers for quotations and key facts.

Each response should consist of the following elements:

1. One sentence explaining the thesis of one chapter of the book or the book overall.
2. One sentence noting a fact, quotation, or illustration (with a page reference) from the book and explaining how that fact, quotation, or illustration supports the thesis stated in the first sentence.
3. One sentence noting a fact, quotation, or illustration (with a page reference) from the book and explaining how that fact, quotation, or illustration contradicts or complicates the thesis stated in the first sentence.

Example:

Gijs Mom argues that for a wide variety of uses, electric vehicles were superior to their gasoline counterparts, which Mom finds “noisy, unhygienic, and unreliable.” (13) Berlin’s 1906 ordinance (150) supports the argument about noise. But his repeated references (102, 123, 170) to the short life span and fragility of batteries suggest that electric cars were even less reliable than gasoline cars, contradicting the thesis.

Review Essays (10 percent each, 30 percent total)

For each unit of the course, you are asked to write a review essays comparing and contrasting the three assigned texts. Each paper should run roughly 1000-1500 words (4-6 pages). It should present a thesis that explains what we learn from reading the three books in combination.

For general instructions on writing a reading response, please see “How to Read a History Book,” “How to Write a Review,” and “How to Write a Reading Response,” all available at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/index.html>

For a model of how to write about three books at once, see Howard Gillette, Jr., “Urban Renewal Revisited,” *Journal of Urban History* 33 (2007): 342-350, or other review essays in that journal. Since your reader has read the books about which you are writing, you need not include as much summary as those reviews. But do include key factual details.

Primary source responses (3.5 percent each, 7 percent total)

At the start of the course, each student will choose two weeks for which she will be responsible for primary-source responses.

For each of those weeks, the student should find a primary source not presented in that week’s reading that the student feels supports or contradicts the thesis of the book. For example, for a discussion of Gijs Mom’s *Electric Vehicle: Technology and Expectations in the Automobile Age*, an advertisement, magazine article, or song lyrics from the early twentieth century, showing what motorists expected from their vehicles, would be helpful. It is fine to use a source cited or quoted only briefly in the assigned reading, but do not choose a text that is quoted at length or an illustration that is reproduced in the book. **Please limit your source to one page or four minutes of audio or video**, excerpting as necessary.

I expect that in most cases you will find your sources online, either on the open Web or in one of the proprietary databases to which the university subscribes. However, you are free to scan or photograph a source that has not been digitized.

Please post your source to the class Blackboard site, along with a brief analysis or two or three discussion questions. For instructions on writing an analysis, see “How to Read a Primary Source,” “Document Analysis,” and “Image Analysis,” all at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/index.html>.

Individual Paper (35 percent)

The major assignment of this course is an original essay of roughly 3000 to 5000 words (12 to 20 pages), not including notes. I expect most students to write historiographical papers, using secondary sources to trace the scholarly debate over some aspect of the history of protest and disorder. However, students who feel they would benefit more from writing a paper based on primary sources may do so.

You are expected to work on the paper throughout the term, and to complete it in stages. Two portions must be posted on Blackboard on Wednesdays, to allow members of your small group to read them in advance of the course meetings devoted to discussing them.

Topics

The readings in the seminar focus on the United States between 1870 and 1970, but the themes are applicable to other nations and eras, so any topic concerning protest and disorder is acceptable. You may want to focus on one event or set of events (e.g., the coal wars of the 1920s), or a theme present throughout many events (e.g., the role of women in riots). Papers based on primary sources should address narrower topics (e.g., the role of women in the coal wars of the 1920s).

For **September 14**, please post a one- or two-paragraph statement of your general topic and the questions that interest you. I will use this to assign you to a **small group** for the remainder of the term.

Prospectus and bibliography

For **September 30** (a Wednesday), please post a one- or two-page prospectus explaining your research question and your selection of sources, as well as an annotated bibliography explaining what you hope to learn from each source. For historiographical papers, I expect you to use ten to twenty sources, though in many cases you will address only the portion of each source relevant to your particular question. For papers based on primary sources, a single source may be sufficient, if it is sufficiently juicy. Please note areas in which you would like help from your classmates and instructor.

For **October 5**, please read the work of the members of your small group and come to class with questions and comments.

Rough draft

For **October 28** (a Wednesday), please post a rough draft of your essay. At a minimum, the rough draft should include one-third of the paper, plus an outline of the remainder. The more complete the paper, the more valuable feedback you will receive. Again, please note areas in which you would like help from your classmates and instructor.

For **November 2**, please read the work of the members of your small group and come to class with questions and comments.

Presentations

Our last two meetings will give you a chance to present your work to the class. Please plan a presentation of your findings, lasting no more than **12 minutes**. If you wish to use a Powerpoint file, please send it to me in advance.

Schedule

August 31.	Introduction
<i>Unit 1: The Gilded Age</i>	
September 14.	Smith, <i>Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief</i> . Topics due
September 15.	Last Day to Add
September 21.	Stowell, <i>Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877</i>
September 28.	Keller, <i>Triumph of Order</i>
September 30 (Wed.).	Post prospectus and bibliography to Blackboard
October 2.	Last Day to Drop
October 5.	Small group workshop: Prospectus and bibliography. Please come with comments and questions on your groupmates' work.
October 5 – 30.	Selective withdrawal period.
<i>Unit 2: The Tribal Twenties</i>	
October 13 (Tuesday)	Capozzola, <i>Uncle Sam Wants You</i>
	Unit 1 review essay due
October 19.	Gage, <i>The Day Wall Street Exploded</i>
October 26.	Feldman, <i>Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama</i>
October 28 (Wed.).	Post rough draft to Blackboard
November 2.	Small group workshop: Rough draft. Please come with comments and questions on your groupmates' work.
<i>Unit 3: The Sixties</i>	
November 9.	Chafe, <i>Civilities and Civil Rights</i>
	Unit 2 review essay due
November 16.	Abu-Lughod, <i>Race, Space, and Riots</i>
November 23.	Flamm, <i>Law and Order</i>
<i>Presentations</i>	
November 30.	Presentations.
	Unit 3 review essay due for those not presenting
December 7.	Presentations, continued.
	Unit 3 review essay due for those not presenting
December 9 (Wed.).	Final papers due on Blackboard. Please send by e-mail as well, just to be sure.