

HIST135 / JWST 289E
Civil Discourse or Urban Riot: Why Cities Don't (Often) Explode
TTh 11:00am - 11:50am
ESJ 1224
Section meeting: Th 5:00–5:50 pm
ESJ 1309

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Off. Hrs: TTh 9:30–10:30 & by appt.

Note: I will try to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Please Note: This syllabus is provisional and **will be changed** before the semester begins. I may also make changes over the course of the semester in order to give you information about readings, movies, assignments, and opportunities for extra credit. Each iteration of the syllabus is dated in the header. Check back frequently and make sure you have the current version.

Required films will be streamed over ELMS or are available on YouTube. If you prefer, you may also find these films in the Non-Print Media division on the lower level of Hornbake Library. Recommended films are available there too.

HIST135 / JWST 289E contributes to the General Education program meeting the categories of : History and Social Science (DSHS), Understanding Plural Societies (DVUP) and I-Series, SCIS. I-Series courses are designed to engage students in discussion of current and significant questions. In this course we will address “When and how can riots be morally justified?”

This course has two aspects. First, we will examine riots in many places and in many eras, trying to understand what factors lead up to explosions of group violence in public places, and what factors tend to block such explosions. But we are also interested in how people (contemporaries and historians) understand and label riots. We will find that the study of public rioting provides an excellent way to study how we expect society to work, and how we react when it doesn't.

How To Prepare For, and Do Well In, This Class

1. This is a class about social violence and how we think about it. You will be asked less about the details of any particular event and more about the significance of that event and reports about it to how we understand and act in society. As a result, you should gear your work and study not to absorbing details (names, facts, dates) but to articulating and critiquing the value statements that lie behind basic social assumptions. Here are several ways you can increase your chance of success.
2. Be prepared. Before class, make sure you have done the readings—both assigned and accounts of riots that you have found in the news. In class you will be called upon to

report about these readings. You will be encouraged to speak before a large audience of your peers, to take public positions on controversial issues, and to draw comparisons between disparate events.

3. Come to section. In small working groups, and with the professor, you will have a chance to go over the readings for the coming week and test out your understanding. Each week we will also work on mini-research topics that range from online fact checking to legal research, from mapping urban rioting to evaluating museum representations of violence, from scripting and acting out the roles of participants in riots to doing primary archival research into the causes and results of riots near to home.
4. Argue strongly for what you believe while remaining civil towards those who disagree. Our course is about the breakdown of civil discourse. We have to make doubly sure civil discourse doesn't break down in our class.

Course Calendar

T August 28 Definitions

What is a riot? Who gets to decide? What are the implications of such decisions?

Reader: Chapter I. Definitions
Genesis Chapter 19
Judges Chapters 19–21

Th August 30 Framing riots in the ancient world

What allowed for civil peace in the ancient world? Are slaves entitled to riot? Did Christianity end a tolerant society?

Reader: Chapter III. The 3rd Servile War
Chapter VII. The Jews of Alexandria
Film: "Agora" (2010)
Film recommended: "Spartacus" (1960)

T Sept 4 Framing riots in the middle ages

How do chroniclers understand the rioters and the authorities in feudal Europe? How did they define social rage?

Reader: Chapter IV. The Jacquerie
Film recommended: Tony Robinson on the Peasants' Revolt of 1381
www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6pZTBxNTMc

Th Sept 6 How to Research. Library Orientation.

T Sept 11 Framing riots in the Christian middle ages

How is religion used to explain violence in the crusades, in Norwich, and in Christian Spain (1391)? Minorities in Christendom. What is anti-Semitism?

Reader: Chapter VIII: Barcelona 1391

Th Sept 13 Assigning status in (Muslim) public spaces

What is public space? What is sacred space? How is status assigned in public space? Does discrimination maintain civil peace?

"The Pact of Umar" (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jews-umar.asp>)

Reader: chapter VI. Granada

T Sept 18 Early modern religious anxieties

Why do Christians come to hate each other so violently?

Reader: Chapter X: St Bartholomew's Day (1572)

Film: D.W. Griffith "Intolerance" (1916)

Th Sept 20 Violence in Defense of Social Order:

What is ritualized violence and is it conservative or radical?

Reader: Chapter II: Great Cat Massacre

T Sept 25 Riot and Revolution: The United States (1776), France (1789), and Russia (1905)

When does riot become revolution? Can ideology justify public violence?

Reader: Chapter XIV: Baltimore 1812

Film: "Battleship Potemkin"

Recommended: The description of the film in

Paul Auster, *4,3,2,1*. [ELMS]

Th Sept 27 Politicizing riot; rioting politically

How are rioting groups organized and motivated? Why do broad political positions become the basis for mass violence?

Reader: Chapter XIV: Baltimore 1812

T Oct 2 Mobilizing Class

What is class consciousness and when did it emerge? Do workers have the right to riot?

Are strikes riots?

Reader: Chapter XI: Evil May Day

Reader: Chapter V: The Haymarket Affair

Film: "Matewan" (1987)

Th Oct 4 Mid-Term Examination

T Oct 9 Urban Violence at the Breakdown of Social Order; Physical and Moral Panics

How do riots respond to general panic?

Reader: Chapter XVII: Kanto Earthquake Massacre (1927)

Film: "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street," ["The Twilight Zone" (1960) #22]

Th Oct 11 Riot as Social Experience

Are riots formless and random? What does it feel like to riot?

Reading: Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Seabury, 1978).

Required: Section 1: "The Crowd" pp. 1–89. The entire book is available in pdf at

[http://asounder.org/resources/canetti_crowdsandpower.pdf]

[McK CMPCT2 HM 131.C233 1978 On reserve on ELMS.]

Tu Oct 16 Control: Theory & Practice. Policing and Police Riot

How does the state prepare for riot? What is its duty? What are its tactics?

Reading: TBA

Th Oct 18 "Deadly Ethnic Riots"; Labeling groups and cultures; the morality of riot

What is ethnicity? Is it natural? Does it lead inevitably to violence?

Reading: TBA

Film: "Gangs of New York"

T Oct 23 Reconstruction and the Rise of Lynching

What are race riots? Why has race been so important in American history and how has it been reinforced and activated?

Reader: Chapter XIII: Emmett Till

Th Oct 25 The Riot/Massacre in Tulsa, 1921. Putting Knowledge in Order.

We will be working on these events in class. To prepare for class, there are several excellent documentaries available online. I recommend "Before They Die." The educational version of the video is available at <http://beforetheydie.org/educational-version>. The password to watch the video is btd1921tul. [This was given to me by the producer who requests that it be used only for educational purposes.] In addition, make sure that you have read the Wikipedia article and familiarized yourself with at least two or three of the sources given there. In class, we will work in groups on a set of questions.

T Oct 30 Pogroms as Riots

Reading: Steven J. Zipperstein, *Kishinev* (2018)
Lamed Shapiro "'White Challah'" and "'The Kiss'" from *The Jewish Government and Other Stories*, tr. Curt Leviant (New York: Twayne, 1971)
H. N. Bialik, "[In The City of Slaughter](#)," *Complete Poetic Works of Hayyim Nahman Bialik*, Israel Efros, ed. (New York: 1948). Vol I: pp. 129–143. [Click on the poem's title to see the poem.]

Th Nov 1 Marketing riots, pogroms, and lynching. Riots and Memory

How can riots be used to motivate public behavior? Why are riots forgotten or remembered?

Reading: TBA

Video: "Lynching in America" <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/>

T Nov 6 Colonialism & the Justification of Violence

Must the colonized respond with violence? Is post-colonial riot inevitable?

Reading: Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

Film: "Bab El-Oued City"
(recommended film: Ajami)

Th Nov 8 Riots in Nazi Germany from 1919 to 1938

Reader: Chapter IX: Kristallnacht

T Nov 13 Collective Violence and the Birth of Israel

How do ethnicity and religion shape national identity? How is collective violence integrated into conflicting Israeli and Palestinian narratives and thus become essentialized? Do riots have to be spontaneous? Is organized terrorism equivalent to riot? Can organized protest be riot?

Reading: TBA

Th Nov 15 The Civil Rights Movement: the logic of non-violent riots

Reading: TBA

Film: Do the Right Thing

T Nov 20 Urban Tensions, Urban Collapse, and Urban Rioting over Turf

How does urban space become sacred? Why is it divided?

Reader: Chapter XII: Detroit Sojourner Truth Housing Riots (1942)

Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Revised edition, 2005). Chapter 9. [ELMS]

Th Nov 22 Thanksgiving Break. No class

T Nov 27 Generational Riots (1968)

Why were there riots in so many countries in Europe and North America in 1968? Did the “youth culture” lead to violence?

Reader: Chapter XV: Democratic National Convention in Chicago

Film: TBA

Th Nov 29 Internet Riots: Video Cameras in Los Angeles

How does the press, the ubiquity of video cameras, and social media affect riots and our understanding of them?

Reading: TBA

Film: *Sa-i-gu*

recommended "Wet Sand: Voices from L.A. Ten Years Later"

[HBK F869.L89 K672 2003]

T Dec 4 Storming the Fence. Protest and Riots in Israel and Gaza

Reading: TBA

Th Dec 6 Narrating Riots in Ferguson and Baltimore

How shall we tell the stories we have witnessed?

Reader: Chapter XVI: Ferguson

T Dec 11 Reading Day

Wednesday, December 12 8:00-10:00am Final Exam [Note: This time may be changed.]

Required Books & Readings

Many shorter readings, both primary and secondary, will be provided on the course ELMS site. You will be able to find them there and/or through links from this syllabus. The following three volumes are required and are the basis for significant course assignments. Students should have their own copy of each.

1. “Civil Discourse or Urban Riot: A Historical Source Book.” Available as a pdf via the course ELMS site.
2. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Tr. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004)
3. Steven Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018)
4. Students are expected to have a subscription to a daily newspaper, to read each morning in order to find reports about riots and other civil disturbances in the U.S. and abroad, and to be ready to report about their findings to the entire class. The *New York Times* offers a special student subscription (see [here](#)) that offers 4 weeks of basic service for free and then costs \$1 per week until you graduate.

Grading

Research Reports 20% (2x10)

Group Final Report 15%

Report on the representation of collective violence in movies: 10%

Mid-Term. 20%

Final Exam. 25%

Participation (based on weekly quizzes in section, and presentations in both section and class),
10%

There will be several extra-credit opportunities over the course of the semester. Watch this space.

Research Reports: The course is built around opportunities for you to discover, describe, and evaluate riots using primary sources and evaluating them against accounts by historians and other analysts. (We will take advantage of the fact that Carillon students are in residence near each other to design our research projects as group activities that will give you the experience and satisfactions of primary research and collective presentation.) Full details for each of these projects will be provided.

1. A description of rioting in Baltimore OR in Washington, D.C. in 1968. For Baltimore, the report should be based on primary materials you examine in the Hornbake Library Maryland Room. (Special sessions will be arranged for your section to view these). Your description may also draw on the history of rioting in Baltimore history from the nineteenth century on, and also draw comparisons with more recent events. For Washington D.C., your report should draw on newspaper accounts as well the special commemorative reports published in area newspapers and websites created by area tv stations (3 pp.)
2. A treatment of the 1929 riots in Jerusalem over prayer at the Wailing Wall. Using primary accounts from newspapers and other sources, your report should outline the history of claims to the holy place, the political forces that were involved in the rioting, the relation between the authorities and the participants, and how accounts of what happened differ. (3 pp.)
3. Final Report. Your group has been commissioned by a city or state in the United States to predict where and when a riot will occur, the extent of the damage it will cause, and methods of dealing with it. You must prepare a ten-page report for submission to the relevant government agency or agencies and give a co-ordinated ten-minute oral presentation with slides and other handouts about your findings. Your report must draw upon information you have learned from research about the site/location in question. Then, using what you have learned about riots elsewhere, you are to explain the significance of these existing social and economic structural factors, the social norms and anxieties that may lead to violence, the likely trigger mechanisms, and the expected results, both short-term and long-term. Your report should document its arguments by citing concrete examples from previous riots as well as the theories of historians, social scientists, and planners. Each member of the group will be responsible for part of the written report and will present part of the co-ordinated oral argument to the agency.

Important Information

The University Office of Undergraduate Studies has prepared a guide to policies relating to undergraduate students and courses. The guide, entitled "Know Your Rights" is available at <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>. Please pay particular attention to the university policies concerning absences and missed assignments.

For students in this course that participate in **Carillon Communities** this course will serve to support the Carillon Community Mission: Carillon Communities creates an inspiring and supportive living and learning environment for first year students. Carillon promotes an environment where students develop a sense of belonging and trust to support their academic success and innovative thought. In Carillon, students consider their own interests and knowledge, and become more active agents in their own education.