

HIS 511A, Spring 2007 - Seminar in Historical Research and Writing
“Mass Movements and Mass Media in the United States, 1932-1992” (WI, SI)

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Office Hours: W, F, 11:00-12:00m and by appointment

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This seminar will examine how mass movements and major public figures in the United States have shaped the national political agenda through various media of communication: newspapers, radio, television, and independent movement-based media. As models for the kinds of history we can write, we will examine scholarly articles and books that explore the relationship between movements, media, the public, and political leaders. We will pay special attention to the black freedom struggle and ways in which the mainstream press framed civil rights issues and generated political celebrity. Students may wish to investigate movements for economic redistribution in the Great Depression, women's movements, peace movements, environmental movements, movements of the right, or others the professor approves. Since the goal is to write a coherent paper with a developed point of view, each student will proceed through a series of assignments: short response pieces to selected readings; an annotated bibliography in the focused field of interest; a proposal with a sharp set of questions that can be answered with an identifiable base of secondary and primary sources; a first draft to be peer-reviewed; a final draft. After a poll of student interest, I will group the class into various working subgroups to provide support, dialogue, information, and feedback.

Undergraduates will write a 15-18 page paper; graduates will write a 20-22 page paper.

Of necessity as historians poach terrain pioneered by social scientists and communications scholars, we will encounter questions and methodologies that we need to judge relevant or irrelevant to our own work and explanations. Historians are especially concerned with explaining social, political, and cultural changes in terms of the people and institutions that make history, that open and foreclose alternative paths. The role of political culture and ideology in shaping powerful people's decisions and ordinary peoples sense of the possible have moved to the center of our enterprise.

Historians use the Media to understand the past in at least two ways:

1. Journalists who were there supply important factual information (quotations, descriptions of events, arguments made by historical actors). Especially when these pieces of information can be corroborated with sources like oral histories or interviews, they can help historians fill in the picture with details left out of other histories or forgotten by participants.
2. Journalists also reflect biases or interests of their audiences or employers. So their "slant" or "angle" or "frame" can help us understand what version of the truth Americans saw,

and what they missed or misunderstood. Or if the source was official, a news report can reveal how journalists, and therefore Americans, might even have been deceived. ("Frame" is an important concept, because every observer puts something in the center of the picture and leaves a lot of detail out of the picture frame entirely). Journalists can't report what leaders hold secret. They tend to focus on violence or the risk of violence, or famous personalities, because they or their editors think that sells news. They have an interest in selling "breaking news," so sometimes they just report an episode without explaining why it happened or why it is important.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation

This class has a strong collaborative dimension, though we do not meet every week. Attendance is mandatory (unexcused absences will result in my lowering your grade by 5 points for each session missed – excuses are limited to medical or family emergency, NOT work obligations or extra-curricular conflicts). So is participation: in discussions and in peer review of each other's project descriptions and first drafts. The best critiques mix searching challenges (questions, counter-arguments) with appreciation (since who wants to hear only what is lacking in their efforts?). I reserve the right to call or cancel class as is needed.

Required reading:

Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Available online and at the UNCG bookstore shortly.

Articles and excerpted PDF files available through Blackboard or Journal Finder or EBSCO. I reserve the right to substitute readings if better studies come to my attention.

Optional Reading -- "How To" Research:

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams. *The craft of research* Chicago : University of Chicago Press, c1995, excerpts on Blackboard.

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, Fifth Edition (Bedford St. Martins, 2007) , excerpts on Blackboard.

Reading, Preparation and Class Citizenship: 20%.

Discussion participation, questioning, critiquing and supporting each other's research strategies, plus the 1-2 page peer reviews of first drafts.

Research process: 30%.

By mid semester, you will have a grade for the following: 1 short response piece to selected readings on the black freedom movement; 1 short response piece to Todd Gitlin's book; 1 3 page book review and oral report; an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources in the focused field of interest; a proposal with a sharp set of questions or working hypothesis that can be answered with an identifiable base of secondary and primary sources.

First draft to be peer-reviewed. 10%

Final draft: 40%.

Academic Honor Code: I remind you that the URL for the University's Academic integrity policy is <http://saf.dept.uncg.edu/studiscp/Honor.html>. If you have not read it, please do so thoroughly. See Rampolla, *Guide to Research*, chapter 6, on Blackboard for more information on plagiarism. Our own library, Dartmouth College and Georgetown University each have superb websites on the nuances of plagiarism. Beware of copying without citing sources; this is a special danger with respect to the Internet. If you "cut and paste" even one sentence -- even if you rearrange some words -- and do not use quotation marks appropriately *and* cite the source, you are plagiarizing, cheating and cheapening the value of honest work written by your peers. People accused of plagiarism are entitled to an Honor Board hearing after, or instead of, a conference with the professor. Recall that university expulsion is automatic for repeat offenders with a documented record of plagiarism.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND DEADLINES

1/10: Introductions

Discussion of Sources and Best Practices for Locating Primary and Secondary Materials.

As soon as possible and definitely by early February you will have settled upon a focused research problem and be busy as bees compiling a bibliography of relevant primary and secondary materials. Remember, there might be quite an interesting secondary literature available on a problem which, unfortunately, Jackson library or a local repository or the Internet does not contain primary materials rich enough to satisfy the requirements of an original research paper.

1/17: The Black Freedom Movement and the "Burning Glass"

Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (NY: Norton, 1976), 134-137, 142-152, 161-172.

[Read this *carefully*].

Payne, Charles M. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 391-405. [You need printout only the first 7 pages of this .pdf file as the second chapter is optional]

Assignment: 2 pp. paper posted on Blackboard discussion board. Pick one of the following paired readings and write 2 pages comparing point of view and argument. Read ALL of them and be prepared to discuss. All articles are available for download on Blackboard.

George Barrett, "'Jim Crow, He's Real Tired,'" *The New York Times Magazine*, March 3, 1957; Ted Poston, "The Negroes of Montgomery," *New York Post*, 6/15&19/56, in *Reporting Civil Rights, v. 1*, 266-279.

Walker, Jenny. "A Media-Made Movement? Black Violence and Nonviolence in the Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement." In *Media, Culture and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, edited by Brian Ward, 41-66. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001; Pat Watters, *Down to Now: Reflections on the Southern Civil Rights Movement*, 69-89. How did the mainstream press misinterpret the role of violence and nonviolence in the southern freedom movement?

MLK, Jr., "People in Action" column, *New York Amsterdam News*, selections, 1964, and "Statement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On Accepting the N.Y.C. Medallion," 12/17/64, Robinson Papers, NYU. Compare these statements with the *New York Times* coverage of King through 1964, especially but not only the December event.¹

1/24: The New York Times, CBS News, and the Antiwar Movement

Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

The class will have begun constructing on the blackboard discussion board a methodological "tool kit" of important concepts, methods of analysis, and excellent examples. Your contributions to this discussion board will be part of your participation grade.

CONFERENCES CONFERENCES CONFERENCES CONFERENCES with me are excellent ways of gaining focus and access to the best literature. I have been teaching this stuff for 20 years almost! I require each of you to visit me at least twice, once early in the game, again later as you are putting it together.

¹ "Dr. King Awarded A City Medallion," *New York Times*, December 18, 1964, by Robert Alden.

1/31: Book Reviews and Reports (See Recommended Titles on Blackboard)

Your book must explore the relationship between print and/or electronic media and politics and/or social movements since the Great Depression. Your review will explore: 1) How did reporters and institutions of the press frame public perceptions of a social movement, political issue, political decision, or political leader? Were there significant biases, omissions, exaggerations, or "slants" that distorted the messages intended by the principal actors? 2) How did movement or political leaders use diverse media to convey their message, and with what degree of success? 3) How is such "framing" related to the exercise of power?

2/7: Discussion: Framing Welfare and Critiquing Frames

Lisa Levenstein, "From Innocent Children to Unwanted Migrants and Unwed Moms: Two Chapters in the Public Discourse on Welfare in the United States, 1960-1961," *Journal of Women's History* 11.4 (2000) 10-33. Through Jackson's electronic journals Academic Search Elite EBSCO. Or through "Project Muse" or directly at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v011/11.4levenstein.html from a networked computer.

Gilens, Martin. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999., ch. 5, "The News Media and the Racialization of Poverty," pp. 102-132.

Carragee, Kevin M., and Wim Roefs. "The Neglect of Power in Recent Framing Research." *Journal of Communication* 52, no. 2 (2004): 214-33. This is an incredibly difficult but important survey of theory, sociology, communications research, and cultural studies research.

Optional: Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51-58.

Annotated bibliography of secondary sources due today.

2/13: Paper Proposal with Working Hypothesis and Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources Is Due Absolutely to Me and Your Peer Reviewer

2/14: Peer Review and Discussions – One page commentary on one proposal

[Late proposals or unacceptable proposals will be due the following Tuesday for discussion on Wednesday next week. Late or unacceptable proposals will cause your final grade to sink four points. Until you pass this part, there is no continuing with the course].

2/21: Peer Review and Discussions Continued

2/28: No Class – Research and Conferences during Class Period

3/7: No Class – Research and Conferences during Class Period

3/14: No Class – Research and Conferences during Class Period

3/21: No Class

3/28: No Class

4/3: First Draft due absolutely to me and your peer reviewer – no exceptions

One page peer review

4/4: Discussion of First Drafts and Revisions

4/11: Discussion of First Drafts and Revisions

4/18: No class

4/25: Reports of Findings

5/7: Final Revision Due at 6:30 P.M. in My Office

Suggestions (Just to Get You Thinking -- More Bibliographies on Blackboard):

Depression movements in the press:

Begin with: Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled*; Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*. How did these movements get their messages out? How did the mainstream press frame their challenges to Franklin Roosevelt and Roosevelt's response?

Father Coughlin and the turn from social justice to anti-Communism (Brinkley, *Voices of Protest*)

Dr. Townsend and the old age revolving pension plan (Edwin Amenta's new book)
The Unemployed Leagues and federal relief

The Postwar Labor Surge and the Eclipse of Social Democracy

the strike wave of 1945, press and public sympathy
Harry Truman's confrontation with unions
the AFL, the CIO, and the Taft-Hartley act in public opinion

The Anti-Communist Network in the 1940s and 1950s and Its Challengers

Begin: Ellen Schrecker's books, Robert Griffith, Michael Paul Rogin
Joseph McCarthy's manipulation of the mass media

Edward R. Murrow's confrontation with McCarthy
Press Coverage of the Henry Wallace Campaign of 1948 and Harry Truman's Red Baiting -- how well could Wallace define the issues at this critical Cold War juncture?

White Civil rights reporters (singular or collective biography, depending on scope of coverage):

Karl Fleming of Newsweek (new memoir, *Son of the Rough South*, and Newsweek reporting)

Claude Sitton of the New York Times -- extensive coverage

The following two were especially sympathetic and insightful into grassroots black politics:

Pat Watters of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and Nation magazine -- memoir and articles

Paul Good, memoir and articles

Presidents and campaigns: Donovan, Robert J., and Ray Scherer. "Television and the transformation of American politics, 1952-1984," 218-239, in *Unslient Revolution: Television News and American Public Life, 1948-1991*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. see candidate ads on livingroomcandidate.org

The civil rights movement and urban crisis of the 1960s:

Donovan and Scherer, *Unslient Revolution*, ch. 1. "Police dogs, fire hoses, and television cameras: shock waves from the South," 3-22.

Donovan and Scherer, ch. 6. "In the eye of the storm: television news and the urban riots," in *Unslient Revolution*, 71-78.

Ryan, William. *Blaming the Victim*. New York: Vintage, 1971, ch. 9 "Counting Black Bodies."

Birmingham 1963:

Lentz, Richard. "Snarls Echoing 'Round the World: The 1963 Birmingham Civil Rights Campaign on the World Stage." *American Journalism* (2000), 69-89.

The 1963 March on Washington:

Tom Kahn, "March's radical demands point way for struggle," *New America*, 24 Sep 1963 .

Thelwell, Michael. "The August 28th March on Washington." In *Duties, Pleasures and Conflicts: Essays in Struggle*, edited by Michael Thelwell, 57-73. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987.

Height, Dorothy I. "'We Wanted the Voice of a Woman to Be Heard': Black Women and the 1963 March on Washington." In *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, edited by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin, 83-92. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Black power and women -- a hidden story:

Abron, JoNina M. "'Serving the People': The Survival Programs of the Black Panther Party." In *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones. Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998.

Smith, Jean. "I Learned to Feel Black." In *The Black Power Revolt*, edited by Floyd Barbour, 247-62. New York: Collier, 1968.

Lyndon Johnson, the Tet Offensive of 1968, and Press Coverage of Vietnam

Chester J. Patch, Jr., "And That's the Way It Was: The Vietnam War on the Network Nightly News," in David Farber, ed., *The Sixties* (Chapel Hill, 1994), pp. 90-118.

"Documents on Tet, 1968: Perception and Reality," in Cohen, ed., *Vietnam*, pp. 205-11, 214-15: "Mike Wallace, "Saigon Under Fire: CBS News Special Report, January 31, 1968" Walt W. Rostow, "The Diffusion of Power," 2/8/68; General Earle Wheeler, "Report on the Situation" 2/27/68; Walter Cronkite, 'Who, What, When, Where, Why: Report from Vietnam, 2/27/68"

The Radical Origins of Liberal Feminism

Daniel Horowitz, "Rethinking Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* : Labor Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America," *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1996).

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 2nd ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963, 1974), pp. 11-27.

Mass Media and Mass Protest in the 1960s

Fisher, Paul L., and Ralph L. Lowenstein, eds. *Race and the News Media*. New York: Praeger, 1967. Papers and summaries of discussion sessions of the conference sponsored by the Freedom of Information Center of the University of Missouri and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1965.

Garrow, David J. *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. And the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. Dense consideration of how the *pictures* of repression in Selma swayed key Congressmen as they debated voting rights.

Lentz, Richard. *Symbols, the News Magazines, and Martin Luther King*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1990. Workmanlike but often plodding comparison of how King was filtered through 3 national newsweeklies.

The Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike, 1968

Honey, Michael K. *Going down Jericho Road* (Norton, 2007)

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, *Memphis: We Remember*. <http://www.afscme.org/about/memphist.htm>

Links to oral history, retrospective accounts from the AFSCME newspaper and several scholarly articles and photographs.