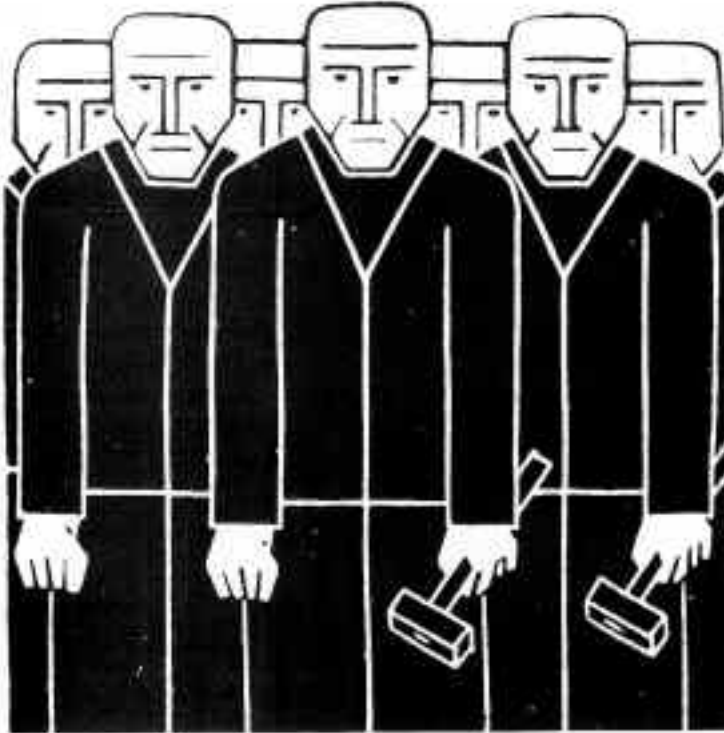


HST-320 TH-1
Crowds, Riots and Mass Society
MICA - Spring 2009
Course Syllabus

*M 4-6:45 PM
Bunting 480*



Hans Schmitz - "Mass"

Instructor: Michael Sizer

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Belua multorum es caput...
(the multitude is a many-headed
beast)

- Horace, 1st C. BC

Course Description & Goals

All historical societies have routinely described collective groups of people as primary actors in political and community life. Current politicians invoke "the American people," pollsters and historians speak of a community's public opinion, medieval chronicles and modern newspapers alike describe scenes of mass hysteria, the dangerous rabble, and other similar manifestations of a sort of collective will. This class will discuss the phenomenon of crowds, riots and the mass and the various theories that have been developed to explain them. Topics will include: theorizations of the crowd and the collective, mass hysteria and fear, the history and meaning of public opinion and the public sphere, sociological/mathematical modeling of crowd dynamics, the "flash mob," and the relationship of the individual with mass society.

Through the investigation of theories of the mass society, it is hoped that as artists in a mass media culture you will be better able to understand the relationship of your individual subjectivity to the larger population/audience of your work, as citizens you will be better equipped to evaluate claims of representation in a democracy, and as members of the global community you will be

better able to understand the implications of a burgeoning human population and its resulting crowding effect.

Course Format, Grading and Assignments

This course will emphasize class and small group discussion. Your participation will be evaluated not only based on the quality of your comments in open discussion, but also on alertness, energy, and preparedness. Various organized activities will also provide an opportunity to participate in class ways other than in large- or small-group discussion. (Note: this participation grade does not include your field study presentation grade, which is evaluated separately; see below). **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 33% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities. The amount of readings varies, but at times is quite heavy. It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class**, either printed out or on your computer screen (see below for comments on bringing laptops to class), to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

There are **4 short, informal reaction papers (approx. 2 pp.)** due throughout the semester **each worth 8% of your final grade.** The papers are generally open-ended; however I am looking for specific references to class texts (actually quote them!) as well as clarity of argument and writing ability, as well as originality of ideas. The goal of these assignments is to ensure good reading, allow students to work out ideas before class that can be presented if necessary in class discussion, and to enable one-on-one dialogue with the instructor. The topics and due-dates of these assignments are:

- **Democracy and Public Opinion: Cynical or Real?**, due in Week 7.
- **Review** of Harris's *Bomb!*, due in Week 9.
- **Meditation/personal reaction** to Baltimore '68 event, due in Week 11.
- **Personal reflection** on maintaining your individuality in mass society, due Week 12 or 13.

The **most important aspect of your involvement in the class** will be your **crowd field study (6-10 pp.)**, the particulars of which will be explained in a separate handout. For this paper, you will have to seek out and observe/participate in a crowd, and analyze it according to the various criteria you encounter in class (particularly in Canetti and LeBon). This paper will ask for your personal reactions and experiences, but will also demand that you apply your experience directly and clearly to the class material. On the final day of class, you will give a short, informal presentation of your findings to the rest of the class. This **final class presentation represents 5% of your final semester grade. The field study paper represents 30% of your final grade.**

Late Assignment Policy

Computer submissions of paper assignments are not allowed. The short assignments will be marked down a grade for each day late (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) The field study will not be accepted after the last day of class - **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Attendance Policy

There are only 14 meetings in the semester and so we have to make the most of them. Any unexcused absence beyond 1 will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). 2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.

Classroom Laptop Policy

Because students in previous classes have abused the privilege of having laptops in class, I am going to set limits on their use in our class. **If there are no online or Blackboard readings, an open laptop is not permitted in class, unless you receive special permission from me to take notes on it or for some other purpose.** If there are online or Blackboard readings, you can have the computer open. However, if you are observed using the computer for anything not related to classroom activity, **you will get an F for the day and your laptop privileges will be revoked.**

ADA Compliance Statement

In order to provide the highest quality educational experience for every student, MICA is committed to compliance with the ADA and Section 504. Any student who has (or suspects he or she may have) a physical, cognitive, or psychological disability and who wants to request accommodations must immediately schedule an appointment to meet with the Director of the Learning Resource Center, Dr. Kathryn Smith, by calling the LRC at 410-225-2416. The LRC is MICA's designated department for determining reasonable accommodations based on legal requirements and will provide the eligible student with an official Accommodation Verification letter to the instructor. Each semester the student must formally request accommodations from the LRC each semester, and format of the Verification letters change each semester to ensure currency. NOTE: Students with disabilities who want assistance during emergency evacuations must register with the LRC within the first week of each semester.

Health and Safety Compliance

MICA has developed policies and practices to ensure a healthful environment and safe approaches to the use of equipment, materials, and processes. It is the mutual responsibility of faculty and students to review health and safety standards relevant to each class at the beginning of each semester. Students should be aware of general fire, health, and safety regulations posted in each area and course specific policies, practices, and cautions. Students who have concerns related to health and safety should contact the Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator.

The Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator, Quentin Moseley, may be reached at 410-462-7593 by email at qmoseley@mica.edu

Readings

- Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973).
- Guy Debord, *Sick Planet* (NY: Seagull, 2008)
- Frank Harris, *Bomb: the Classic Novel of Anarchist Violence* (Portland: Feral House, 1996).
- Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002).
- Supplementary texts on Blackboard class site, online, or handed out in class.

Course Schedule (Topics and Assignments) - Subject to change if necessary.

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

Week 1 - 1/26: Introduction to course

- Introduction to course; introduction to each other; Obama's Inauguration crowd and its symbolic qualities; this crowded world.

COURSE SECTION I: WHAT IS THE CROWD?

Week 2 - 2/2: Canetti

- Overview of Canetti; what genre is Canetti?

Assignments: Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 15-90.

Week 3 - 2/9: Canetti, cont. & Crowd Modeling

- Canetti and the Pack; Mathematical definitions of crowd movement and behavior.

Assignments: > Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 93-125
> Dirk Helbing & Martin Treiber, "Jams, Waves, and Clusters" in *Science*, New Series 282 #5396 (Dec. 11, 1998): 2001 & 2003.
> Diagram on "Hooking Up" from *Harper's Magazine*, June 2005, p. 22.

Week 4 - 2/16: Gustave LeBon

- Group Psychology before Freud; crowds and politics.

Assignments: > Gustave LeBon, *The Crowd*.

COURSE SECTION II: "THE PEOPLE" IN ACTION: MOBILIZATIONS OF PUBLICS

Week 5 - 2/23: Political Crowds and the Group Mind

- Charismatic leadership and demagoguery; Fascism; nationalism; Max Weber on Charismatic Leadership.

- Assignments: > William McDougall, "The Mind of a Nation" in *Group Mind* (1920), pp. 148-180.
- > George Mosse, CH. 1 from *Masses & Man*.
 - > Erich Fromm, "The Emergence of the Individual & the Ambiguity of Freedom" in *Escape from Freedom*, 39-55.
 - > Michel Foucault, Preface to Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (3 pp. or so).

Week 6 - 3/2: Democracy: Rule of the Mob? or manifestation of the General Will?

- History of conceptions of democracy; debate on democracy's meaning. What is "The American People"?

- Assignments: > Short excerpt from Plato's *Republic*.
- > Short excerpt from Rousseau, *Social Contract* on the General Will.
 - > James Madison ('Publius'): *Federalist Paper* #10:
<http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>

Week 7 - 3/9: The Public Sphere and Democracy

- Origins of the concept of the public; mobilizations of public interest groups in democratic elections; polling and measures of public opinion.

- Assignments: > Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: and Encyclopedia Article" in *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974): 49-55.
- > V.O. Key, "Public Opinion and Democratic Politics" from *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, pp. 535-558.

***** SPRING BREAK!!! *****

COURSE SECTION III: RIOT: CROWDS IN HISTORY

Week 8 - 3/23: Historical Descriptions of Riots

- Short Lecture on various historical interpretations of causes and meanings of riot (NZ Davis, EP Thompson, Gurr, etc.); historical examples; Canetti.

- Assignments: > Canetti, *Crowds & Power*, 127-200.
- > Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Ch. 24 on "Blues & Greens", p. 59.
 - > *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, 1405-1449*, excerpt describing the 1st Prison Massacre of 1418, pp. 111-119.

Week 9 - 3/30: Violence

- Anarchist violence and the mass society; excerpts from interrogation of Ravachol; terrorism.

- Assignments: > Frank Harris, *Bomb!*

Week 10 - 4/6: Modern Riots and Crowd Control

- Riot and society; Riot vs. Demonstration; Crowd Control.

Assignments: > Guy Debord, "The Rise & Fall of the Spectacular Commodity-Economy" from *Sick Planet*.
> Excerpts from Capt. Charles Beane, *Police Crowd Control*.
> Excerpts from "Baltimore '68: Riots & Rebirth." SEE NOTE BELOW.

*** SPECIAL MANDATORY ATTENDANCE CLASS EVENT: Tues. Apr. 7, Falvey Hall,
7:30 PM: ORAL HISTORIES FROM BALTIMORE '68 RIOT ***

COURSE SECTION IV: THE MASS SOCIETY, ART & INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTIVITY

Week 11 - 4/13: Audience and Crowds in the Movies

- MOVIE!: "The Crowd (1928)" (if available); if not Fritz Lang's "Metropolis (1927).";
Discussion of Baltimore '68 event.

Assignments: > Anton Kaes, "Movies and Masses" from *Crowds*, ed. Schnapp, pp. 149-158.

Week 12 - 4/20: Modern Mass Society

- The artist in the modern world; what is the *zeitgeist*? Lonely crowd: cities make you lonely?
Anomie.

Assignments: > Guy Debord, "A Sick Planet" from *Sick Planet*.
> Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry," from *Enlightenment & Mass Deception*.
> Charles Baudelaire, excerpt from "The Painter of Modern Life"
> Hegel, excerpt from *The Philosophy of Mind*, 281-288.
> Frank Bures, "A Mind Dismembered: in Search of the Magical Penis Thieves"
from *Harper's Magazine* (June 2008), 60-65.

Week 13 - 4/27: Contemporary Crowd Forms; Privacy vs. Publicity

- Flash Mobs; ; internet: group mind or atomized society?; how do you see privacy?

Assignments: > Bill Wasik, "My Crowd, or Phase 5: a Report from the Inventor of the Flash Mob" from *Harper's Magazine* (March 2006): 56-66.
> Victor Burgin, "Jenni's Room: Exhibitionism and Solitude" in *Critical Inquiry* 27 #1 (Autumn 2000): 77-89.
> Larry Niven, "Flash Crowd," short story 1-65.

Week 14 - 5/4: FINAL CLASS

- Informal Presentations on Field Studies.

Assignments: Final Field Study Papers due today!!!