Lost in the Crowd? Mobs, Masses, and Multitudes in Modernity

“The age we are about to enter will in truth be an ERA OF CROWDS.” - Gustave Le Bon

“There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses.” - Raymond Williams

The notion of the people as fickle crowd, mob, or many-headed monster has plagued the idea of democracy since ancient times. In modernity, changing social conditions and the rise of democratic politics prompted new fears and fascinations around crowds, the masses, and the people, but also new theories and practices of collective and popular politics. Today, questions about the power of the masses are as relevant as ever, as recent protests around the world have shown. In this seminar, we will consider the social and political significance of “seeing people as masses” in modern thought. Through texts, images, and other media, this seminar will trace competing ideas of popular and democratic collectivities – multitudes, mobs, crowds, masses, movements, publics – in order to explore some of the distinctive tensions and questions of modernity: How is it possible to achieve unity out of the many? Does modern life threaten individuality? What forms can democracy and popular sovereignty take? How do we reconcile the rise of modern democratic practices with the persistent ambivalence toward the masses? What role can mass collective action play in political and social change?

Required Textbooks:

Optional to purchase:
Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich: 0156701537)

Other readings will be posted as pdfs or available in a reader.
Seminar aims and expectations:
The seminar format involves a collaborative, in-depth exploration of a topic. It is essential that you read the materials closely, carefully, and thoroughly every week, and that you come prepared to engage actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully in our discussion.

The assigned readings and materials are the core of the class. During class time, we will focus on interpreting these texts, reflecting on the questions and ideas they raise, and debating their implications. These readings and discussions will raise many questions, and will offer many competing perspectives, ideas, and answers. We will find that the texts disagree on these questions and their answers, both because ideas and meanings change over time, but also, and even more importantly, because the ideas and questions we are exploring are contested and controversial at any time. Thus, we will also find that we do not always agree, whether about interpretations of the texts or about the broader issues of democracy, individuality, violence, etc. One of the main goals of the seminar is for you to develop and articulate your own interpretations and arguments about the texts and about the questions they raise. That means more than just having an “opinion”; it means developing well thought-out and cogent arguments through careful analysis of the texts and ideas – both in your writing and in our discussions. Our class discussions are thus, in part, a space for each of you to work out and debate your own arguments and interpretations. It is crucial, then, that we maintain a constructive and civil discussion, where we can debate – and sometimes disagree – thoughtfully and respectfully.

We will also find that many of the questions and answers posed in these texts remain important today. I encourage you to reflect on how the ideas and questions that we discuss relate to contemporary society and politics, and to bring contemporary examples into our discussions. The seminar will also emphasize research and writing, and you will have the opportunity to do your own research on both historical and contemporary examples of crowds, movements, mass politics, etc.

How to prepare for class:
Read slowly, carefully, and thoroughly. Take notes in the margin or in a notebook: make a note of passages that are interesting, confusing, provocative, problematic, of points or concepts that seem important, are unclear, or about which you have questions. Jot down your thoughts about an argument’s implications, possible objections, comparisons to other authors and texts, and/or connections to current-day society and politics; use some of these ideas to generate your critical response post. Bring your notes to class, and come with questions to discuss.

Course requirements - summary:
Grades will be based on the following components: Due date
Participation: 30%
20% In-class participation Weekly: Sun, 5pm (online)
10% Critical responses and forum posts
Short writing and research assignments: 30%
10% Analysis paper (4-5 pages) Fri, April 15, 5pm (mailbox)
10% Research exercise 1: Historical primary source* Fri, May 6, 5pm (mailbox)
10% Research exercise 2: Contemporary example* Mon, May 23, 12pm (in class)
(*2-3 pages plus annotated bibliography)
Final paper: 40%
5% Abstract and outline Mon, May 16, 12pm (in class)
35% Final paper (10-12 pages) Wed, Jun 8, 12pm (mailbox)
Course requirements - details

Active in-class participation
In a seminar, it is essential that everyone comes prepared and ready to discuss the material. You must complete the readings before class and bring the readings with you each week. Attendance is necessary but not sufficient for a good participation grade; note that missing class more than once will significantly lower your participation grade. Your in-class participation grade will reflect not simply how much you speak, but the quality of your contributions, as well as your degree of preparedness, attentiveness, respect for others’ contributions, adherence to class policies, regular and punctual attendance, and factors like improvement over the quarter. There are many ways to contribute: asking questions; pointing out passages relevant to the point being discussed; making an argument or disputing one; explaining a concept; and more. Often there will not be a single right answer, but there are always more and less thoughtful answers. I will be looking for evidence that you’ve done the readings and are thinking carefully about them.

Classroom etiquette: The nature of a seminar requires that we all focus our full attention on the discussion and on the course material during class. Please show respect for your fellow seminar members by arriving on time, listening attentively when others are speaking, and avoiding noisy, distracting, or disruptive behavior during class. Remember our old friend Hobbes: “To hearken to a mans counsell, or discourse of what kind soever, is to Honour; as a signe we think him wise, or eloquent, or witty. To sleep, or go forth, or talk the while is to Dishonour” (Hobbes, Leviathan, I, 10). Electronic devices policy: Computer use is not permitted in class, except with prior permission from the instructor and appropriate documentation. Cell phones and other electronic devices are never permitted; phones must be off and put away during class, per university rules.

Critical responses and forum posts:
Each week* you will post a short response (approx. 200 words) to the week’s readings on the online discussion forum, by 5pm Sunday. This post should be your own analytic response to the readings, and it should include at least one question for discussion. At the end of the quarter, you will add a final entry reflecting on the course as a whole. Take these posts seriously as writing and thinking exercises; in grading them, I will be looking for careful and thorough reading, and thoughtful reflection and analysis. In addition, in at least 5 weeks of your choosing, you will post a brief (1-2 sentence) response to at least one other student’s post, before class on Monday. *Note: you can miss one weekly response without penalty.

Writing and research assignments
This seminar also aims both to develop your skills of analytic, argumentative writing and to familiarize you with aspects of the scholarly research process. You will complete a short analytic paper and two research assignments, plus a final seminar paper that will build on those earlier assignments. In week 4, part of our class meeting will be a library workshop on research skills and resources. We may also have occasional in-class or take-home exercises on writing, argumentation, and information literacy.

The short analytic paper (4-5 pages, due week 3) will analyze two of the central concepts using at least two of the assigned readings. For the first research assignment (2-3 pages plus annotated bibliography, due week 6), you will find and analyze a historical primary source not included in the assigned readings: this can be a text of any genre, an artwork, a film, or other media,
dating from 1700-1950. For the second research assignment (2-3 pages plus annotated bibliography), you will research a recent example of crowd behavior, public protest, mass politics, or related phenomena, and write a short analysis connecting it to our course themes. I will post detailed guidelines for each assignment on the course website.

The final paper (10-12 pages, due exam week) will address 3-4 of the assigned readings plus either one additional primary text you have found, or a contemporary example. I will circulate a list of possible topics early in the quarter. You can also design your own topic, as long as you get it approved by me. You should identify your topic and meet with me to discuss it no later than week 5. In addition, you are required to submit an abstract and a draft outline of your final paper by week 8, and to schedule an individual meeting with me during week 10 to discuss your final revisions.

**Deadlines, extensions, and late penalties:**

*Late assignments will be penalized by half a letter grade per day. Late forum responses will receive no credit.* On very rare occasions, I may be able to grant extensions, at my discretion. However, extensions must be requested well before the deadline, and require proof of need (e.g. documentation of family or medical emergencies, other unusual circumstances).

**Academic integrity:**
I take academic integrity very seriously. Assignments for this class must be submitted to Turnitin, and I also require all students to complete a plagiarism reading and quiz. Plagiarism means taking someone else’s ideas or words and presenting them as if they were your own – whether intentionally or by accident. Plagiarism, cheating, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be reported to the Dean of Students office for disciplinary action. Make sure that you fully understand the university rules and procedures on Academic Integrity:

http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/students/integrity/

http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/assets/documents/StudentGuide.pdf

http://www.studentgroups.ucla.edu/dos/assets/documents/StudentCC.pdf

**Communication:**

*Office hours:* Please do come by and see me in office hours to talk about the class, your papers, etc. My office hours are always posted online, and any changes will be announced by email.

*Email:* I'm happy to answer brief questions by email. (Office hours are better for lengthy, complex questions or issues.) Please follow professional email etiquette, and make sure to include your name in emails. I usually respond to emails within 24 hours during the work week; feel free to email me again if you haven’t heard from me after 48 hours.

I will regularly send official class announcements and information by email; these will also appear in the “Announcements” section of the class website. It is your responsibility to make sure that you receive these emails, so please check that your address is up to date in URSA and that class emails aren’t blocked.

**Accommodations and other circumstances:**
If you have special circumstances or need any accommodations, please come and see me as early in the quarter as possible, so that we can take them into consideration.
Weekly schedule:

Week 1 (March 28): The Many-headed Multitude, the People, and the Problem of Unity
Justus Lipsius. *Politicca* (1589), Book 4, ch. 5 (only the English pages of ch. 5: 401, 403, 405, 407, 409).
Hobbes, Thomas. *On The Citizen (De Cive)* (1642); Ch. 6, sections 1-3, 18-20; ch. 7; ch. 12, sections 1 and 8; *Leviathan* (1651), reread ch 16-ch 17 (ch XVI - XVII) (pp 217-228 in the Penguin edition).
Spinoza, Baruch. *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670), selections from chs. 16-17, pp 200-207, 214-216 and *Political Treatise* (1677), TPT; PT pp. 287-308, 313-318 (chs 1-3, ch 5, ch 6 sections 1-8); also recommended but not required: pp. 327-332, 339-341.

Recommended:
Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book 1, ch. 58: “The Multitude is wiser and more constant than a Prince” (also of interest: chs. 53-55, 57)

Week 2 (April 4): Riots, Revolutions, and the Mob
Fielding, Henry. *The Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 47 (June 13, 1752) and No. 49 (June 20, 1752).
Paine, Thomas, *Rights of Man*, 1792, selections

Week 3 (April 11): The Masses, the Majority, and Power
Quetelet, Adolphe. *Treatise on Man* (1835, English trans. 1842): Introduction; Book 1, section 1; Book 4, ch1, intro and sections 3-4. (pp. 5-9, 96, 99-103)
Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America* (1835 and 1840); Author’s introduction (pp. 11-26); Book 1, part 2, ch. 7 and 1” section of ch. 8 (287-306); Book 2, part 4, ch. 6 (803-809)

**Short paper due: Friday, March 15, 5pm**

Week 4 (April 18): Movement(s), History, and Progress | Library Session
*Note: Class will meet in Powell Library this week, in room #228 at 12pm, then #238 at 1:30.*
Stein, Lorenz von. *The History of the Social Movement in France* (1850), selections
Douglass, Frederick. “The Anti-Slavery Movement” (1855) and other selected writings
Selected pamphlets on 19th century popular movements.
Edgar Allen Poe, “The Man in the Crowd” (1840)
Charles Baudelaire. Selections from *The Painter of Modern Life* (1859) and *The Spleen of Paris* (1869)

Week 6 (May 2): Irrationality and Contagion: Crowd Psychology
Le Bon, Gustave. *The Crowd* (1895)
Tarde, Gabriel. *Penal Philosophy* (1890), ch. 6, part 2, sections 1-2 (pp. 322-331).
**Research exercise 1 due: Friday, May 6, 5pm**

Week 7 (May 9): The Public and Communication
Tarde, Gabriel. “The Crowd and the Public,” from *Opinion and the Crowd* (1901)

Week 8 (May 16): Mass Man and Mass Politics: Democracy, Totalitarianism, Violence
Ortega y Gasset, José. *The Revolt of the Masses*, selections.
**Abstract and draft outline of final paper due: Monday, May 16, 12pm (in class)**

Week 9 (May 23): Protest and Collective Action in Contemporary Politics
Charles Tilly, “Social Movements as Political Struggle”
Alain Touraine, “The Importance of Social Movements”
CORE, “The Sit-Ins: the students report.” (pamphlet)
James R. Robinson, “The Meaning of the Sit-Ins” (Statement for CORE)
Jean-Marie Apostolidès, “May ’68 and the Experience of the Crowd in France”
Timothy Garton Ash, “The Revolution of the Magic Lantern”
**Research exercise 2 due: Monday, May 23, 12pm (in class)**

Week 10: Writing week -- No class meeting May 30 (Memorial Day)
Individual writing appointments (required)

Exam week:
**Wed, June 8, 12pm: Final paper due (in my mailbox)**