

Law, Politics & Social Change in 20th Century America
Professor Thomas Hilbink
Fall 2006

Paper Assignment One

Due Monday, October 16th at 12:00 p.m. (noon) to 110 Gordon Hall

Part One

Using evidence and examples from the primary source documents assigned about the Little Rock School crisis, please write a 4-5 page paper addressing the following question:

What role did law play in the Little Rock crisis?

There is no one way, right or wrong, to answer this question. You might wish to analyze in depth one aspect of law (broadly defining the concept of law), or you may wish to emphasize how a number of different aspects of law (again, broadly defining law) were in play during the Little Rock crisis. As we discussed in class, "the law" refers to more than what is written in books or interpreted by judges: law has many different social, cultural, and political manifestations and we want papers to reflect that fact. We encourage you to approach your paper with this expansive idea of the law in mind: think creatively!

No matter what approach you take, one crucial component of your paper should be a strong thesis statement (argument), convincingly supported by evidence from the range of primary source documents you have now read on the Little Rock crisis. Remember, history is about more than mere names and dates - although these are certainly important. What we are looking for in your papers is your substantiated interpretation and critical analysis of the past.

Part Two

After completing part one, write a brief essay (1-2 pages maximum), in which you describe how the Little Rock crisis helps to illuminate themes we have studied during the first several weeks of the semester. For instance, what does the Little Rock crisis have to say about race, gender, or class in the 1950s? How does studying the crisis help you to understand cultural attitudes toward youth culture, delinquency, or education in a new way? How do the events fit within your understandings of law and its role in other areas of American society? As in part one, there is no one way to approach this essay: our ultimate goal is to get you thinking about how one moment or event can illuminate larger historical themes.

Guidelines

- Part one of the paper should be four to five typed pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point font, one inch margins). Part two should be one to two typed

pages (same guidelines). Page totals do *not* include your works cited page or citation footnotes.

- All materials used to support your arguments must be cited. Citations must conform to those set out in one of the major citation formats (i.e. Chicago, Turabian, APA, MLA). I don't care which one so long as you are consistent.
- Only materials assigned as part of the course may be used in writing your papers. You are not allowed, expected, or rewarded for using outside information or materials. Your world, for this paper, is the world of our course and the materials used therein.
- Extensions will be granted only in cases of *documented* hospitalization or family illness. Papers turned in after the deadline will be graded down two points for every 24-hour period after the deadline. Papers turned in at 12:01 on the 16th will lose two points, after 12 noon on the 17th they will lose another two points, etc.

What we're looking for

A good paper will make a clearly stated argument and will be well organized. It will use the readings to support the thesis. An excellent paper is one that demonstrates a close and complex reading of the course materials and lectures and relates them to the issues and concerns discussed in the class thus far. There is not one "correct" interpretation of the documents (just as there is no one "correct" interpretation of any historical event). Thus your ability to make your point and support it with scholarly evidence should be the focus of your efforts.

Evaluation

	Strong	Fair	Weak
Do you state your thesis clearly?	5	3	1
Do you support your position with evidence from the readings?	5	3	1
Do you give specific examples to illustrate your points?	4	2	0
Do you understand the complexity of the question and the issues involved?	2	1	0
Do you engage in analysis of the materials, not simply exposition of those materials?	5	3	1
Do you show original thinking and analysis about the idea of law?	2	1	0
Is your essay well-written and easy to follow?	3	2	1
Are grammar and punctuation correct?	3	2	1
Are footnotes/endnotes cited correctly?	1	.5	0
		/30	