

HST 203: History of the United States Sp17 (Escobar Meta 41054 41053)

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Censorship & Morality

by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 14, 2017, 6:38 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Censorship & Morality topic.

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Concerning the Mann Act questions.

by Amber Leonard - Monday, April 17, 2017, 1:34 PM

The Mann Act was necessary in that time era to protect women from being forced into prostitution. The Mann Act was "Originally intended to combat forced prostitution and debauchery." (0:12 into the NPR audio report). The amended version of the Mann Act is necessary today, "The 1986 amendment protects minors and replaces the terms debauchery and any other immoral purpose with any sexual activity for which any person can be charged with a criminal offense". (1:56 into the NPR audio report). The amendment somewhat protects minors today from going into prostitution. When government attempts to regulate the behavior of its citizens the citizens usually will find a way to do the prohibited act anyway. The

prohibition is a great example of this. "A speakeasy is an illicit establishment that sells alcoholic beverages. Such establishments came into prominence in the United States during the prohibition era". (Wikipedia speakeasy, 1st paragraph). People still found ways to acquire and consume alcohol even though it was against the federal law. The unintended consequence the Mann Act had was that it targeted colored people and immigrants. Jack Johnson for example. "On October 18, 1912, Johnson was arrested on the grounds that his relationship with Lucille Cameron violated the Mann Act against "transporting women across state lines for immoral purposes" due to her being an alleged prostitute and due to Johnson being black". (Wikipedia, John Johnson link under prison sentence). Johnson was only arrested because people in that era did not accept a black man being with a white woman or the other way around. So in people's minds she must have been forced by someone to be with Johnson. In the same article right under my last quote it says "Her mother also swore formally that her daughter was insane". Her mother didn't accept her being with Johnson either and did not want people to blame her for her daughter's behavior. Further proving that people did not accept interracial relationships in that time era.

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Re: Sapho and Censorship in the U.S. in the 1900's

by Katlyn Smelcer - Monday, April 17, 2017, 3:30 PM

The state of censorship in the 1900's was very strict and in my opinion unfair. The fact of any woman being a sexual being was considered scandalous (1:30 into Sapho and Olga Netersole video). It seems that the world was much more conservative and not nearly as open minded as our world today. The part I found most compelling in the Sapho clip was that she was arrested and faced jail time for acting in a play. I recently read an article that was similar to the Sapho case in many ways. The article explained how United Airlines had barred two teenage girls from boarding their flight because they were wearing leggings (yoga pants). In this case two women were punished for barely showing their sexuality kind of like Olga Netersole being punished for showing her sexuality in a play.

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Re: Sapho and Censorship in the U.S. in the 1900's

by Alicia Lundeen - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 12:46 PM

I completely agree with you Kaitlyn, the state of censorship in the 1900's was very strict and unfair. At that time, it was expected that women shouldn't show signs of sexual enjoyment especially to public audiences, even if they are playing a character. The arrest, fine, and later on freedom given to Olga Nethersole shows just how strict the social aspects were. Progressivism needed an activist government to correct the political, economic, and social change (lecture notes 4/13). To improve the faults of others, Progressives succeeded at regulating the behavior of society. Fortunately, Olga's personal and professional life was embraced and her show continued with major success. *After the arrest and findings, Sapho expanded and many women found the play to be important and instructive* (2:43 & 3:06 Sapho audio report).

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Re: Sapho and Censorship in the U.S. in the 1900's

by Tyler Ingram - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 11:02 PM

Firstly, I just wanted you to know that you slightly misquoted the Sapho mp4.

The first quote is: "Other witnesses called the play instructive." (Sapho video 2:39) I believe it's important to recognize that other witnesses, both male and female found the play instructive.

I also believe the most overlooked note is that the overall social aspects weren't as bad as they've been made out to be in this forum, in my opinion. The general population we heard in the film, disclusing the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, didn't seem to have much of a problem with the play, such as the police inspector who testified "He had seen the play 6 times, and had not found Sapho offensive at all." (Sapho video 2:28)

What is interesting to me is that we appear to be able to see, in this incredibly small moment of time lasting only two weeks, the spectrum of people's changing opinions of female sexuality: most people were beginning to accept it. This is also supported by the shift in mood towards the end of the film, "New Yorkers were now seeing things in public places they'd never seen before." (Sapho video 3:16)

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Re: Sapho and Censorship in the U.S. in the 1900's

by Amber Leonard - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 3:28 PM

I agree that it was very strict back in the 1900s i think that is because people thought differently. A lot of people were heavy church goers. They followed the bible and if you didnt im sure you were looked down upon. It is kind of interesting to see how far women have come in terms of what is seen as okay for us to do and wear out in public. In our day its completely okay for us to wear shorts and a tanktop back in the 1900 if a girl did that they might have been looked down upon.

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Re: Similarities PMRC and Sapho

by Katlyn Smelcer - Monday, April 17, 2017, 4:16 PM

One major similarity in the Sapho video and the PMRC censorship example is the back lash they got ended up helping them with their success in the end. In the Sapho case she was arrested and faced a fine plus jail time. She ended up being not guilty and her "audience was expanded far what it would have been without the arrest" (3:06 into the Sapho clip). Then, in the PMRC example the censors succeeded in adding restriction labels to rock music (6:25 of Heavy Metal vs PMRC clip). But in the end the sticker they had to put on all their albums only made kids want to buy them even more. These are both examples of conservatism because in both cases it seems like they are trying to "get things back to the way they were" (lecture notes 4/4) where women stayed at home and covered their ankles, and music wasn't allowed to be explicit in any way.

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1



Re: Similarities PMRC and Sapho

by Alicia Lundeen - Friday, April 21, 2017, 2:42 PM

In these past situations, it's always entertaining when the more understanding and accepting party gets the last laugh. I do agree mostly that both examples have a certain high degree of conservatism behind it and that "retaining some sense of more sanity" (:25 audio on PMRC) is important to said members. "Grassroots, fundamentalist, and many religious groups were gathering to declare that all rock music was the devil's music" (3:38 audio on PMRC). The only reason I'm not 100% on board that this effort is only based on conservatism is because the leader/speaker for the PRMC is Tipper Gore, wife of Democratic Vice President and Presidential Nominee Al Gore. "Throughout history, heavy metal music has battled conservatism forces and has always pushed back" (:50 audio on PRMC). I am glad they have and won in the long run, with or without help from the Democratic side.

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2



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Re: Similarities PMRC and Sapho

by Marisa Wyman - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:07 PM

I believe that the OUTCOME of both cases were indeed similar. The result being that the debate of censorship alone made the show/music more interesting and appealing to their audiences, but it does seem that between the 80 years there was at least a little bit of loosening up. Twisted Sisters was not put into jail for cussing or putting out sexually implied lyrics/images. Something Sapho definitely would have been jailed for. I see this as a form of pessimistic conservatism because it's a restriction of how one can freely express themselves. But I can see that from the opposite point of view it would appear as optimistic, a way to maybe protect young children from being exposed to things like that too early. Nonetheless, humans prove that whether it be early 1900's or late 1900's the more you try to restrict something, the more people want it.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Public Humiliation and Morality: Now and Then

by Tyler Ingram - Monday, April 17, 2017, 6:17 PM

While public humiliation due to "sex scandals" of recent years may be reminiscent of cases from the 1920's, they are far from the same and are popularized for very different reasons.

For example, the Jack Johnson case we learned about was, arguably, entirely racially motivated. "Many believed that Johnson's case was racially motivated. He was black while his mistress was white" (1:20 into NPR audio report).

Meanwhile, a modern version brought to us as Governor Spitzer is far from racially motivated. As seen by the magazine cover on the second page of the censorship & morality google slider, the woman Spitzer is seeing, as well as the governor, are white.

It can be argued that the modern case is popularized much more by morality, as the woman is depicted in rather "indecent" clothing, which may be to conjure the shock of Americans who see prostitution as morally incorrect. This implies a radically different idea of morality today than our previous "racially motivated", discriminatory case.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Public Humiliation and Morality: Now and Then

by Katlyn Smelcer - Friday, April 21, 2017, 11:24 PM

I completely agree with this post. Jack Johnson's case was totally racially motivated while Governor Spitzer's is entirely morally motivated. The Wikipedia article says this regarding the reason for Johnson's arrest, "due to her being an alleged prostitute and due to Johnson being black" (Wikipedia entry on Jack Johnson). Not to mention that "Johnson was convicted by an all-white jury" (Wikipedia entry on Jack Johnson). While in Spitzer's case they were both white and it was clear that the woman could be a prostitute by her appearance on the magazine cover and the caption "Spitzer Linked to 2nd Call Girl Ring" (New York Post cover). Prostitution seems to play a much larger part in the Spitzer case which is a huge moral issue in the U.S. today, while Johnson's case mentions prostitutes but was mostly fueled on racism. This shows that morality today may play a more apparent and outright role whereas at the turn of the 20th century other issues may have played a more outright role such as racism.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Sapho: Then vs. Now

by Marisa Wyman - Monday, April 17, 2017, 8:07 PM

Anything released in the 1900's was heavily regulated; music, books, poetry, plays, etc. The "guardians of public morality" (0:20 into Sapho episode) kept a close eye and made sure any material that was deemed too sexual was removed including Nethersole's play "Sapho". I find her case interesting for many reasons. First, is that in the play nothing is actually SHOWN it is simply implied, but that alone was enough to enrage viewers. Second, if Sapho were to be shown in this time period it would be considered acceptable for children to watch. Our idea of explicit is vastly different being much more lenient. Lastly, I was surprised to learn that Nethersole was to be jailed for an act that occurred in a play she had only written, not for actually sleeping with a man in real life. To me, that would be as if J.K. Rowling was arrested for killing off Dumbledore in her Harry Potter books. These days you can pretty much write/show anything with little or no censorship. It's also strange to think that women like Jane Addams, who fought so hard for the Progressives to give women rights, was also under the impression that women shouldn't be sexual. "She was troubled by the emerging sexual revolution, which she worried would lead many more poor women into prostitution" (textbook pg. 690). So, although with good intention, she herself was holding back women's fight for equality by opposing the idea that woman can express their sexuality.

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Re: Censorship & Morality

by Nicholas Bates - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 9:12 AM

I think the reason that Jane Addams along with many other progressive women at the time were against things like the play was because at the time religion played a huge role in how people looked at things. While they wanted to have rights as they should women like Jane Addams were often ensuring that modesty wasn't lost. If you look at the way the U.S. works today in advertising alone everything is sexually driven and that is what they were attempting to avoid. Not to say I agree with the way they went about it but that is how they looked at the situation, in my opinion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Sapho Nethersole

by Dana Lowder - Monday, April 17, 2017, 10:03 PM

It is interesting to see what was considered inappropriate in the 1900's and how it relates to our society today. The most compelling thing that I learned after watching this video was Sapho Nethersole was punished for playing a woman who portrayed sex as something women can enjoy. She was punished in real life and was thrown in jail for acting scandalous and sexual. By showing her body, acting in ways that no one in that time had seen was considered wrong. It seems that during the 1900's the world was sensitive, judgmental, and stuck in their ways just like today. The way women are being judge sexually, the way we look, and what people have expected of women since the beginning of time is cook, clean, and have children. Obviously times have changed dramatically but not without constant struggle. Sapho and the play that many people enjoyed in the 1900's was part of the movement that has progressed over time helping women become empowered.

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1



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Considering Sapho

by Nicholas Bates - Monday, April 17, 2017, 10:37 PM

I understand that the reason that they tried to keep things as censored as they were back than was to make sure that the entire nation wasn't run on sensuality, like it has become. However, the way in which they went about it was entirely wrong. I find that the most compelling part of it that Olga Nethersole was arrested simply for the play. If something was considered to be not what they wanted for the nation they should have simply shut it down and left it at that.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0



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Mann Act of Today & 80 Years of Public Morality

by Alicia Lundeen - Monday, April 17, 2017, 10:42 PM

(P1)

The Mann Act of 1910 is more necessary in today's America than it ever was 1910. This law was passed during a time of great change and "moral panic". The Mann Act made it a crime to transport women across state lines for prostitution, debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose. During this time, *new technologies, such as the typewriter, allowed many women to support themselves financially for the first time, and many flocked to the cities* (0:31 into NPR audio report). The idea of dating/relationships became easier, women had another way of meeting potential partners. These women were of age and consent do go about their business however they seemed fit. Even with women going to work for themselves, many in the community believed that these women were being kidnapped and used by the brothel owners. While these stories were found untrue during that time, The Mann Act should be used in America today for the exact reason of prostitution and transportation. Many underage adolescents are taken away from their family and friends during a difficult time and find solace. Unfortunately, solace is with deplorable individuals who cause harm and havoc to many of their victims.

(P2)

Many censorship examples can be found between both Sapho and PMRC, starting with the entertainment factor, plays and music brought certain communities together. One parallel in both groups, the individuals that were against shows and music had put together their own guidelines against said entertainment. *Guardians of public morality were working overtime to stop shows* (1:42 Sapho audio report). Both Sapho and PMRC censorship against rock music gained much fanfare on both sides, *the industry of entertainment was available to many* (1:45 Sapho audio report). One difference between Sapho and PMRC is the "winning" side. PMRC won their court battle for exclusive censorship being displayed on every record sold, Sapho actress Olga Nethersole won her battle but her livelihood changed after they came after her on a personal level rather than her professional acting. Both Olga Nethersole and heavy metal music thrived under these new rules and regulations, *After the arrest and findings, Sapho expanded and many women found the play to be important and instructive* (2:43 & 3:06 Sapho audio report). *"Put it on, it's wonderful....people will buy it"* *"The little sticker would almost guarantee some disgruntled kid will buy it"* (7:05 PMRC audio report).

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3



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Conservatism from a Left-Wing (ish) View

by Marisa Wyman - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 4:52 PM

From my experience in political conversations with family/friends that hold more conservative views, I would have to agree they do seem to be less willing to adjust or change with society or stray from their strong beliefs. It seems they find a comfort in things staying the same, like mentioned in the article, "The avoidance of uncertainty, for example, as well as the striving for certainty" (6th paragraph UC Berkley Study). They don't know what they don't know and it probably worries them, change can be hard. For example, in Sapho, she was seen going upstairs with a man, sightseers unknowing of what happens next but clearly implied that there were sexual intentions. (0:21 into Sapho video) The idea of women being sexual was a new concept and worried men and probably some conservative women as well. I accept all views, left or right, and I personally think a lot of it is how we are raised. Parents, environment, and peers are the main factors of how we make decisions. If one is taught from the beginning that something is morally wrong, then it is hard to differ from that. So in my opinion, a lot of conservative views are simply being passed down. With my stand-point being more left winged, it is rather hard to be objective on the matter of how accurate the article is. So I might

say that it would be better for someone who IS conservative to give their stance as to the accuracy of the findings. But I don't think that means that an outside perspective should have no say in the matter. It can often help get a better understanding from the outside looking in.

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Similarities in the PMRC censorship and Sapho

by Amber Leonard - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 5:00 PM

In both the PMRC censorship example and Sapho higher officials wanted them to stop showing the public that what they were doing was okay. In the PMRC censorship people wanted to stop artists from making heavy metal music because they found it offensive and it didn't fit with what they thought was appropriate. "When religious groups were getting together all rock music was seen as devil music."(PMRC video 3:47) in Sapho the play only implied what she was going to do sat the end of the play. Because people did not like that the character could go unpunished for her actions in the play people wanted to punish the actor. "Because the character wasn't punished in the play Olga had to be punished in real life. Olga was arrested and charged with violating public decency."(Olga video 1:11).

Both of these are examples of conservatism because in both cases people were trying to stop the new. In Sapho's case Olga made a play where the woman didn't get punished for being scandalous and that hadn't been done before. In the PMRC censorship the heavy metal bands were singing about darker things for the first time and some people didn't like it. They didn't think it was okay, and didn't want it to influence people to do the things that the songs suggested. Kind of like in the Sapho case people didn't want ladies to think it was okay to act like the actress in the play.

It's a case of pessimistic reformers. They lost big time in both cases. Not only did they lose they also made both things they tried to ban more popular. When Olga got out of jail her play was more popular than ever. "the show reopened and the sensors who had gotten it closed succeeded only in expanding the audience far beyond what it would have been before the arrest"(Sapho video 3:01). 80 years later congress passed a thing where artists had to put a sticker on their album if it contained explicit content." That little parental discretion sticker almost guaranteed that your record was going to be purchased by disgruntled kids. In some sick way the PMRC was the best thing that happened to metal because it literally drew much more attention and made it even hipper and cooler.

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Women's sexuality as seen by the public

by Matthew Molinari - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:18 PM

What the Sapho Broadway show debuted, the American public reacted with an extreme conservatism that would shock people today. Even calling for the jailing of the playwright, Olga Nethersole. The harsh reaction was solely the result of a woman expressing her sexuality, as stated in the video, "She went willingly to have an illicit sexual relationship with a man, and she wasn't punished for it."(Sapho video, 0:56) This attitude toward women's sexuality hasn't much in the greater public view, as seen in Bill Clinton's sex scandal involving Monica Lewinsky. In this example, we see Monica Lewinsky regarded as nothing more than the woman involved in an affair with Bill Clinton, whereas Bill Clinton is still viewed by many as a

prominent democratic figure head. This shows an obvious bias against women and how their sexuality is seen by the public. Even Monica Lewinsky's name is slang for oral sex, as shown on UrbanDictionary.com. solely

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