

HST 203: U.S. History Sp18 (Escobar Meta 41002 43590)

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Forum 1 Censorship & Morality

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Censorship & Morality

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 9:05 AM

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

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Censorship & Morality

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Re: Censorship & Morality

▼ ▼ by [Kyle Schmidt](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 10:50 AM

The Mann Act

The Mann act or the white slave traffic act states that it is prohibited one to transport a woman over state lines and was officially designed to combat forced prostitution. The law was created due to progressives push to “clean up” American morality. Personally I do not believe that any political party whatever their motives should have that much influence on society. The fact alone that men and women were not allowed to travel together surprises me greatly. I can’t imagine how hard it must have been for a family to move to another state considering the children's mother couldn't wasn't even permitted to travel with them.

While I do not agree with the premise of this act I understand it’s purpose. The act was passed with only the best intentions of progressives, attempting to put an end to a serious problem in America that has persisted even to this day. Progressives were simply attempting to stop what they believed was a crime syndicate committing atrocities. However noble their motives were I still do not agree with the ways the law was implemented.

I believe it limited americans freedoms and I agree with the video that the law was passed mainly due to fear as opposed to actual evidence of forced prostitution. “At the turn of the century new technology such as the typewriter allowed women to support themselves for the first time and many flocked to the cities. Suddenly there were concerns about the country's moral underpinning. By 1907 there were rumors taken as truths that women were being shuttled around the country by vast networks run by immigrants.” (0:30 NPR Audio Report) I am not saying that this is not an important issue however I think at the time the passing of the law was more motivated by the fear of womens growing independence as well as the fear of immigrants than by actual crimes. In addition to this it’s likely many of these stories were fabricated by muckrakers, a term coined by theodore roosevelt criticising magazine and newspaper reporters who created scandalous situations for only the purposes of capital gain. (Textbook pg.773). In addition to this the act was used to discourage “debauchery” which could be defined however the government decided. In 1912 heavyweight champion Jack Johnson was arrested on the grounds that his relationship violated the Mann act. I should mention that Johnson was the first african american boxing champion and that his relationship was with a woman named Lucille Cameron who was white. While interracial marriage had only recently been legalized it was still very controversial to some. It is speculated that the Mann act was abused in this case to wrongfully arrest Johnson for this reason and create a scandal. Johnson was convicted again less than a month later of the same crime with a different alleged prostitute and in 1903 was convicted by an all white jury. (Wikipedia entry on Jack Johnson) In addition to this in 1914 Charlie Chaplin was also prosecuted for the same crime

addition to this in 1944 Charlie Chaplin was also prosecuted for the same crime however he was acquitted. He may have been one of many victims of muckrakers using his fame to elicit a reaction from the public in this case. These are just two examples of the many ways this act had been misused in the time period. Regardless of its success I still believe the act was unconstitutional and was not necessary for the progressive party to infringe on the rights of american citizens. While this act was designed to protect women it only achieved singling them out. Because of the nature of the act it was easily abused by yellow journalists that were trying to create scandals where there were none and even to disrepute people who were disliked by certain groups. It would terrify me if a similar act were passed to this in today's age however I do believe there are measures we can take to prevent sex trafficking in America but, I do not think the Mann act achieved this.

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Re: Censorship & Morality (Consider Sapho)

by [Scott Carpenter](#) - Friday, April 13, 2018, 9:23 PM

What's compelling to me is that with any hint of women experiencing pleasure was considered scandalous, that just weird to hear . Olga Nethersole and her version of Sapho became targets of (censorship & morality) from Guardians of public morality film at 1.40 into it. Because of a common appeal of the actress's ultra-realism and the world view and approach to journalism at that time. (yellow press)

Today we have nude beaches, porn shops, nude magazines ,obscenity on tv, and movies. Seems to be a lot more acceptable in current times. Also today's journalism is it true facts or hyped up to appeal to the reader. Censorship issues keep some news from reaching you. With the explosion of citizen journalism and internet platforms, the truth will now have an easier way of getting out.

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Re: Censorship & Morality (Consider Sapho)

by [Sierra Carrier](#) - Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 7:25 PM

Scott,

I agree that when you hear of a women doing something "scandalous" you think less of them or that they shouldn't be doing something like that. I even feel like in

today's society we look down on women when they do something like this and don't censor themselves. Even though at the same time men do the same thing. But tabloids tend to get a big reaction from people when they hype up the wrong things.

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Censorship in the 1900's

by [Cam Burnett](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 6:16 PM

During the 1990s the censorship in America was much more severe than we see today. Things we see as normal such as a girl going with a man up to a bedroom with no punishment causing a huge court case as said at 1:09 in the Sapho court case video. The fact that it started a court case is most compelling to me because we wouldn't see something like the play Sapho to be so controversial it's something we've come to be normal in today's society. I see some connections to today's society with morals trying to drive censorship and what and what shouldn't be allowed to the public or seen as okay for the public.

Tags: [censorship](#)

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Re: Censorship in the 1900's

by [Sierra Carrier](#) - Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 7:08 PM

Cam,

Isn't it weird how we don't have those morals like they did back then? I feel like they are more needed in today's society. If we were to bring something like Sapho's case to court now, people would just laugh in their face. You have to have such a serious problem happening for it to even be looked at. Which in a way is sad because it lets a lot of things just slide by when it shouldn't.

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Was the Mann Act Necessary? Is it today?

by [Sierra Carrier](#) - Monday, April 16, 2018, 11:21 PM

The legislation was intended to stop the interstate trafficking of women.

Though federal criminal statutes were rare in 1910, and seen as an attack on state police powers, the legislation encountered little opposition. The act made it a felony to transport knowingly any woman or girl in interstate commerce or foreign commerce for prostitution, debauchery, or any other immoral purpose. It also made it a felony to coerce a woman or a girl into such immoral acts. President William h. Taft signed the bill in June 1910.

Johnson, the first African-American heavyweight boxing champion, was among the first to be charged under the act. In 1913, he was accused of ostensibly transporting a prostitute from Pittsburgh to Chicago. Johnson was convicted and given the maximum sentence: one year and one day. Critics, however, believe that Johnson's case was racially motivated — the "prostitute" was his white girlfriend.

The Mann Act, perhaps more than most laws, was clearly a product of its time. At the turn of the last century, the Industrial Revolution had taken hold and the old order of rural, largely male-dominated America began to fade. New technologies, such as the typewriter, allowed many women to support themselves financially for the first time, and many flocked to the cities. The modern notion of dating was born.

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Sapho censorship and morality.

by [Chris Castro](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 2:12 PM

In the 1900's it seems that they had a much more intense view on censorship and morality. The reason I say this is because by today's standards Sapho wouldn't really be considered a play in need of censorship. Even the morality issue of the play would mostly be fine by today's standards. At the 32 second mark in the video it states that the play is about "a seductive women with any number of lovers". After hearing that I thought about today's modern TV show the bachelorette and i realized that it's essentially the same exact thing. However in today's standards its not very shocking. They then go on in the video to talk about the main issue with Sapho being the fact that she willingly went upstairs with a man to have an explicit sexual relation. Again by today's standards not very shocking. I've seen tons of movies with sexual implications with them. Some movies even have entire scenes where they display the sexual relations. Even some family movies that are rated PG have scenes where they make

relations. Even some family movies that are rated PG have scenes where they make adult jokes that go over the kids heads, in which the characters (usually parents) are making sexual innuendos. Both in the 1900's and today we have issues with censorship and morality, however i would argue that we as a society have gotten a lot more relaxed about the issue's and only really make a big deal out of it when its something that truly is explicit or "too much".

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censorship and morality not much different today?

by [Chris Castro](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 2:28 PM

Finally, consider the public humiliation of any politician or celebrity in recent years, caught in a sex scandal which caused his or her approval ratings to plummet. Do these events signal that the morality of the United States today is not very different than it was at the turn of the 20th Century?

I think with this question the key is that were talking about Politicians and celebrities. In the politicians case these are people with a lot of power and responsibility behind them. We as people elect them (usually) because we believe they have a good moral compass and we trust them not to do anything that we would deem inappropriate. In the case of celebrities they are people who some kids look up to . They are everywhere and as such most of them choose to be proper role models. They tend to be very careful about what they say and who they endorse and what they let out into the public sphere. When politicians and or celebrities break the trust we have in them they get punished. Their ratings drop, people start to think poorly of them, and their careers suffer as a result. Now if we compared what happens now to the early 20th century, I would still say our censorship and morality issues are vastly different. Again if we're talking about just politicians and celebrities of course we judge them harsh. Any breach on morality by them is seen by everyone and we begin to lose our trust in them. It's because they are important people in power. The public eye is always on them and they somewhat are examples to the rest of us. The United States as a whole however is much less morally obliged than back in the early 20th century. As I stated in a previous post movies are a great example of this. Also television shows and our music now a days are much less censored. I hear rap songs in which they talk about extremely explicit things that would be unacceptable in the early 1900's. We even have the show "the bachelor" in which one man basically dates a plethora of women at the same time. We have the show "naked and afraid" in which a man and a woman (both naked) try to survive in the wild together. We even have books and reading material that are sexually explicit (Fifty Shades of Grey). In all I hardly believe that politicians and celebrities being caught in sex scandals and such shows that we are the same as the early 19th century, and it seems very obvious to me how different we are on the issues of censorship and

morality.

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Re: censorship and morality not much different today?

by [Kyle Schmidt](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 9:08 PM

Hi Chris, I really like your idea about how we view celebrities as role models and how they have to live up to our romanticised ideas about them. I agree that modern entertainment has become much less censored than in the 1900's but, I think if anything we put celebrities on an even higher pedestal now compared to the past.

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Sapho

by [Kyle Schmidt](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 3:50 PM

To me the most interesting part about the entire Sapho scandal was that the play was never actually successfully censored. Yes the actress was fined and arrested for public indecency by the New York society for Suppression of Vice which created a massive scandal surrounding the whole endeavor. However the amazing part is that instead of slandering her Olga Nethersall's and her play's popularity skyrocketed in New York. She was quickly found not guilty, the show reopened and her audiences only grew. (Sapho documentary 3:00) Why I thought this was particularly interesting is public approval for the show was immense and the people seemed to have no problems with the so called "indecency" that occurred during the play. Even though Olga did not write the play simply for performing it the government felt it necessary to intervene. This is yet another example of progressivism taking over and allowing small groups of individuals to decide what they think is best for an entire public. I am glad that in this case Olga won her trial however, the whole situation seems to be somewhat against democracy. Originally the people had no say whatsoever when the play was shut down and the star was arrested and fined. The fact that this happened with no warning or violation of a specific law amazes me. I am also very glad that this could never happen in today's age we are definitely very comfortable with sexuality in our entertainment and women are no longer discriminated in that way. However censorship is still very prevalent in our society. In America we generally overlook graphic violence but any mention of sexuality is considered adult and is still heavily censored. The difference now is that we only censor it for children even radio is heavily censored with many lyrics simply taken out of songs. It's interesting that in countries like France where Sapho was originally written (Sapho documentary 0:30) they have no problems with sexuality in their entertainment but violence is more heavily censored. I am not saying we should

get rid of censorship entirely but at least it should be equal so that kids are not growing up with skewed perceptions of the world based on what someone thinks is best for them. Especially when this differs for other countries, I think it is another factor that divides the U.S. and has a serious impact on the development of young children.

An actress or actor like Olga would never have been arrested for lude behavior in a movie or play today. I think most people would be appalled by the situation regardless of who wrote or directed the piece. With this in mind people still love a good sex scandal in the media, and it can still have a huge impact on a celebrities image. Yes, our morality about these things has changed much in the past one hundred years and has become a lot more accepting. Even now though celebrities are still subject of ridicule and entertainment especially now that the media has become such a large part of our society. In short we have come a long way since the 1900's but I believe the public will always be interested in a good scandal. I think people will always be invested in the lives of celebrities and love to find out how human they can be, so journalists will continue to publish these kinds of stories even at the expense of some of the celebrities' reputations.

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Censorship compared

by [Easton McVeigh-Walker](#) - Friday, April 20, 2018, 8:57 PM

The state of censorship in the early 1900's was pretty strict. I think this was mainly the issue regarding anything sexual, considering the difference in how sex was viewed in culture back then compared to now. It was more "taboo" for something to be sexual. However by today's standards these images do not seem very obscene. Times change and what made people uncomfortable then may not today. I can see the purpose behind the Mann Act, as long as it is being used in the way to stop human sex trafficking. However, in the case of Jack Johnson I believe him being charged as a felon was fueled by hate and someone's idea to use that to ruin his career. Passing legislation such as this allows for it to be abused in this manor too easily.

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Morality in the U.S.

by [Jacob Spriggs](#) - Friday, April 20, 2018, 11:54 PM

I believe the morality of the United States is much different than it was a century ago, because at that time it was mostly based on protestant beliefs. Today it seems that the

morality of the United States is based more around people's individual opinions of right and wrong. Today, our country's population is so diverse that it's very difficult to pinpoint the morality standards of the entire population, and that is why this country's morality is so different than it was one hundred years ago.

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