

**HIUS 187: "Fortress California" Revisited, 1940 to the Present,
through the Lens of Social, Urban and Oral History
Abraham Shragge, Lecturer**

Winter Quarter, 2009

Instructor; Abraham J. Shragge, ashragge@ucsd.edu

Phone: (858) 534-8176

Office: 317 Social Sciences Research Building

Office Hours: Mon. and Thur. 4-5:15, and by appointment

Fridays, 4:00 – 6:50,

Classroom: HSS 6008

Course Description:

In a series of articles and books dating from the 1970s to the present, urban historian Roger Lotchin proposed a model of development especially pertinent to San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. It states that coalitions within these cities forged a special relationship with the federal government, in particular the military, to obtain the resources they needed to build population, industry, commerce and infrastructure. Oral history, both extant and created by students during the course will explore the human element behind the story of California's 20th-century urban takeoff and subsequent suburban explosion. The combination of "standard" academic history and oral history will provide keys to understanding certain important facets of the unique social history of modern California including questions of race, class, gender, identity and justice.

The course comprises three principal elements to be discussed in depth during weekly classroom sessions: a review of Lotchin's oeuvre and related elements of 20th-century California urban and social history; readings on the value, techniques and pitfalls of oral history; and an oral history practicum.

Course Requirements:

Reading, Preparation and Participation: Students must come to the weekly seminar meeting having read all required readings, ready to discuss the readings in depth. Informed and active participation in the discussion is crucial for the success of this seminar. The quality of your class performances is an important element of your overall evaluation. All students will make one or more presentations on readings, intended to stimulate and support discussion; make a presentation on an original oral history interview; and make a brief presentation on the research paper. **(20% of your course grade)**

Reading Response Presentations: Students will be assigned on a rotational basis to present concise summaries of assigned readings and to lead the seminar discussions on those readings. Detailed instructions on this element of the course appear below. **(15% of your course grade)**

Oral History Interview and Presentation: Each student will conduct, record and transcribe an oral history interview with a respondent who has lived in San Diego, Los Angeles or San Francisco continuously (and as an adult) for the past twenty years or more. Detailed instructions on this assignment will be distributed in class during week 3. **(20% of your course grade)**

Research Paper: This assignment includes three elements, all of which must be completed in order to earn a passing grade for the course.

1. **Proposal:** an essay no more than two pages in length that specifies the research topic, spells out the research problem and specific questions you wish to explore, and includes a working bibliography of scholarly articles and books. **Deadline: In class, Friday, February 6.**
2. **Essay:** A coherent interpretive paper on a topic that you have developed from course readings, additional outside scholarly readings and research, and your oral history interview as an essential primary source, 16 to 20 typed double-spaced pages of interpretive text in 12-point Times New Roman font. You are required to adhere to Chicago Manual of Style or MLA guidelines for proper footnote and bibliographic citations. **Deadline: Wednesday, March 11, 3:00 PM in Faculty mailbox, HSS 5016.**
3. **Oral presentation** to the class of your project on Friday March 13, 5-7 minutes in length.
4. **The three steps of the essay project combined comprise 45% of your course grade.**

Late assignments will be accepted only in emergencies, and only by arrangement with the instructor prior to the regular due date.

Essay guidelines: Detailed guidelines and instructions will be distributed and discussed at the second session of the seminar. In the meantime, here are some thoughts to help you get started.

1. **Topic:** You should devise a topic that engages some aspect of the main theme presented in this course: social history in one or more of California's three major cities since the World War II era, with particular regard to change over time with respect to the evolving "metropolitan-military complex"—the central theoretical construct in Roger Lotchin's work. Your argument should address historical continuities, discontinuities or dramatic change. As such, it should express a clear thesis supported by evidence found in multiple primary as well as secondary sources.
2. **Start the process** by formulating a general question that secondary sources such as the course readings can begin to answer. Check carefully the footnotes and bibliographies of those readings for ideas about where to look next. The databases within the Roger catalogue will provide insight on many useful subject areas.
3. **Primary sources** include newspapers, government documents, personal and business documents such as diaries, journals, letters, oral histories, photographs, works of art and architecture, etc.—items created at and about the time of the events you wish to discuss.

Reading Response Presentation Guidelines:

1. When assigned a text to discuss, your primary objectives are to distill the author's main arguments, the historical questions she/he explores in the text, and then to outline the author's approach to argumentation, sources, and evidence.
2. Useful questions to ask:
 - a. What are the problems or questions the author confronts?
 - b. Does the author assert the existence of a dilemma or paradox about social change or an explanation of politics, society, or culture that she/he deems significant?
 - c. Do you find within the reading a question or problem that arouses your interest, curiosity, anger or passion? Is there something within the reading about which you would like to learn more?
 - d. What makes the author's topic or case study significant? In other words, does she/he ask a question worthy of scholarly pursuit? How and why (or why not)?
 - e. What evidence does the author use? Why is this kind of evidence useful or significant for the argument(s) embedded within the study?
 - f. How does the author interpret the evidence? Does the author use the evidence well to prove the book or article's argument?
 - g. Did anything within the reading remain perplexing to you? What remained unsolved or unsubstantiated?
 - h. Do you find an intellectual or scholarly benefit in reading the assigned work? Why/why not?
 - i. Don't try to summarize the entire reading; rather use these questions to stimulate your own thinking and response to the text and to guide your effort to direct a discussion among your classmates.

January 30:

1. Roger Lotchin, "The Metropolitan-Military Complex in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of the West*, 18, No. 3 (1979), 19-30.
2. Lotchin, *Fortress California: From Warfare to Welfare, 1910-1961*.

February 6: Your choice of a social history- related work based primarily on oral history.

Recommended: Studs Terkel, *Division Street: America; The Great Divide: Second Thoughts on the American Dream*; Japanese American National Museum, *The Boyle Heights Oral History Project*; Jeff Kisselhoff, *Generation on Fire : Voices of Protest from the 1960s*; etc.

Consultation on and approval of selections required in advance.

February 13:

1. A.J. Shragge, "I like the Cut of Your Jib: Cultures of Accommodation between the U.S. Navy and Citizens of San Diego, California, 1900-1951. *Journal of San Diego History*, Summer 2002, Volume 48, Number 3. <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/2002-3/navy.htm>
2. Mike Davis, et al., *Under the Perfect Sun: The San Diego Tourists Never See*.

February 20: Peter Schrag, *California: America's High Stakes Experiment*.*

February 27: San Francisco history; recommended: D.H. Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites: A social and Cultural History of Black San Diego**; or ed., James Brook et al., *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*.

March 6: Los Angeles history. Recommended: Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*; Andrew Rolle, from *Pueblo to City of the Future*, 2nd Edition; William D. Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space*; Ronald J. Schmidt, Jr., *This Is the City: Making Model Citizens in Los Angeles*.

March 13: Research presentations.

*Electronic version available from UCSD Library.

Defining Social History

Social history attempts to view historical evidence from the point of view of developing social trends. Thus academic social histories may include elements as diverse as economic and legal history as well as the analysis of other aspects of civil society in order to explore the evolution of social norms, behaviors, movements, and interactions of many different kinds between individuals and groups. Much of the best social history may be described as “history from below” or “grassroots history” because it deals with ordinary people and how they shape history rather than elites, leaders, or “great men.”

From: Gordon Marshall, ed., **A Dictionary of Sociology**, Oxford, 1998.

social history Any study of the past which emphasizes predominantly ‘social’ concerns. Since much modern social history deals with the very recent past there is considerable overlap with the substantive concerns of sociologists.

As a recognizable specialism, social history blossomed during the 1960s and 1970s, a self-conscious reaction against what was taken to be the élitism and empiricism of established practice in political and economic history. For many practitioners, the new social history was synonymous with ‘expressing the voice of the common people’, and this is reflected in the rapid expansion of interest in the values, life-styles, and everyday experiences of ordinary men and women. This new substantive terrain was explored by an expanded range of methods and techniques (including, for example, those of oral history) an explicit attention to theory. A proliferation of new journals (for example *Social History*, *History Workshop Journal*, *Journal of Social History*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*) sprang up to act as outlets for the new materials uncovered in this way.

The majority of contemporary practitioners would (understandably) expand upon the above sketch in heroic terms, and would undoubtedly be correct in pointing to the narrowness of most institutionalized history up to the 1950s, compared to which the new concern with the ‘social’ comes as a breath of intellectual fresh air. However, a significant minority of social historians themselves have voiced concerns about the extent to which their speciality has rapidly become diluted by indiscriminate importing of concepts, theories, and methods from cognate disciplines (notably sociology). For example, among other complaints it has been alleged that too much contemporary social history is itself empiricist, and consists merely of mindless accumulation of data on a particular subject of popular concern merely because these data exist, rather than the pursuit of interesting historical problems or questions; that the obsession with model-building has led to indiscriminate application of (what are recognized elsewhere to be) problematic concepts and arguments derived from functionalism, modernization theory, structuralism, and so forth; that the babies of politics and economics have been thrown out with the bath-water of élitism; and that there is a widespread tendency to make unsubstantiated (usually trite) generalizations about the ‘mentality’ or ‘collective mind’ of the masses during some (usually ill-defined) period of interest. In short, for some critics at least, contemporary social history has become a sort of retrospective cultural anthropology, with a premium placed on the use of exotic sources and grandiose (often untestable) generalizations.