



CHAPTER 11

Red Shirts and Citizens' Councils

Special Collections and Information Literacy in the College Classroom

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Introduction

Although modern observers might be tempted to believe the current political climate to be uniquely partisan, political discourse uniquely coarse, or media outlets uniquely biased, certain periods of the nation's past have seen the tone of political debates descend into extreme violence that indicated nothing short of a crisis in the rule of law and a complete breakdown of civil society. Political debate and media coverage in early twenty-first century are to be sure deeply partisan, yet not to the extent that the past does not have lessons to guide college students as they look for ways to articulate their views without resorting to violence or intimidation. The pace of information creation and the ease of access to news and opinion may have increased, but the overall climate parallels rather than exceeds that of the most volatile times in America's past. Special collections and archives in academic libraries consequently have numerous opportunities to help students understand the historical context behind current political debates and discover constructive means of influencing public discourse toward productive ends.

This chapter presents a case study of how instructors might use materials in special collections to help students learn about and discuss historical conflicts, draw connections between historical events and the present social and political

climate, and gain essential skills for information literacy. This case study draws on my own experience teaching the second semester South Carolina History course at the University of South Carolina while also serving as Head of Collections at South Caroliniana Library, the university's repository for materials related to the history and culture of South Carolina. This study focuses specifically on using digitized collection materials related to three different topics covered in the class—violence during Reconstruction, dueling during the post-Reconstruction period, and riots during the Civil Rights Movement. All three time periods witnessed the breakdown of civil society to some degree, including the murder of politicians, physical violence against voters, and serious threats to life and property by neighbor against neighbor.

Pedagogical Method

For each topic, I worked to find relevant sources from readily available digitized collections, collections held at South Caroliniana Library that had not been digitized but that I could nevertheless digitize easily, and online databases such as the Library of Congress's *Chronicling America*. I focused on digital sources for three reasons. First, this class met in the evenings, outside the operating hours of South Caroliniana Library. Visiting the library is always ideal, but in this particular case was not feasible. Second, many students in the class worked full-time, and so ease of access was a high priority. Finally, because the class covered state and local history, many non-history majors who simply wanted a more thorough understanding of their home state's past signed up for the course. I consequently wanted to ensure that these students learned about the nature of archives and historical sources without necessarily requiring in-depth archival research. Digital collections of various types therefore facilitated instruction in archival literacy in the most convenient way for these particular students.

For each of the three topics listed above, students interacted with three different types of sources and worked through three different levels of discussion. With respect to sources, and as mentioned above, students first interacted with digitized primary source material housed in South Caroliniana Library or one of the special collections libraries at the University of South Carolina. Second, they read accounts of the events found in digitized historical newspaper databases so they could see how contemporary news sources reported them. Finally, they read a relevant scholarly article that both provided context and illustrated how historians might use these sources to craft a historical argument.

As for the three different levels of discussion, students answered a set of basic questions about archival sources, newspapers, and scholarly articles before each class. These questions, which are listed below, remained the same regardless of the particular set of sources for a given week. Students consequently came to class prepared to discuss these basic questions. At the beginning of each class, they

formed small groups to discuss their assignments as well as a second set of more open-ended conceptual questions that the instructor provided. This second set of questions usually focused on details within the sources themselves and how those details relate to larger themes. An example might include asking why the South Carolina State Constitution of 1895 might require literacy for voting, or what the state might have hoped to accomplish with the creation of an agricultural and mechanical school, but not a liberal arts college, for young African Americans. After discussing this new, second set of questions in their small groups, the entire class reconvened to go over them briefly, but also to engage in a third level of discussion focused on how readings of various types might prove relevant for understanding South Carolina and America in the present.

Underlying this pedagogical method, and behind all of these readings and discussions, lies the Association of College and Research Libraries *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.¹ Through the discussion of each historical topic, students work within all six frames to varying degrees, although the frames “Scholarship as Conversation” and “Authority Is Constructed and Contextual” figure most prominently. Primary sources, scholarly articles, and classroom discussions help students recognize knowledge practices associated with each frame while also developing the dispositions that characterize those who have attained a high level of information literacy. At the end of the course, through both increasingly sophisticated in-class discussions and written assessments, students will hopefully demonstrate both a new perspective on the political and social debates that consume the media and a more sophisticated process for interpreting and understanding those debates, not to mention any historical sources they might encounter in their life outside the classroom.

Case 1: The Election of 1876

The South Carolina gubernatorial elections, held every two years after the advent of Congressional Reconstruction in 1868, were the occasion for widespread violence and fraud, with the election of 1876 proving one of the most violent in American history.² That year, white supremacists vowed to redeem their state from black and Republican rule. They chose as their candidate for governor Confederate General Wade Hampton, who before the war owned thousands of acres—and thousands of slaves—across the cotton South. As part of the campaign, Hampton and his followers donned red shirts and stumped from town to town, enacting a bit of political theater along the way. Whenever Hampton and his entourage arrived in a new town, a lady wearing a sash emblazoned with the words *South Carolina* lay down in the street. Hampton then stooped to pull her up from ignominy, sometimes with thirty-seven other women representing the thirty-seven states looking on.³

Many Red Shirts, as Hampton’s supporters came to be known, understood the word *campaign* in its older sense and took the opportunity to form military

units and seek out armed encounters with South Carolina Republicans, both black and white. The July 1876 Hamburg Massacre, for example, resulted in the deaths of six African Americans.⁴ The showdown between competing militia units in El-lenton in September left anywhere between thirty and fifty African Americans dead, including a state representative.⁵ Violence, intimidation, and fraud marked Election Day itself as well, with the outcome in doubt well into 1877. Hampton and his Red Shirts ultimately prevailed, and Republicans remained out of power in South Carolina for the next century.

South Caroliniana Library holds one document that especially illustrates the Democratic tactics and goals in 1876. The papers of Democratic leader and Confederate officer Martin Witherspoon Gary contain a political strategy document he penned called a “Plan of the Campaign” for 1876. This document contained thirty-three points for winning the election and taking back the state. Gary, for example, directed that “the Democratic Military Clubs are to be armed with rifles and pistols and such other arms as they may command.” He called his fellow Democrats to treat African Americans “as to show them you are the superior race, and that their natural position is that of subordination to the white man.” The crux of Gary’s plan was, however, the directive for each Democrat to “control” at least one African American’s vote by “intimidation, purchase,” or any other means necessary.

In preparation for class discussion, students read copies of the “Plan of the Campaign.” As with all primary source analysis assignments, they then uploaded their assignment to Blackboard before the scheduled class discussion. All primary source analyses included the following information:

1. type of document
2. title
3. date of publication
4. author (include relevant affiliations)
5. physical characteristics
6. intended audience
7. purpose
8. three relevant or important facts

When students identified each piece of information, they took a small step toward greater archival literacy. By the end of the semester, students had encountered letters, diaries, unpublished essays and manifestos, photographs, business records, meetings minutes, and any number of other document types. Through the written assignments turned in before each discussion, they had explored the backgrounds of various authors and discussed how and why these authors wrote their documents and to whom they addressed their writings. The final question encouraged students to read each document as a historian writing an account of events to which the document might relate.

During the actual class period, students discussed each point of the primary document analysis in small groups, but also explored additional questions for

which they had not prepared beforehand. With respect to the Gary plan, students discussed the following questions:

1. What did Gary hope to achieve?
2. Provide examples of Gary's beliefs about African Americans.
3. What nonviolent means does Gary hope to employ to control the votes of African Americans?
4. Can African Americans join Gary if they wish?
5. Why do you think Gary wrote the word "omit" next to certain items?
6. In some instances, Gary was quite clearly violating the law. Why did he believe this was acceptable?
7. How did Gary treat whites who did not vote for the Democrats?

These questions encouraged a deeper but still directed interaction with the content of the source as well as the historical concepts it illustrates. Concepts such as the rule of law, political party organization, and even the construct of race itself come to the fore as students engaged with the text of Gary's plan. Interactions with the second type of source—historical newspapers—are more freeform. The University of South Carolina has fortunately digitized around two hundred titles through *Chronicling America* and has its own digital collection of newspapers. Newspaper assignments generally required students to find their own articles using the database and then bring them forward for discussion. Through discussion, students learned the extent of partisanship in the Reconstruction press, including the fact that most Republican newspapers had Republican politicians as owners and editors. They also encountered thousands of quotations, such as one from the deeply Democratic *Charleston News and Courier* that "the Union of equal States was practically destroyed by a proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand troops to practically coerce the Seceded States" but that "the use of the bayonet in the formation of a State Legislature is but the last act in the drama then begun."⁶

Every primary source and newspaper discussion also included a final question from the instructor—Can modern readers draw any connections between the primary source and contemporary issues in South Carolina or American society? This question brought students to the third level of discussion, in which they used what they had learned about the election of 1876 to begin thinking about their own world and the news surrounding the election of 2016. Although widespread murder does not generally accompany elections in modern America, voter suppression and fraud have been topics in the news for some time, and especially since the 2016 presidential debates. Furthermore, questions of race and bias in voter registration figure prominently in debates over laws aimed at, depending on which side is speaking at a given moment, maintaining the integrity of the electoral process or suppressing minority voter turnout.

In conjunction with the primary source and newspaper readings, students also read the article "Counting the Votes: South Carolina's Stolen Election of 1876" by Ronald F. King and published in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

in 2001. This article introduces students to the concept of quantitative history and proves mathematically that the Democrats' 1876 victory was fraudulent. Students can then infer whether Gary's plan was merely an inconsequential manifesto or an effectual plan of action. The article shows students yet another aspect of the historians' task and gives them a view of the different ways scholars formulate arguments.⁷

Reading the article along with the primary sources therefore helps students mature with respect to the frame "Scholarship as Conversation." As with all three topics discussed, students can understand the ways that "particular articles, books, and other scholarly pieces" contribute to "disciplinary knowledge." The scholarly articles also help them "recognize they are often entering into an ongoing scholarly conversation" and teaches where to "seek out conversations taking place in a particular research area."⁸ The article most importantly provides a particularly striking example of how perspectives on controversial topics can change after patient, diligent investigation and sober reflection. The topics that come to the fore when discussing the election of 1876—voter fraud and suppression—can be divisive. Reading articles like this one reminds students that true dialogue requires wrestling with facts and logical arguments, or at least identifying concrete strategies for finding the information that can support or refute opinions, rather than firing emotional comments across a room or online discussion forum. Scholarly sources can therefore model the tone instructors want to see in their classroom discussions.

Case 2: The Cash-Shannon Duel

In the aftermath of Reconstruction, whites consolidated power through impeachments, judicial appointments, and revisions to election laws. They were not, however, monolithic in their tactics or goals. The death of William Shannon at the hands of C. E. B. Cash illustrates divisions within the white community better than perhaps any other event. The lawyer Shannon insinuated while arguing a lawsuit that Cash's wife had lied about personal financial matters. Cash repeatedly challenged Shannon to a duel as a means of defending his wife's honor, and after repeated rejections Shannon finally accepted. The legal status of dueling in South Carolina was such that the state could not prove that deaths resulting from the practice were in fact murder. Thus, after Shannon fell at Cash's hand in July 1880, Cash remained a free man.

South Carolinians quickly chose sides for and against Cash, with hardliners like Martin Witherspoon Gary declaring Cash's act a necessary defense of his wife's honor, while moderates such as the now-United States Senator Wade Hampton were aghast at the barbarity of the whole affair. Hampton for his part issued subdued criticisms and played the statesman. In a series of letters to Cash written on United States Senate stationery and housed in the Hampton Family

Papers at South Caroliniana Library, he attempted to dissuade Cash from further bloodshed against those who had criticized him since the duel.

During class, students discussed the same basic information (authorship, audience, etc.) regarding each letter as they did with all archival materials, but also in small groups answered the following questions:

1. What was Hampton's attitude toward Cash?
2. How do you think Cash would have responded to Hampton's letters?
3. Did Hampton side with Cash or Shannon? Why do you think that?
4. What can we learn about divisions among South Carolina's whites from these letters?

Again, these questions laid the groundwork for deeper discussion. In this case students discussed how we label groups and describe group activity, especially groups from the past with whom we might have no personal sympathies. Questions arose such as why white southerners, all of whom were Democrats, reacted so differently to a duel between two Confederate veterans. Were the differences between the two men's supporters primarily over strategy and tactics, or did deep philosophical differences divide their two distinctive views of southern politics and society?

The political climate during the spring semester of 2017 facilitated discussions of how historical events might inform students' understanding of the present social and political climate. In the wake of the 2016 primary and general elections, which had concluded only a couple of months before, the question naturally arose of the extent to which political labels obscure deep differences among members or supporters of a single political party. Supporters of Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton obviously all voted in Democratic primaries, although they held to different fundamental beliefs about the role of the government in the economy. Likewise Ted Cruz represented a doctrinaire conservatism at odds with Donald Trump's populism that broke from the Republican Party's traditional platform on some key areas such as free trade. Identifying Cash, Shannon, Hampton, and Gary as Democrats and leaving the discussion there obscured important historical realities just as much as identifying Hilary Clinton and Bernie Sanders as Democrats without explanation would obscure important contemporary realities.

As with the election of 1876, various newspaper databases made it possible to explore questions of news media bias and partisanship. In this case, however, differences of opinion existed between Democratic papers, with dozens of newspapers excoriating Cash and dozens more defending him. Few of the papers would have advocated voting for anyone other than a Democratic candidate. At the same time, the 2001 peer-reviewed article "Southern Independents: South Carolina, 1882" by Brooks Miles Barnes and published in the *South Carolina Historical Magazine* places the Cash-Shannon Duel and the ensuing debates within the context of an ephemeral and unsuccessful third-party challenge to the newfound and still fragile Democratic hegemony in 1882. This article in particular highlights that,

even though Republicans and third parties never constituted a real threat to Democrats after 1876, white supremacists on both sides of the Cash-Shannon debate were extremely anxious about opening the door to African American voters on the one hand and disunity among whites on the other.⁹

Using historical documents to highlight nuanced political stances in the present helps students better analyze the information they receive throughout their day. Students again interact with the frame “Scholarship as Conversation,” although with respect to the topic of the Cash-Shannon Duel, the question of constructed authority is perhaps more prominent. Historians addressing the historical situation have subject expertise, while the newspaper editors commenting on a contemporary have what the *Framework* calls “special experience.” United States Senator Wade Hampton exercises authority deriving from his social and political position. Recognizing these different authorities at play in historical sources as well as in journal articles will consequently engender “an open mind when encountering varied and conflicted perspectives.”¹⁰ As students face a flood of information from sources that newspaper editors and politicians of the 1880s could never have imagined, they must learn to sort for themselves not only which news sources might possess authority, but also what kinds of authority might lie behind their reporting.

Case 3: School Desegregation, 1970

The third case study centered on school desegregation in South Carolina. After sixteen years of delay tactics and court battles, the Fourth District Court of Appeals ruled in February 1970 that schools in Greenville and Darlington Counties had to desegregate immediately, a ruling that included students at all grade levels as well as the desegregation of teaching staffs. When buses carried African American students onto the grounds of Lamar High School in Darlington County on March 3, 1970, a white mob surrounded them, disabled their engines, threw bricks, and ultimately pushed them onto their sides just after the students exited. Highway patrolmen dispersed the mob with tear gas. The dramatic event, complete with striking photographs of state highway patrolmen in gas masks standing next to buses lying on their sides, made the front pages of national newspapers and garnered the attention of national nightly news broadcasts. Even so, most South Carolinians, and especially college students, know nothing of the event today.

The University of South Carolina’s Moving Images Research Collections fortunately has a large collection of local news footage on Lamar, including statements from Governor Robert McNair, interviews with law enforcement and school officials, and interviews with the purported leader of the white mob. Up to this point in the class, the primary sources with which students interacted had

been textual, so audiovisual materials provided new opportunities to explore the nature and challenges of archival material.

Although the media were different, students nevertheless followed procedures similar to those outlined above for analyzing primary sources as we watched the film clips together in class. Questions about the audience for and the purpose of news footage pushed students to think more deeply about local television news reporting. The question of the physical characteristics of the source also provided occasion for instruction on the fragility of audiovisual materials in archives and problems of access. The nature of the news footage itself, and the topic it covered, led to second-level discussions regarding parents' motives and explorations of why public education was the scene of so much of the desegregation struggle. Finally, these questions about Lamar culminated in third-level dialogue regarding an ongoing lawsuit in South Carolina over discrepancies in educational funding between South Carolina's counties, discrepancies that many attribute to racial bias.

I also sought quotations in microfilm and digital copies of *The State* newspaper, the paper of record in South Carolina. The editor of *The State* in 1970 was William Workman, a segregationist who opposed both violence and federal intervention in state affairs. In his editorial following the Lamar riot, Workman blamed not racism, but "integration measures ordered by federal courts" and "two decades of sociological and educational turmoil stemming from school desegregation pressures." For Workman, those who overturned the school buses did so because the federal government had provoked them to their limit. The question of race is almost absent from his account of the events.¹¹

These quotations from Workman contrasted sharply with the viewpoints expressed in the archives of national newspapers to which the University of South Carolina Libraries subscribes. Editorials in national mainstream and African American newspapers naturally blamed racism for the startling events in Lamar. African American newspapers also reported details that the mainstream press did not. For example, the *Chicago Defender* highlighted the prevalence of white women in the mob, reporting that one told police officers that "you nigger-loving highway patrolmen make me sick," while another asked a patrolman who helped children off the bus if he wanted "nigger grandchildren."¹²

Finally, the Lamar incident occurred in the midst of a contentious gubernatorial campaign, with Republican Albert Watson running the last openly segregationist, and ultimately unsuccessful, campaign in South Carolina. To contextualize the newspaper and film sources, students read the article "The Changing Politics of Race" by the historian Billy Hathorn. His article describes other, less dramatic incidents from other parts of the state that nevertheless paint an overall picture of pervasive racial tension in the midst of a long-delayed school integration that finally began in earnest a full sixteen years after *Brown*.¹³

Because the Lamar riot was relatively recent, and because few South Carolinians remember it, the frame "Information Has Value" is especially relevant.

Students accessed relevant information about Lamar only because of the unique holdings (video news archive, digitized newspaper databases, newspapers on microfilm) of the institution of higher education they attended. Few books mentioned Lamar, and common news outlets rarely reference it in the same way they might better-known events from the Civil Rights Movement. That historical memory can fade so quickly and be recovered with such effort might help them “recognize issues of access or lack of access to information sources” and develop a disposition toward “examin[ing] their own information privilege” as students at a major research university.¹⁴

Conclusion

Using sources such as these to cover important topics in South Carolina history not only introduced students to specific subject matter and spurred fruitful discussions, but also facilitated instruction in information literacy. Assignments required students to note specific aspects of texts such as tone, arguments, facts and details, context, and potential use as sources for historical inquiry. They also learned how letters and speeches distributed in print could create just as much tension in a community as viral social media posts and tweets. Although the students did not visit the archive to view the sources but instead accessed them electronically, incorporating them into class assignments nevertheless allowed for instruction regarding the nature of archives, including discussions of how materials came to the archive and how to find other sources related to the topic in question.

The fit between the South Carolina History class and the collections at South Caroliniana Library was natural and easily accomplished because of my dual role, but with some planning between instructors and librarians, the archives can prove a rich instructional resource on several levels. As these case studies have illustrated, instructors and librarians can take five steps to connect discussions of historical documents to current political debates.

1. Instructors and librarians can work together before the semester to identify topics that interest students and illustrate aspects of the current political climate, and for which the archives or manuscript repository have sufficient resources.
2. Instructors and librarians can then determine how best to provide digital copies to students for their assignments, whether creating a new digital collection or simply creating scans for students to use within the class.
3. After identifying relevant materials that may lie outside of existing online databases, librarians can work with instructors to find electronic resources such as historical newspapers that can help flesh out any on-site archival holdings discovered above.
4. Librarians can work with instructors to identify relevant secondary sources on the topic, such as journal articles or book chapters, so that

students not only learn about the events the sources address, but also learn how historians have interrogated and interpreted those sources.

5. Finally, librarians and instructors can work together to formulate questions that lead students through the three different levels of discussion and facilitate growth in information literacy.

For example, if I were working with a North Carolina History instructor in my current position at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, I would first identify events that would be of interest to students. Two events that receive wide attention in many different courses at UNCW are the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and the events surrounding the arrest, trial, and jailing of the civil rights activists who came to be known as the Wilmington Ten in 1971. The former event constitutes one of the only violent coups in American history since the Civil War, and the latter became a cause célèbre for civil liberties advocates as well as a propaganda opportunity for America's adversaries overseas. For both events, Special Collections at the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Randall Library contains firsthand accounts. Newspapers are readily available via online databases to which students have access, as are peer-reviewed journal articles. Instructors wishing to follow the model of information literacy and history instruction described above therefore have more than enough material to teach both the subject matter and the information literacy skills necessary to navigate the media environment in which students live each day.

As a final note, this type of collaboration does not have to confine itself to history classes. By their nature, regional archives tend to collect sources that appeal to religious studies, environmental policy, political science, anthropology, and even nursing classes. At the University of North Carolina Wilmington, for example, the papers of local doctor and activist Hubert Eaton cover topics as diverse as the integration of public schools, disease prevention among African Americans in eastern North Carolina, and the tennis great Althea Gibson. Current debates on issues such as racial health disparities and the role of African American athletes in furthering social causes may not easily fit within a history syllabus, but would probably appeal to public health and sociology classes. To the extent that the past can inform current debates in any area of discipline, the archives have something to offer instructors.

Whether attempting to illuminate an especially difficult historical event, spur discussion on relations between the past and present, or instill skills for analyzing information, special collections librarians and archivists have much to contribute to their host institutions' educational mission in a contentious and partisan age. As a humanistic discipline, history at its best informs students about themselves and their place in the world. The past may be a foreign country, as L. P. Hartley famously stated, but its ways and mores are not so incomprehensible to modern students that they cannot gain valuable perspectives and insights regarding their own lives in a post-2016 America.

NOTES

1. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.
2. Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).
3. Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 173.
4. Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 164–65.
5. Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 176–78.
6. *Charleston News and Courier*, December 6, 1876, as quoted in Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 188.
7. Robert F. King, “Counting the Votes: South Carolina’s Stolen Election of 1876,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 2 (Autumn 2001): 169–91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3656976>.
8. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*, 8.
9. Brooks Miles Barnes, “Southern Independents: South Carolina, 1882,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 96 (July 1995): 230–51.
10. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*, 4.
11. William Workman, Jr., “Anti-integration Violence Defeats Its Own Purpose,” *The State*, March 4, 1970, 12-A.
12. “Women Face Arrest,” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 1970, 4; “S.C. Mob Attacks Kids,” *Chicago Defender*, March 4, 1970, 4.
13. Billy Hathorn, “The Changing Politics of Race: Congressman Albert William Watson and the S.C. Republican Party, 1865–1870,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 89 (October 1988): 227–41.
14. Association of College and Research Libraries, *Framework*, 6.

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