

Crowd Control

A SHOT 2020 Open Session Proposal

Organizer: Scott Kushner
Assistant Professor of Communication Studies
University of Rhode Island
scottkushner@uri.edu

Queues, gates, doorways, turnstiles, stanchions, guards, cages, pens, cells, anterooms, hallways, cameras, bottlenecks, streets, signage, velvet ropes, bouncers, bleachers, fences, barriers, ushers: the methods of crowd control are technological interventions. The ways that crowds have been constituted, apprehended, understood are historically, geographically, and culturally contingent. The discourses that differentiate crowds from (and conflate them with) adjacent categories of analysis, such as audiences, mobs, masses, multitudes, are similarly variable across different contexts. The purposes to which crowd control has been put have also changed over time and space, organizing the flows and stases of bodies in order to impose political, social, cultural, and economic logics specific to and co-constitutive of the contexts in which its various technologies are situated.

This SHOT session seeks to develop an understanding of technologies used to control crowds of people over time. Participants will present research on historically-situated technological devices, protocols, systems, and infrastructures that modify built and natural environments in order to contain, channel, direct, arrange, expel, disperse, and otherwise direct the movements and stillnesses of human bodies. The significance of this work to the history of technology lies in concentrating discussion about the ways that technological interventions have shaped the spatial dispositions of groups of human bodies in order to sculpt the experiences of those spaces and of the crowds of people those spaces attract.

Proposals engaging with any era and geographic context are welcome. The organizer is interested in placing in conversation scholars and audience members working with and curious about a range of materials and methodologies. Potential participants are therefore invited to imagine the notion of crowd control in adventurous manners.

Procedure: Those interested in proposing presentations for potential inclusion in this session should kindly prepare a one-page abstract (500 words maximum) and a one-page short CV (300 words maximum) with current contact information. **Please send these materials to Scott Kushner (scottkushner@uri.edu) no later than February 15, 2020.**

Note: If you will be a first-time SHOT presenter and wish to be considered for the Robinson Prize, please indicate as much in your abstract and send a separate email to this effect to SHOT.Secretariaat@tue.nl. (Find information about the Robinson Prize at the [Robinson Prize page](#) at the SHOT website.)