



Course: UNIV 100 – Section H09 **Theme:** History & Politics

Course Topic: *Lafayette's Vigilantes*

Description: This course will explore the long forgotten and controversial Vigilante Committees in Lafayette and the surrounding parishes just prior to the Civil War that historian David Edmonds described as, “a tragi-comedy movement which polarized society and came very close to precipitating class warfare in south Louisiana.” Were the vigilantes the noble, honorable, and virtuous protectors of society as described by eyewitness Alexandre Barde, or were they themselves outlaws for taking the law into their own hands and inflicting violence, exile, and death on their adversaries? Who exactly were the criminals that the vigilante committees targeted? Were they actual criminals or were they victims of the social, economic, and political divide that developed in the region? Students will read primary and secondary sources to explore the motives behind the Committees and to form their own interpretation of the Vigilante Committees.