

## How Do You Know If You Are The Target Of A Mobbing?

Over the next few days usmnews.net will publish excerpts from an excellent article published in the Chronicle of Higher Education. *Mob Rule: In departmental disputes, professors can act just like animals*, John Gravois, <http://chronicle.com>, Section: The Faculty, Volume 52, Issue 32, Page A10. It is based, in significant part, on the work of [Kenneth Westhues](#) who has made an extensive study of academic mobbing. The article outlines the various stages of a mobbing and why it happens. Are you at risk?

"The *first stage of a mobbing*, as he outlines it, is a period of increasing social isolation. At this point, if you are the target, you might get left off certain guest lists. Colleagues begin to roll their eyes at you during meetings. You get the sense that more people dislike you than you once thought."

"The *next stage* is one of petty harassment. Your administrative requests are repeatedly delayed or misplaced. Your parking space is moved to the outer reaches of the lot. Your classes or meetings get scheduled at odd times..."

"Then matters come to a head - to a "critical incident," as Mr. Westhues calls *the third stage*. You are accused of making racially or sexually insensitive remarks. A minor charge of plagiarism surfaces against you. A surprise audit shows you have been careless with expense reports. You have an angry outburst in class (perhaps catalyzed by your long walk across the parking lot, your misplaced request, the insanely early/late time of day). A rumor of some impropriety with a student gets traction.

In the eyes of your colleagues, this "critical incident" demands swift administrative action - and many of them may sign a petition saying so. They may say that the incident confirms what they have always suspected about you. What's more, it makes them wonder aloud what you're really capable of..."

"A mobbing, he [Westhues] often says, is like a tornado spun off from a spring rainstorm - a fervent collective assault that escalates from an ordinary conflict.

"What happens in a mobbing is that everybody gets lined up on one side," he says, 'with one or a few targets on the other side who are demonized as being beyond the pale.'"

*Mob Rule: In departmental disputes, professors can act just like animals*, John Gravois, <http://chronicle.com>, Section: The Faculty, Volume 52, Issue 32, Page A10.

