



St. Mary's College of Maryland  
at Historic St. Mary's City

## Some Rules Were Made to be Broken

### Constitutional Scholar Cass R. Sunstein to Speak Feb. 25 on "Bad Conformity and Good Dissent"

(St. Mary's City, MD) Feb. 10, 2005 – Is conformity bad for society? Constitutional scholar Cass R. Sunstein will delve into the issue at a lecture for St. Mary's College's Center for the Study of Democracy. The lecture, "Bad Conformity and Good Dissent," will be held at 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 25 in St. Mary's Hall, located on the College campus. The talk is free and open to the public.

Sunstein's talk will address the potentially dangerous issue of conformity, a subject he wrote about in his work, *Why Societies Need Dissent* (Harvard University Press, 2003). In the book, Sunstein argues, "[C]onformity can lead individuals and societies in unfortunate and even catastrophic directions. The most serious danger is that by following others we fail to disclose what we actually know and believe. Our silence deprives society of important information."

His talk will discuss the premise that "like-minded people often go to unjustified extremes. Those who dissent, and who reject the pressures imposed by others, perform valuable social functions, frequently at their own expense." In commenting on Sunstein's book, Senator Patrick Leahy remarked, "Cass Sunstein offers a cogent and timely reminder that dissent is not merely an individual right; reasoned dissent and balanced debate are the very essence of a healthy democracy."

Sunstein earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard College in 1975, before graduating magna cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1978. His career began as clerk for Justice Thurgood Marshall of the US Supreme Court and then as attorney-adviser in the Office of the Legal Counsel of the U.S. Department of Justice. He later joined the faculty of the University of Chicago Law School, where he is the Karl N. Llewellyn Distinguished Professor of Jurisprudence. He is also a member of the Political Science Department.

Sunstein has testified before congressional committees on several subjects. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and has

(Ref. 05 SMCM 025)

Contacts:

Marc Apter

Voice: (240) 895-4381

Cell: (301) 904-3690

Amanda McCartney

Voice: (240) 895-4191

**Office of Public &  
Media Relations**

**St. Mary's City, MD 20686**

**Voice: (240) 895-4381**

**FAX: (240) 895-4195**

Founded in 1840 as Maryland's "monument school" commemorating the state's first capital, St. Mary's College of Maryland provides a high-caliber liberal arts education typically associated with prestigious private colleges while maintaining the affordability and accessibility of a public college.

- 1934 men and women
- Designated the Maryland state honors college in 1992.
- Consistently ranked among the top liberal arts colleges by *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Princeton Review*, and the *Fiske Guide*.
- Selective admissions – SAT average of 1252
- Highest 6-year graduation rate for all Maryland public colleges and universities
- Opportunities for independent student research through the senior thesis, the St. Mary's Project
- Waterfront campus along the St. Mary's River in Southern Maryland
- National 2004 Inter-Collegiate Sailing Association Co-ed Champions

(more)

chaired or sat on many committees, including the ABA Committee on Separation of Powers and Governmental Organizations, the Administrative Law Section of the Association of American Law Schools, and the President's Advisory Committee on the Public Service Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters. He is involved with constitution-making and law-reform activities in several nations, including Ukraine, Poland, China, South Africa, and Russia. An author of many of articles and books since 1990, Sunstein's current projects involve the relationship between law and human behavior.

St. Mary's College of Maryland is ranked one of the best liberal arts colleges in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Princeton Review*. With roots going back to 1840, SMCM is the state's only public honors college, offering the academic excellence of a top private college with the openness and affordability of public education.