COURSE OVERVIEW

What are the causes of crime? Would we all break the law if we knew that we couldn’t be caught? If not, why? Exploring questions such as these will be a central concern in CLJ 413. The focus of this course will be to examine predominant sociological explanations of crime and how these theories relate to empirical evidence and social policy. We will begin by asking the question “What is Crime?” From there, we will look at how crime is measured and what general patterns emerge from previous surveys of criminal behavior. Next, we will dive into the heart of the course; investigating the various explanations of crime and the implications these theories have for crime control policies and social change. Finally, we will conclude with a discussion of what the future holds for crime and social control in American society.

Throughout the semester, you will be asked not only to understand and explain the foundations of criminological theory and research, but also to think critically about this material and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. To foster critical thinking skills, you will have ample opportunities to discuss topics in class, analyze arguments in written assignments and in-class exercises, and apply theory to a real world situation through a course project and final paper.

OBJECTIVES

The goals emphasized in this course are:
- Understanding, applying and evaluating criminological theories
- Effectively communicating ideas in written and oral formats
- Connecting sociological ideas with real-world phenomena

REQUIRED TEXTS


Additional readings are available on-line (see course webpage below).

**COURSE WEBPAGE**

Additional readings and course information can be found at the course website:
http://www.personal.psu.edu/dak27/CLJ413_homepage.htm
You can also access the course webpage and other crime links through my webpage:
http://www.personal.psu.edu/dak27

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**Reading and Class Participation:** The success of this course depends on your prior preparation and active participation in classroom discussions. The format of the class will vary day-by-day, and will include lectures, discussions, practical exercises, review sessions, and a mixture of these activities. For classroom time to be productive, it is essential that you read the required materials and come to class willing to participate. A portion of your final grade will reflect your in-class participation. Two short in-class quizzes will also make up a portion of your class participation grade.

**Two In-Class Examinations:** The Midterm and Final exams will be equally weighted and non-cumulative. The exams will primarily consist of objective questions (e.g. multiple choice and short answer) and a short essay. The exams are scheduled on **October 17th** and during final exam week, **December 18-21st**. **We are not planning make-ups for exams**; please plan accordingly.

**Course Project:** An important aspect of the criminological enterprise, and one that is often overlooked in academic courses, is the process of finding patterns in the real world and using these to test theory. In this course, you will pick a community that you are familiar with (e.g. your hometown or another neighborhood that you find interesting) and compare its characteristics to the neighborhood described in Bourgois’ **In Search of Respect**. The project will consist of three components; (1) a comparison of the characteristics of your chosen neighborhood and Bourgois’ neighborhood using on-line census data, (2) a short paper (e.g. 2-4 pages) that applies one of the criminological theories discussed in class to a newspaper article or observational data collected in your chosen neighborhood, and (3) a longer paper (8-12 pages, double-spaced 12 point font) that compares and contrasts two criminological explanations for the patterns observed by Bourgois. More details will be provided for each of these requirements on separate handouts. Over one third of your final grade will be based upon this project and the exercises related to it.

**GRADING**

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<th>Assignments and Points Breakdown</th>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Census data for Two Communities</td>
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<td>Newspaper Article Application</td>
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<td>Compare and Contrast Paper</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Students with special needs:** Pennsylvania State University is committed to providing equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please let me know as soon as possible.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Although we will take assignments handed in late, they will be penalized. Each assignment will have 10% of its points deducted per day that it is late. For assignments due toward the end of the course, turning them in late may result in your final grade not being completed in time.

**Office Hours:** We will have weekly office hours that I encourage you to attend if you feel you need additional instruction or have questions on the material. We also check our e-mail regularly and may answer any questions you have in that manner. The key to any problems you may have in this course is early identification and open communication. We are more than willing to help you be successful in achieving your goals for this course.

**Student Collaboration:** Other students can be an excellent learning resource. We encourage you to get to know your classmates and study together. As you talk with others during the first week, try writing a few names down on the lines below with their phone numbers or e-mail addresses.

__________________________________     ____________________________________
__________________________________     ____________________________________

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

**Discussion Etiquette:** Discussions in this course will often involve controversial topics which you may have strong feelings about. Although we want to encourage you to express your thoughts on these issues, we expect you to be courteous toward others by providing those speaking your undivided attention and not making comments which may be construed as personal attacks. The best way to ensure this occurs is to look at all sides of an argument and understand where others may be coming from. For our part, we will do our utmost to be courteous to everyone in the class and give our full attention to those who are speaking.

**Promptness:** I expect you to attend class and be on time. If you do not attend regularly, I will be unsympathetic should your grade(s) not be what you expect.

**Honesty:** There is no excuse for cheating on individual assignments. If it comes to our attention that a student has cheated, we will pursue the matter to its fullest extent. For the university’s formal policy regarding academic dishonesty, visit [http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html](http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html). If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit [http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html](http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html).

**Have Fun!** As a final note, we want us all to try our best to have fun in this course. If there are suggestions which you feel may liven up the classroom, or if you have any other concerns about the way the class is proceeding, please let us know.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction and Definitions**
- Sept 5  Introduction to Course/Syllabus
- Sept 7  Readings on-line: Selected pages from Siegel, “Criminology: The Core.” Chapter 1
Week 2: Researching and Measuring Crime
Sept 12  Readings in Bourgois: “Introduction”
Readings on-line:
   Short et al. “Experimental Research in Criminal Justice Settings: Is there a Role for Scholarly Societies?”
   Sterk-Elifson, “Just for Fun? Cocaine use among Middle-Class Women”
Sept 14  Readings on-line:
   Selected pages from Siegel, “Criminology: The Core.” Chapter 2
   Rosenfeld, “Crime Decline in Context”

Week 3: Early Ideas of Crime – From Demons to Darwinism
Sept 19  Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Intro to Part I. Pp. 18-22
   Beccaria, “An Essay on Crimes and Punishment”
Sept 21  Lombroso, “The Criminal Man”
   Intro to Part II. Pp 29-38
   Rowe, “Does the Body Tell? Biological Characteristics and Criminal Disposition”

Week 4-5: The Neighborhood and Crime – Social Disorganization Theory
Sept 26  Readings in Bourgois: Chapter 2, “A Street History of El Barrio”
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Shaw and McKay, “Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas”
Sept 28  Sampson and Wilson, “A Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality”
   Sampson et al., “Collective Efficacy and Crime”
Oct 3  Gathering Census Data for Your Course Project (Location TBA)

Week 5-6: Peers and Gangs – Learning and Cultural Theories
Oct 5  Readings in Bourgois: Chapter 5, “School Days”
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Sutherland, “A Theory of Crime: Differential Association”
Oct 10  Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Wolfgang and Ferracuti, “The Thesis of a Subculture of Violence”
   Film, Goodfellas

***Midterm October 17 ***

Week 7-8: Poverty and Crime – Structural Strain/Anomie Theory
******Census Data Due Oct 19******
Oct 19  Readings in Bourgois: Chapter 4, “At Work”
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie”
Oct 24  Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
   Cohen, “Delinquent Boys”
   Cloward and Ohlin, “Delinquency and Opportunity”
   Agnew, “Pressured into Crime: General Strain Theory”

Week 8-9: Families and Schools – Control Theories
******ASC Meetings Oct 31-Nov 4******
Oct 26  Readings in Bourgois: Chapters 7-8
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Hirschi, “Social Bond Theory”

Oct 31
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Sampson and Laub, “An Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control”
Readings on-line:
Kreager, “Strangers in the Halls”

Nov 2
Film, In this Affluent Society

Week 10-11: Power, Social Reaction, and Law – Labeling and Conflict Theories
Nov 7
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Lemert, “Primary and Secondary Deviance”
Readings on-line:
Selected pages from Becker, Outsiders

Nov 9
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Bonger, “Criminality and Economic Conditions”
Currie, “Crime in a Market Society”

Nov 14
Film, Hooked: Illegal Drugs and How They Got That Way

Week 11-12: Gender Theories
********Short Papers Due Nov 21st********
Nov 16
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Adler, “Sisters in Crime”
Chesney-Lind, “A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency”

Nov 21
Reading in Cullen and Agnew:
Heimer and De Coster, “The Gendering of Violent Delinquency”
Messerschmidt, “Masculinities and Crime”

Nov 23 – NO CLASS THANKSGIVING

Nov 28
Readings in Bourgois: Chapter 3, “Crackhouse Management”
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Cornish and Clarke, “Crime as a Rational Choice”
Cohen and Felson, “Routine Activity Theory”

Nov 30
Readings in Cullen and Agnew:
Patterson et al. “A Developmental Perspective on Antisocial Behavior”
Moffitt, “Pathways in the Life Course to Crime”
Sampson and Laub, “A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime”

Week 14: Crime Policy and the American Penal System
Dec 5
Readings on-line:
The Economist, “Crime in America: Violent and Irrational – and That’s Just the Policy”

Dec 7
Readings in Bourgois: Chapter 9, “Conclusion”

Week 15: Conclusions, the Future, and Course Review
********Papers due December 14th********
Dec 12, 14
Course Review and Wrap-up