

SOCIOLOGY OF CRIME

SOCI-30200/Spring 2009

Friends 303/MWF – 10 – 10:50 AM

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 AM – 12 PM; Wednesdays, 3 PM – 4 PM; and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

If you read the news or watch TV, you can easily develop the impression that crime is everywhere. As a result of our general fear of crime, individuals in the United States often go to great lengths to protect themselves from crime – from putting bars on their windows, to avoiding going out of their homes at night, to carrying weapons for protection. And the fact that we spend more money on law enforcement and imprison more of our adult population than any other developed nation suggests that we do indeed have a crime problem. This course focuses on the sociological research on crime and criminal behavior in order to critically evaluate our experience of Crime in the US.

GOALS

- To propel students to view crime from a sociological rather than “common sense” perspective
- To introduce you to the ways that sociologists define, measure, and explain crime
- To critically exam the strengths and weaknesses of available knowledge and theory

PREREQUISITES

Juvenile Delinquency (SOCI 20300) and Definitions of Normality (SOCI 21400)

REQUIRED TEXTS

John M. Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*

James William Coleman, *The Criminal Elite: Understanding White Collar Crime, 6th Edition*

Course Pack – Available in the Sociology office (Mueller 106)

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

The best way to reach me is by email. (ONLY LEAVE VOICE MAIL MESSAGES EMERGENCIES.) If you have a simple question or need to schedule an appointment, just send me an email. I will respond within 24 hours on weekdays. If you have a complicated issue to discuss, come by my office! I encourage you to make appointments, even if you are coming during office hours.

CLASS POLICIES AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A STUDENT

1. ATTENDANCE – You are expected to be on time and to attend class regularly. You should not schedule activities that conflict with class time (such as work, a doctor’s appointment, or personal travel time). If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes and announcements from a fellow classmate. Do not ask me for notes.

I will take attendance daily at the beginning, middle or end of class. Any student who is not present when attendance is taken will be marked absent. You are responsible for keeping track of your own attendance. Any student with more than three absences for any reason (*excused or unexcused*) will have 10% deducted from their final grade. Thus, when you miss 4 or more classes, your grade of an A becomes a B, an A- becomes a B- and so on. If you miss six classes, I reserve the right to drop you from the course. If you have special circumstances that require you to miss more than three classes, contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation and options.

2. READINGS – I have gone to great effort to choose a set of readings that are interesting, help explain fundamental concepts covered in the course, and will spur class discussion. You may enjoy some readings

more than others, but at least give them a try by reading them all the way through. I would not assign them if I did not believe they would contribute to your overall knowledge of the topic.

There is a substantial reading load throughout the semester. After looking over the syllabus, if you think you cannot or will not do the reading, now is the time to look elsewhere for a class. This acknowledgement is not meant to scare you, just to make you aware that completing the readings will be essential to earning a good grade in this course.

The information presented in the readings will serve as a point of departure for class discussion. I expect you to complete all required readings *before* the date listed on the syllabus. Class discussion will meander. It will include topics from the readings, relevant topics from the headlines, and even insights from your own experiences and observations. I may or may not cover every topic discussed in the readings in class, but I will most certainly cover them on exams.

3. CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR - This class is meant to be an enriching, enjoyable learning experience for all of you; disrupting the class results in depriving your fellow classmates and yourself of this experience. Be respectful of your instructor, your fellow classmates, and yourself. The following list provides general guidelines, but is not exhaustive.

- NO TEXTING DURING CLASS. Your phone (and any other personal electronic devices) should not be visible at any point during class time.
- No reading during class unless you are explicitly instructed to do so by me.
- No talking with the people next to you. If you are asking your neighbor a question about the course, it is likely that everyone will benefit if you raise your hand and ask your question of the professor. I can guarantee that at least one other person in the class is thinking about your same question. Everyone benefits from your curiosity.
- No sleeping.

If you are behaving inappropriately, I will give you an explicit instruction to stop AND I will count you absent for the day. If I must ask you a second time to stop disruptive behavior (on that same day or on a different day), you will be instructed to leave the class. I reserve the right to withdraw disrespectful and disruptive students from the class.

4. COMPUTER USE POLICY – In a class this size personal computers can be distracting. In addition, research demonstrates that computers in class inhibit communication. Therefore, it is my policy not to allow computers in class.

5. CLASS WEBSITES – The primary website for this class is <http://crime.kimberlymbaker.com>. On this website, you will find copies of course documents (syllabus, assignments, etc.), links and further information about individual single class session, important announcements, our class discussion board and more. I will update this site regularly. This site is a wonderful opportunity for us to interact outside of class. So, when you find interesting things you want to share with others or when you have thoughts about what we have been talking about in class, you should add comments. I also encourage you to respond to others' comments. To preserve your anonymity, you may use only your first or last name when you comment.

If you find any section that is password protected, the password is "Ithaca".

Blackboard – You will post all of your assignments on the college's Blackboard site at <http://courses.ithaca.edu>. I will post your grade and feedback for assignments on Blackboard as well. If you have problems with this site, you need to contact the ITS Help Desk (274-3282). If you find that any of your information on the site is unavailable or incorrect, contact me via email as soon as possible.

All graded items will be submitted electronically. Thus, you need to learn how to use the Blackboard site. Technical problems will not be viewed as a legitimate excuse for submitting a paper late.

6. ACADEMIC HONESTY – The college experience is founded on the concepts of honesty and integrity. Dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course So that there is no confusion: Plagiarism refers to using the work, ideas, or knowledge of other people as your own. It includes all forms of exam cheating, submitting other people’s work, and “borrowing” from published sources. Plagiarism is an extremely serious violation of academic standards and values—please do not give me any reason to suspect you of this sort of dishonesty. You must cite any outside source that you use to construct your paper. And you cannot use material that you previously submitted in another class. Plagiarism (even the unintentional kind) is a serious offense. Failure to honor the Ithaca College policy can result in failure of the course and possibly more serious consequences. Review the college policy at <http://www.ithaca.edu/attorney/policies/index.html>.

6. SENSITIVITY – Discussions in this course will often involve controversial topics that you may have strong feelings about. I encourage you to express your thoughts on these issues in a manner that is both thoughtful and relevant. I expect you to be courteous toward others by providing your undivided attention to those speaking in class and to avoid making comments that can be construed as personal attacks. The best way to approach this course is to consider all sides of an argument to understand where others may be coming from.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability (physical or cognitive) and require academic accommodations, contact the Office of Academic Support Services for Students with Disabilities at 274-1257 (voice) or 274-7319 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. Please notify me as soon as possible of any documented accommodations that will improve your classroom and test-taking experiences.

General Expectations in this Course

You will not gain an authentic understanding of crime if you are not willing to commit time outside of class to studying. Having said that, I am opposed to homework that is simply busywork done for the sake of earning points toward a grade. The work you do outside of class must be meaningful and directly connected to what we are studying. I recommend that you do the following four things on a regular basis:

- Review notes from the previous class before each session. Practice putting new concepts in your own words and thinking of your own examples.
- When reviewing your notes, look for areas where you are missing information or do not fully understand. Be sure to ask your classmates or me about these issues!
- Read any material that I have listed on the syllabus.
- Reflect on what you are learning. Ask yourself, How has your understanding changed? What are you curious about? What are you still wondering?

EVALUATION

The final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

News Assignment	10%
Crime Data Paper	40%
<i>Part 1 = 10%, Part 2 = 10%, Part 3 = 20%</i>	
Exams (2 x 15%)	40%
Participation	<u>20%</u>
	100%

1) News Assignment – Crime data is reported in the news all the time. For this assignment, you will find news stories that incorporate crime data. Using our class wiki, you will respond to and reflect on stories that you find. Specific details of the assignment will be handed out separately.

2) Crime Data Paper – This assignment will be completed in the second half of the course. You will have several options to choose from. The paper will be submitted in 3 stages. Specific details of the assignment will be handed out separately.

A Note on Paper Grading

I warn you at the outset that I am a demanding grader. I have high expectations for your papers because writing is one of the most essential skills you are expected to have upon graduation. As a result, I expect papers to have creative theses, coherent organization, and to be edited thoroughly before you turn them in. Rare are the students who can complete an acceptable paper begun the night before it is due, so keep up with the readings as we go and give adequate time to reflect, outline, draft, and rewrite all papers. If you struggle with writing issues, you should contact the writing center for help.

3) Exams: Two exams are scheduled for this course – a midterm and a final. Each exam will have an in-class component and a take-home essay component. The midterm exam will cover lecture and required reading material from the first half of the class. The final exam will cover lecture material and required readings from the second half of the course. Please note that although the final exam is given during the final exam period, the final exam is **NOT** comprehensive. The exams will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

4) Participation: In this class, we will rely heavily on discussion. As a result, participation is a required. There are two ways to earn participation points:

1) *Reading Questions:* Half of your grade will come from submitting reading questions throughout the semester. While reading, you should write down three questions that occurred to you while doing the required readings. These questions may point to areas of confusion, ideas to further unpack, or critical points for discussion. You should seek to address all of the readings in the questions you submit. I will use these questions to help guide our discussions in class. You will post your questions on the discussion board on our class website. You must **post 3 questions on 12 separate weeks** (which means you get a “free pass” on 2 weeks during the semester). Questions must be posted before the beginning of class (10 AM) on Monday of each week – unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. **ABSOLUTELY NO LATE POSTINGS WILL RECEIVE CREDIT** – even if the posting occurs just a few minutes late. So, plan accordingly. At this point, my plan is to grade these on a credit/no credit basis. However, if the quality of the questions is uneven, I may adjust the assignment or the grading scale.

2) *In-class Participation:* Half of your grade will be determined by participation in class discussions. Generally this category includes insightful, informed comments and questions that show engagement with the lecture, discussion, and readings. If you are prepared for and engaged in class, I encourage you to take risks and speak up, even if you are nervous about doing so. You do not always have to be correct or accurate to receive credit. In fact, incorrect statements can be a wonderful way for everyone to refine their thinking on a topic. It should though be noted that you are not guaranteed a point of participation every time you speak. Spouting-off with uninformed opinions unconnected to lecture or the readings will not help you. Such comments generally show that you have not been engaged in class or doing the reading. If you are not prepared for class, stay quiet (unless called on). In addition, if you are comfortable talking in class, try not to dominate the conversation. You cannot receive more than one participation point per class meeting. If you are very shy, or think of something afterward, you can also submit written comments. You can email me directly or post comments on the course website. Only substantial comments and questions will receive credit.

You must distribute your participation evenly across the duration of the term. Thus, you may earn up to

two points for participation each week of the class (excepting the first and last week of class). The grading scale is as follows: A=26-24, A-=23-21, B+=20-18, B=17-15, B-=14-12, C+=11, C=10, C-=9, D+=8, D=7, D-=6, F=5 or lower.

Late/Make-up Policy: **ONLY** students with an excused absence will be allowed to make up exams or avoid late penalties on papers. To qualify as an excused absence, you must (1) have a valid and verifiable excuse; and (2) have contacted me **PRIOR** to the absence to notify me of your circumstances. (*Read that last sentence again, because I really mean it.*) Failure to contact me in advance or failure to have a verifiable conflict with the test or assignment will result in a zero. Make-up exams must be scheduled within 1 week and may be given in essay format. All late papers will be penalized 10 points per day (including weekends).

If, during the semester, you experience some kind of issue that affects your ability to do work for this class, you need to contact me as soon as possible to discuss your options. You do not need to give me tons of personal details, but you do need to communicate with me about your situation. When students turn work in late or fail to turn in work, I generally assume that means that the student does not care about her or his grade. If this assumption is not accurate, it is your responsibility to let me know. This kind of issue is best discussed in my office (not over email and not before/after class).

Final Grade Assignment: The final grades will be based upon the following grading scale:

100-97.0	A(+)	96.9-93.5	A	93.4-90.0	A-
89.9-87.0	B+	86.9-83.5	B	83.4-80.0	B-
79.9-77.5	C+	77.4-73.5	C	73.4-70.0	C-
69.9-67.5	D+	67.4-65.0	D	64.9-62.5	D-
62.4 or below	F				

NOTE: The range shrinks the closer we get to the letter 'D'. Why? Hard work, effort, and improvement are rewarded. The grade range is provided for your information only and may be adjusted at the professor's discretion. Borderline grades will, in part, be resolved by an evaluation of the quality and rigor of your involvement in this course.

Some further comments on grades: Make a commitment to excellence in this class. In other words, do not be satisfied with a minimum effort. I will not promise you easy credit for this course. But I can guarantee that if you stay engaged in what we are doing, you will learn a great deal about yourself and the world around you. And, frankly, this class can be both enriching and a lot of fun.

I know many of you have general concerns about your GPAs (because of scholarships, academic status, your parents, etc.). You should know now that your grade is earned based on the quality of your work throughout the semester. As a general rule, I do not assign extra credit projects. Do not plan on it and please do not ask me about it. Applying yourself throughout the semester is a vastly better way to pass any class than scurrying around at the last minute.

Furthermore, you I WILL NOT CHANGE GRADES FOR ANY REASON other than an error on my part. Do not request adjustments for being "close." With respect to any individual grade, I will entertain requests for re-grades of specific exam questions and paper issues, but such requests (1) must be submitted in writing, with a specific description of what part of the grading you believe was incorrect and a thorough argument as to why you believe I made an error; and (2) must occur within one week of grades being posted.

What should you do if are concerned about your grade? I encourage you to come and talk to me immediately. My door is always open to you. The more proactive you are, the more I can help. *Do not wait until the end of the semester or right before an exam to discuss matters such as grades or comprehension problems.*

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Jan 21-23): Introduction

Jan 23: [NOTE: This week you may submit questions on Friday instead of Monday]
 Venkatesh, "Living Underground" from *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*
 Vaughn, "The Dark Side of Organizations: Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster" (NOTE: You will read this article again in depth at the end of the semester. For now, focus on the author's discussion of "Mistake, Misconduct, and Disaster that begins on p. 283.)

WEEK 2 (Jan 26-30): Issues in the Sociology of Crime

Jan 26:
 Sampson, "Whither the Sociological Study of Crime?"
 Covington, "Race Classification in Criminology: The Reproduction of Racialized Crime"

WEEK 3 (Feb 2-6): Crime in the Media/Fear of Crime

Feb 2:
 Sacco, "Media Constructions of Crime"
 Gilliam, et al, "Where You Live and What You Watch: The Impact of Racial Proximity and Local Television News on Attitudes about Race and Crime"
 Stanko, "Women, Crime, and Fear"

WEEK 4 (Feb 9-13): Measurement

Feb 9: Review the following websites
 Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) - <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>
 National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/NIBRS/>
 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) - <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict.htm>
 United Nations International Homicide Statistics - <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/ihs.html>

WEEK 5 & 6 (Feb 16-27): Correlates

Feb 16:
 Hannon & Defronzo, "The Truly Disadvantaged, Public Assistance, and Crime"
 Tigges, et al, "Social Isolation of the Urban Poor: Race, Class, and Neighborhood Effects on Social Resources"

Feb 23:
 Steffensmeier & Allan, "Gender and Crime: Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending"
 Sampson, "Rethinking Crime and Immigration"

WEEK 7 (Mar 2-6): Victims

MIDTERM on Monday, Mar 2, Take Home due Wed, Mar 4)

March 4: [NOTE: This week you may submit reading questions on Wednesday instead of Monday.]
 Greenberg and Beach, "Property Crime Victims' Decisions to Notify the Police: Social, Cognitive, and Affective Determinants"
 Felson, "Is Violence against Women about Women or about Violence?"

March 7-15 – Spring Break – NO CLASS

WEEK 8 & 9 (Mar 16-27): Violent Crime & Homicide

March 16

Luckenbill, "Criminal Homicide as a Situational Transaction"

Levi, "Becoming a Hit Man: Neutralization in a Very Deviant Career"

March 23: Quantitative Assignment - Part 1 Due - Submit on Blackboard before the beginning of class

Jackman, "Violence in Social Life"

WEEK 10 & 11 (Mar 30-Apr 8): Property Crime

Mar 30

Hakim and Shachmurove, "Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Commercial Burglary: The Evidence Examined"

Decker, et al, "A Woman's Place is in the Home: Females and Residential Burglary"

Fleming, "The Thrill of it All: Youthful Offenders and Auto Theft"

April 6: Quantitative Assignment - Part 2 Due - Submit on Blackboard before the beginning of class

Hagedorn, *A World of Gangs* (whole book)

WEEK 12 (Apr 13-17): Public Order Crimes

April 13:

Phoenix - An Analysis of Women's Involvement in Prostitution

Snow - Criminality and Homeless Men: An Empirical Assessment

WEEK 13 & 14 (Apr 20-May 1): Corporate Crimes

April 20:

Coleman, *The Criminal Elite: Understanding White-Collar Crime, 6th Edition* (whole book)

April 27: Quantitative Assignment - Part 3 Due - Submit on Blackboard before the beginning of class

Vaughan, "The Dark Side of Organizations: Mistake, Misconduct and Disaster"

Matthews and Kauzlarich, "The Crash of ValueJet Flight 592: A Case Study in State-Corporate Crime"

WEEK 15 (May 4): Wrapping Up

Final Exam –

In Class – Wednesday, May 6, 4:30-7 PM

Take Home Due – Friday, May 8, 5 PM

NOTE: Schedule subject to change. Check course website regularly for updates.

SOCI 214000—Spring 2009

NAME: _____

I have read the syllabus and I expect that I will be held to the requirements written therein.

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE _____

Tell me a little about yourself

Hometown: _____

Circle One:

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Major: _____

One of your favorite bands or artists: _____

One of your favorite movies or TV shows: _____

Why are you taking this course (Sociology major, CSI Miami fan, it fit your time slot, etc)?

What is one topic that you hope we will discuss during this semester?

Tell me one additional thing that you want me to know about you.

