



Utah State University

SEMINAR IN SOCIOLOGY: RACE AND CRIME

Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology
SOC 4480, Section 001, Spring 2016, CRN 13502
Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 10:30-11:20am
Ray B. West, Room 113

SOC 4800.001

Professor: Stephen G. VanGeem
E-mail: stephen.vangeem@usu.edu
Office: Old Main 224D
Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

A history of the United States criminal justice system is a history of race relations in America. No aspect of the American criminal justice—from policing to the courts to corrections—is untouched by issues tied to race. This course will examine one of the most persistent and divisive issues in criminal justice—racial and ethnic incarceration disparity in the United States. In particular, the class will focus on examining the potential sources of this disparity—differential involvement, bias in administration, and bias in policy—and assessing what historical and contemporary evidence exists to support each explanation. In addition, this course will look at the social and political consequences of disproportionate minority involvement in the criminal justice system.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press.
- Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2014. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kennedy, Randall. 1997. *Race, Crime, and the Law*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir A. 2000. *American Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir A. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.
- Supplemental articles available via the Canvas classroom

GRADING SCALE

A 93 and above	A- 92-90	
B+ 89-87	B 86-83	B- 82-80
C+ 79-77	C 76-73	C- 72-70
D+ 69-67	D 66-60	F 59 and below

STUDENT EVALUATION

Your course grade will be based upon two exams, a series of writing assignments, an in-class presentation, and ongoing in-class discussion. Each exam is worth 25 percent, the writing assignments are worth 30 percent, the presentation is worth 10 percent and class participation is worth 10 percent.

Exams	50%
Writing Assignments	30%
Class Presentation	10%
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%

EXAMINATIONS

Both exams will be comprised of a combination of short answer and short essay questions.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be five writing assignments due throughout the semester, each one worth 6 percent of your final grade. These responses are meant to elicit personal thought and build off of in-class discussion, typically addressing how key concepts are related to each other and how they are related to crime. Your completed assignments will be turned in as short 3-page essays that draw upon the assigned readings and any additional materials covered in class. I will provide the writing prompt a week before the assignment is due and each assignment ***must be uploaded to CANVAS*** by 6pm on the assignment due date.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Student presentations will be composed of brief 10-15 minute “mini-lectures” introducing assigned readings that are pertinent to the in-class discussion for that day. There will be ten presentations given throughout the course, but specific assignments will depend on the number of students in the class. I will provide more details after the class roster has been firmly established.

LECTURES AND CLASS DISCUSSION

As this is a cross-listed graduate-undergraduate course, my aim is to run the class like a graduate-level seminar at times. This means that class participation is a mandatory component in order to provide students with the richest learning experience possible. As the instructor, my job is to guide your learning as much as I can. To this end, while I will give structured lectures about the readings at each meeting, but I will also open it up to intensive discussion. In this regard, students must come to class having completed the assigned readings in order to participate completely in class.

COURSE POLICIES

1. Please extend courtesy and respect to your fellow students in any discussion and avoid any overtly hostile or demeaning language when reacting to another student's ideas. Repeated disrespectful and rude behavior may be grounds for dismissal from the class.
2. Late assignments will not be accepted unless: (1) you notify me 48 hours ***before*** the assignment is due and (2) provide me with an acceptable reason for why the assignment will be late. I may request written documentation for the excuse if deemed necessary. If you do not follow this procedure then you will receive a zero on the assignment.

3. In line with university policy, students with disabilities who are in need of academic accommodations must (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Research Center (DRC) and (2) bring a memorandum from the DRC to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be accomplished within the first two weeks of the semester. Additional information can be accessed at www.usu.edu/drc/

4. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated (see below).

5. This syllabus is not a contract. I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time throughout the semester and will give you ample notification beforehand via class-wide announcements. It is your responsibility to stay abreast of any changes made.

6. In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), academic progress in this course will be kept private from all third parties unless waived by the individual student. This waiver, along with other information, can be found at <http://www.usu.edu/registrar/htm/ferpa>.

7. If you have a problem, please do not hesitate to contact me. It is easiest to reach me via email, although I do request that you include your *first name*, your *last name*, your *A number*, and the *course number* in all correspondence. I check my email account daily, so if you need to contact me, you can expect a response within 24 hours, but you should not wait until the last minute before deadlines to write to me with questions.

CHEATING, PLAGIARISM, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. A single case of cheating can be the basis for a failing grade and/or dismissal from the University. Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1). The penalties for plagiarism are severe and may include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other appropriate disciplinary actions. If you have any questions concerning what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, feel free to ask me.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Week 1: Course Introduction (Monday, January 11)

Film: “Race: The Power of an Illusion” (Wednesday, January 13)

What is “Race”? (Friday, January 15)

Marks, Jonathan. 2003. *Interview with Jonathan Marks*. San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel.

Newsome, Melba. 2007. “The inconvenient science of racial DNA profiling.” *Wired*.

Sauer, Norman J. 1992. “Forensic anthropology and the concept of race: If race don’t exist, why are forensic anthropologists so good at identifying them.” *Social Science & Medicine* 34:107-111.

Week 2: **NO CLASS (Monday, January 18)**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 IS DUE *VIA CANVAS* at 6 PM MST

The Latino Paradox (Wednesday, January 20)

Martinez, Ramiro. 2006. "Coming to America: The impact of the new immigration on crime."
Pp. 1-19 in *Immigration and Crime*, edited by R. Martinez, Jr. and A. Valenzuela, Jr. New
York, NY: NYU Press.

Sampson, Robert J. 2008. "Rethinking crime and immigration." *Contexts* 7:28-33.

Incarceration Disparities (Friday, January 22)

Blumstein, Alfred. 1982. "On the racial disproportionality of United States' prison populations."
Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology 73:1259-1281.

Hindelang, Michael J. 1978. "Race and involvement in common law personal crimes." *American
Sociological Review* 43:93-109

Week 3: Social Factors Influencing Differential Involvement: Segregation (Monday, January 25)

Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, Chapters 1-2

More Segregation (Wednesday, January 27)

Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, Chapters 3-4

Yet More Segregation (Friday, January 29)

Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, Chapters 5

Week 4: More Social Factors: Concentrated Disadvantage (Monday, February 1)

Peterson, Ruth D., and Lauren J. Krivo. 1999. "Racial segregation, concentration of disadvantage,
and black and white homicide victimization." *Sociological Forum* 14:465-493.

More Social Factors: Family Disruption (Wednesday, February 3)

Sampson, Robert J. 1987. "Urban black violence: The effect of male joblessness and family
disruption." *American Journal of Sociology* 93:348-382.

More Social Factors: Collective Efficacy (Friday, February 5)

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton J. Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and violent
crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy." *Science* 277:918-924.

Week 5: Combining Social Factors (Monday, February 8)

Venkatesh, *American Project*, Chapters 1-2

Combining Social Factors continued (Wednesday, February 10)

Venkatesh, *American Project*, Chapters 3-4

Combining Social Factors continued (Friday, February 12)

Venkatesh, *American Project*, Chapters 5

Week 6: **NO CLASS (Monday, February 15)**

****NO CLASS** (TUESDAY, February 16)**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 IS DUE *VIA CANVAS* at 6 PM MST

More Social Factors (Sub)Cultural Theory (Wednesday, February 17)

Anderson, *Code of the Street*, Chapters 1-3

Testing the Code (Friday, February 19)

Stewart, Eric A. and Ronald L. Simons. 2006. "Structure and culture in African American adolescent violence: A partial test of the "Code of the Street" thesis." *Justice Quarterly* 23:1-33.

Week 7: More Social Factors: Legal Cynicism (Monday, February 22)

Kirk, David S., and Andrew V. Papachristos. 2011. "Cultural mechanisms and the persistence of neighborhood violence." *American Journal of Sociology* 116:1190-1233.

Individual Factors Influencing Differential Involvement: Rational Choice Theory (Wed, Feb 24)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 2

More Rational Choice Theory (Friday, February 26)

Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*, Chapters 1-4

Week 8: More Rational Choice Theory (Wednesday, February 24)

Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day*, Chapters 5-8

****NO CLASS** (Wednesday, March 2)**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3 IS DUE *VIA CANVAS* at 6 PM MST

MIDTERM EXAM (Friday, March 4)

****SPRING BREAK** (Monday, March 7 – Friday, March 11)**

Week 9: Bias in Policy-making: A History of Unequal Protection (Monday, March 14)

Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, Chapter 1

Kennedy, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, Chapters 2

Bias in Policy-making: A History of Unequal Enforcement (Wednesday, 16)

Kennedy, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, Chapters 3

Bias in Policy-making: Disenfranchisement (Friday, March 18)

King, Ryan D., and Darren Wheelock. 2007. "Group threat and social control: Race, perceptions of minorities and the desire to punish." *Social Forces* 86:1255-1280.

Week 10: Bias in Policy-making: The War on Drugs (Monday, March 21)

Kennedy, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, Chapter 10

Bias in Administration: The Organizational Imperative (Wednesday, March 23)

Lilly, Cullen, and Ball, *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*, Chapter 8

Bias in Administration: Differential Enforcement (Friday, March 25)

Beckett, Katherine, Kris Nyrop, and Lori Pfingst. 2006. "Race, drugs, and policing: Understanding disparities in drug delivery arrests." *Criminology* 41:105-137.

Week 11: Bias in Administration: Situational Dynamics (Monday, March 28)

Smith, Douglas A., Christy A. Visher, and Laura A. Davidson. 1984. "Equality and discretionary justice: The influence of race on police arrest decisions." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 75:234-249.

Warren, Patricia Y. 2010. "The continuing significance of race: An analysis across two levels of policing." *Social Science Quarterly* 91:1025-1042.

Film: "The Central Park Five" (Wednesday, March 30)

Film: "The Central Park Five" continued (Friday, April 1)

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #4 IS DUE *VIA CANVAS* at 6 PM MST

Week 12: Bias in Administration: Hypercriminalization (Monday, April 4)

Vios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Chapters 1-4

Bias in Administration: Courtroom Decision-making and Sentencing (Wednesday, April 6)

Bowers, William J., Marla Sandys, and Thomas W. Brewer. 2004. "Crossing racial boundaries: A closer look at the roots of racial bias in capital sentencing when the defendant is black and the victim is white." *DePaul Law Review* 53:1497-1538

Sommers, Samuel R., and Phoebe C. Ellsworth. 2000. "The courtroom: Perceptions of guilt and dispositional attributions." *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin* 26:1367-1379.

Bias in Administration: Capital Punishment (Friday, April 8)

Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Sarah Bacon, Andrew Ditchfield, Karen Beckman, Deanna Perez, Michael Strauch, and Nadine Frederique. 2003. *An empirical analysis of Maryland's death sentencing system with respect to the influence of race and legal jurisdiction*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland.

Unnever, James D., and Francis T. Cullen. 2007. "The racial divide in support for the death penalty: Does white racism matter?" *Social Forces* 85:1281-1301.

Week 13: Consequences of Mass Minority Incarceration (Monday, April 11)

Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, Chapters 4-5

Film: "The House I Live In" (Wednesday, April 13)

Film: "The House I Live In" continued (Friday, April 15)

Week 14: Modern Racism (Monday, April 18)

Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, Chapter 3

Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1997. "Subtle prejudice for modern times." *Divided by color: Racial politics and democratic ideals*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. Chapter 5, pp. 92-127.

Modern Racism continued (Wednesday, April 20)
Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, Chapters 4-8

Film: "Finding the Gold Within" (Friday, April 22)

Week 15: Policy Remedies (Monday, April 25)

Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, Chapter 6

Vios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Conclusion

*Recommended: Clear, Todd R. 2007. *Imprisoning Communities: How Mass Incarceration Makes Disadvantaged Neighborhoods Worse*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Chapter 8 and Appendix, pp. 175-224.

Course Conclusion (Wednesday, April 27)

Civil Rights Division. 2015. *Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice.

****NO CLASS** (Friday, April 29)**

WRITING ASSIGNMENT #5 IS DUE *VIA CANVAS* at 6 PM MST

Finals Week: FINAL EXAM (Wednesday, May 4, 11:30 am – 1:20 pm, in Ray B. West, Room 113)

