

Crime and Criminology: First-Year Seminar (SOCIOL 101-6-20)
Winter '17: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 – 12:20 PM
Harris Hall L05

Instructor: Zach Sommers

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

Email: z-sommers2014@nlaw.northwestern.edu

Course Description: This course examines a variety of topics relating to crime and the social scientific study of crime, or criminology. Using a wide range of in-class media and interactive activities, we will explore research investigating the effects of crime and what it means to be a criminal. After a brief overview of the field, we will examine criminological and sociological research on the different stages of the criminal justice system (policing, courts, and prisons) before turning our focus to a few specific substantive areas of research, such as capital punishment, gangs, and crime as depicted in pop culture. As with all first-year seminars, writing and in-class participation will be the core requirements

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify Empirical Trends in late-20th and early-21st century crime
2. Understand the various methodological approaches used by criminologists
3. Compare the leading theories of punishment and criminal offending
4. Survey the empirical literature on a crime-related topic and evaluate the existing evidence
5. Develop a research proposal that engages with and builds upon existing criminological research

Reading Assignments: All reading assignments will be posted on Canvas (hooray for cost savings!). The required readings for each session are short—the trade-off being that you all *have* to do them. The structure of the course depends on it. The required assignments vary in type, including portions of scholarly articles, news articles, and video clips. An additional list of scholarly articles and books is included in each class's optional readings, in case you have a particular interest in that area.

Top Hat: Every week in class we will be making use of an interactive feedback system called Top Hat. Information about registering was included in my introductory email, but plan on bringing a Wi-Fi-enabled device to every class (e.g., laptop, tablet, smartphone). If that is a hardship, please let me know—it's not a problem and we can make it work!

Grading: Your grade will consist of three papers and participation/attendance. There will be papers due at the end of Units I and II, as well as a final paper. Each paper may be revised up to two times. Participation and attendance will be tabulated using Top Hat, with one free absence built in. Further accommodations may be made for additional excused absences **so long as you let me know ahead of time**. I will be much less flexible about participation points if you come to me after the fact. ****Also, I reserve (and will assuredly exercise) the right to raise or lower your final grade one step on the grade scale based on the quality and frequency of your participation throughout the quarter.**** For example, if you had a B+ but always came to class

prepared and gave particularly insightful comments, I might instead give you an A-. On the contrary, if you rarely participated, frequently showed up late, and were distracted by your laptop the entire quarter, I might (read: will!) reduce your final grade.

Grade Breakdown:

Unit I Paper (3-5 pages): 15%. Due Friday, January 20th on Canvas by 5 PM.

Unit II Paper (3-5 pages): 25%. Due Friday, February 17th on Canvas by 5 PM.

Final Paper (8-10 pages): 40%. Due no later than Friday, March 17th on Canvas by 5 PM.

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Grading Scale: Final grades will be recorded on a 100-point scale as follows:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	0-59

Class Meeting and Reading Schedule

Unit I: Overview

1. Thursday, January 5th: Introduction/Syllabus.

Required Assignment: None.

Optional Readings: None.

2. Tuesday, January 10th: What is crime? What is a criminal? What is criminology?

Required Assignment: Lon L. Fuller, "The Case of the Speluncean Explorers." *62 Harvard Law Review* (1949). [Selection].

Optional Reading: Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*. Free Press (1897).

3. Thursday, January 12th: Criminological Theory – Theories of Offending

Required Assignment: Video: Adrian Raine, "The Origins of Violence":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKFtSh_H9jY

Optional Readings:

- Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press (1957).
- Howard Becker, *Outsiders*. New York: Free Press (1963).

4. Tuesday, January 17th: Criminological Theory – Theories of Punishment

Required Assignment: Valerie Wright, "Deterrence in Criminal Justice: Evaluating Certainty vs. Severity of Punishment." *The Sentencing Project* (2010).

Optional Readings:

- Michael Tonry. "Learning from the Limitations of Deterrence Research" in *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, edited by Michael Tonry. The University of Chicago Press (2008).
- Charles Tittle and Alan Rowe, "Moral Appeal, Sanction, Threat, and Deviance: An Experimental Test," *20 Social Problems* 488 (1973).

5. Thursday, January 19th: Methods and Measurement

Required Assignment:

- Video: "Interview as a Method for Qualitative Research" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNNKCD2f4qw>)
- Video: "Sports Fan Ethnography" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTboT3au4-4>)

Optional Readings:

- Norman R. Draper & Harry Smith, *Applied Regression Analysis*. New York: Wiley-Interscience (1998).
- W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative*. Allyn & Bacon (2005).

Sunday, January 22nd: Unit I Paper due on Canvas by 5 PM.

Unit II: The Criminal Justice Process

6. Tuesday, January 24th: Police – Enforcing the Law

Required Assignment: Herman Goldstein, "Toward Community-Oriented Policing: Potential, Basic Requirements, and Threshold Questions." 33:1 *Crime & Delinquency* 6 (1987). [Selection].

Optional Readings:

- James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows." *The Atlantic* (1982).
- Bureau of Justice Statistics on Policing (see: <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=71>).

7. Thursday, January 26th: Police – Race and Police Brutality

Required Assignment:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Myth of Police Reform." *The Atlantic* (2015).
- Evan Perez, Shimon Prokupez, and Wesley Bruer, "FBI Chief Tries to Deal with the 'Ferguson Effect.'" *CNN* (2015).

Optional Readings:

- "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department," USDOJ Civil Rights Division (2015).
- Randy Sutton, "Policing With Honor." *PoliceOne* (2015).

8. Tuesday, January 31st: Courts – Lawyers and Judges

Required Assignment:

- Abraham S. Blumberg, “The Practice of Law as a Confidence Game: Organizational Cooptation of a Profession.” 1:2 *Law and Society Review* 15 (1967). [Selection].
- Gilbert Geis, “Revisiting Blumberg’s ‘The Practice of Law as a Confidence Game.’” 31:1 *Criminal Justice Ethics* 31 (2012).

Optional Readings:

- “After the JD: First Results of a National Study of Legal Careers.” *American Bar Foundation* (2004).

9. Thursday, February 2nd: Courts – Juries

Required Assignment: Shari Seidman Diamond, “Truth, Justice, and the Jury.” 26:1 *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy* 143 (2003).

Optional Readings:

- Harry Kalven Jr. and Hans Zeisel, *The American Jury*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1971).
- Samuel Sommers, “On Racial Diversity and Group Decision Making: Identifying Multiple Effects of Racial Composition on Jury Deliberations.” 90:4 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 597 (2006).

10. Tuesday, February 7th: Prisons – Overview

Required Assignment: Complaint, *Boyd v. Godinez*.

Optional Readings:

- Alan Eisner, *Gates of Injustice: The Crisis in America’s Prisons*. FT Press (2006).
- Atul Gawande, “Hellhole: The United States Holds Tens of Thousands of Inmates in Long-Term Solitary Confinement. Is This Torture?” *The New Yorker* (2009).

11. Thursday, February 9th: Prisons – War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration

Required Assignment: Movie: *The House I Live In* (Watch in its entirety – available for rent on Amazon, YouTube, iTunes. Also available on Netflix (on DVD, not streaming) and at library).

Optional Readings:

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press (2012).
- Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure*. Little, Brown and Company (1996).

12. Tuesday, February 14th: Capital Punishment – Normative and Empirical Arguments

Required Assignment:

- Letter from Governor Pete Ricketts to Nebraska Legislature.
- David C. Baldus, Charles Pulaski, & George Woodworth, “Comparative Review of Death Sentences: An Empirical Study of the Georgia Experience.” 74:3 *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 661 (1983) [Selection].
- Hashem Dezhbakhsh and Paul H. Rubin, “Does Capital Punishment Have a Deterrent Effect? New Evidence From Postmoratorium Panel Data.” 5:2 *American Law and Economics Review* 344 (2003). [Selection]

Optional Readings:

- Matthew H. Kramer, *The Ethics of Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and its Consequences*. Oxford Scholarship (2011). Available here: <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199642182.001.0001/acprof-9780199642182>
- J. Daryl Charles, *The Ethics of Capital Punishment*. 17:1 *Christian Research Journal* (1994).
- Isaac Ehrlich, “The Deterrent Effect of Capital Punishment: A Question of Life and Death.” *NBER Working Paper* (1973).
- William J. Bowers & Glenn L. Pierce, “The Illusion of Deterrence in Isaac Ehrlich’s Research on Capital Punishment.” 85:2 *The Yale Law Journal* 187 (1975).

13. Thursday, February 16th: ***NO CLASS***

Required Assignment: Movie: *13th*. Watch in its entirety (available on Netflix streaming) and complete response paper.

Optional Readings: None

Friday, February 17th: Unit II Paper Due on Canvas by 5 PM.

Unit III: Emerging Areas of Research

14. Tuesday, February 21st: Crime and Media – Crime in the News

Required Assignment:

- Seong-Jae Min & John C. Feaster, “Missing Children in National News Coverage: Racial and Gender Representations of Missing Children Cases.” 27:3 *Communication Research Reports* 207 (2014).
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “The Invisible Weight of Whiteness: The Racial Grammar of Everyday Life in Contemporary America.” 35:2 *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 173 (2011). [Selection].

Optional Readings:

- Sarah Stillman, "'The Missing White Girl Syndrome': Disappeared Women and Media Activism." 15:3 *Media* (2007).
- Travis L. Dixon, Cristina L. Azocar, and Michael Casas, "The Portrayal of Race and Crime on Television Network News." 47:4 *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 498 (2003).

15. Thursday, February 23rd: Crime and Media – Crime in Pop Culture

Required Assignment: Nicole E. Rader and Gayle M. Rhineberger-Dunn, "A Typology of Victim Characterization in Television Crime Dramas." 17:1 *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 231 (2010).

Optional Readings:

- Andrew Selepak, "Skinhead Super Mario Brothers: An Examination of Racist and Violent Games on White Supremacist Web Sites." 17:1 *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 1 (2010).

16. Tuesday, February 28th: International Crime – The ICC and War Crimes

Required Assignment: Jack L. Goldsmith, "The Self-Defeating International Criminal Court." 70 *University of Chicago Law Review* 89 (2003).

Optional Readings:

- ICC website (https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/about%20the%20court/Pages/about%20the%20court.aspx).
- Marlise Simons, "Hague Court May Prosecute in South Ossetia War." *The New York Times* (2015).
- Teresa Welsh, "U.N. Reports Finds Israelis, Palestinians Could be Guilty of War Crimes." *U.S News and World Report* (2015).

17. Thursday, March 2nd: International Crime – Terrorism, Crime, and Religion

Required Assignment:

- Oliver Libaw, "How Do You Define Terrorism?" *ABCNews* (2015). Available here: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=92340&page=1>
- "Terminology to Define the Terrorists: Recommendations from American Muslims." *U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (2008).

Optional Readings:

- Video: "Sam Harris vs. Reza Aslan – Their Views on Charlie Hebdo Attack." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2RXBy7NTQo>)
- Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. Random House (2004).

Friday, March 3rd: Final Papers can be submitted starting at 5 PM on Canvas.

18. Tuesday, March 7th: Gangs

Required Assignment: David J. Bordua, "Delinquent Subcultures: Sociological Interpretations of Gang Delinquency." 338 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 119 (1961).

Optional Readings:

- Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Study of Delinquent Gangs*. Routledge (2013).
- Frederic Milton Thrasher and James F. Short, *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. University of Chicago Press (1963).

Friday, March 17th: Final submission deadline for any papers at 5 PM on Canvas. To be clear, this deadline applies to a first submission of the final paper, as well as revisions of any of the three assignments.