

CRJU 343 Crime and Culture Syllabus

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Description of the course:

In this course we will focus on several aspects of culture and justice in America and across the globe. We will study both the positive and negative aspects of difference and deviance in anthropological (holistic) and identity politics perspectives. We will approach culture as the human understanding and creation of “differences that matter,” differences that reflect values, symbols and rituals as well as social control in criminal justice. To this end we will study social difference and diversity in subcultures in the United States as well as issues of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination as it effects justice practices in courts, policing and corrections.

We will also study individuals and groups that define their cultural difference through their radical behavior from the political right and left. We will study cases of school shooters and school cultures, charismatic criminal leaders, cults and prophets and terror groups as manifestations and interpretations of cultural difference where these leaders seek to change, rebel against and overthrow cultural values they oppose.

Finally we will study social difference as a resource, deviance as a potential for growth, a way of peacemaking and a social advantage, evolutionary and hybrid. That is, we will study our own and other cultures also as attempts to use diversity of race, ethnicity, gender and religion as an intellectual, social and political strength. Social change is often a positive force for justice around the world and we will study how we can be a part of this force for good.

Students will also read a case study of how a town in the US has fallen apart and is seeking hope for its drug and crime problems. We will read Nick Reding’s *Methland* which describes the social and economic pressures, conflicts and criminal violence, addiction and frightening deviant creativity found in small town America. We will discuss this book throughout the course as an example of American culture at its most economically despairing but also at its point, as Reding says, of hopeful transformation and realistic appraisal of the ravages of drug addiction, its supply and its demand.

Readings (AT WSC BOOKSTORE)

Investigating Difference: Human and Cultural Relations in Criminal Justice (2009)

978-0-20-561021-1

0-20-561021-8

AUTHORS: (group edited text) The criminology and criminal justice collective of Northern Arizona University

PRENTICE HALL PEARSON 2ND EDITION

Methland: The death and life of an American small town, 2009 by Nick Reding and **ISBN-10:** 1596916508 **ISBN-13:** 978-1596916500

Outcomes

Critical Thinking- We will emphasize the economic, anomic, subcultural and control theories of difference and deviance and cross-cultural worldviews that define and create change and the prevention that can channel that energy into positive action. We will look specifically at labeling theories and conflict perspectives, that is, who has the socio-political power to define what groups are “Other” and what behavior is deviant and often therefore criminal. We will also examine ideology and the role that the media, the

government, academia and the military play in projecting ideologies. Question: Do American passively let the media and powerful political forces define our difference, our language, our symbols and our cultural values? How?

Communication- Students will have a variety of written and internet-related assignments that touch on many cases and theories in cultural difference. Exams and response papers will be primarily essay and opinion/response papers. I hope to encourage many active discussions/chats online about the case studies described in the books we are using.

Computing Skills- Students are encouraged to use all of the resources in the class and to do their own internet searches and research for paper topics and information they need for essays and discussions. Motivated students can also use powerpoint and visuals to accompany their essay work.

Quantitative Reasoning- Some basic concepts for reading statistics in social science research will be presented. Students should know enough statistics to read the average Criminal Justice journal such as those published by the ACJS.

Ethical Decision-Making- The entire course of readings in this crime and culture, difference and deviance, course are aimed to instill ethical decision-making and a sense of justice as “truth in action” in our students. Because we are studying power relations and definitions of deviance, ethics, fairness and a humanistic perspective are essential. Students will question how they create and label others and other cultures and subcultures. Student will be asked about the standards that the powerful use to define deviance and criminality. Why do definitions of crime and deviance change over time and between socio-cultural groups? Why do we have mentally ill people in prison when they should be protected by law? We will also learn basic concepts of restorative justice, a profound and ethically-driven theory and practice of criminal justice as peacemaking (many ideas of which are gleaned from other cultures).

Understanding of Diversity- This course is uniquely able to address diversity issues as we focus on race, class, gender, religious and age and disability issues and the justice for these populations in American culture and across the globe. This course actively engages students about issues of discrimination and prejudice as well as what happens when oppressed groups seek to change society through positive political advocacy or radical violent means. In our case studies we will note recent challenges and debates over racial profiling from the Gates/Crowley Cambridge case to cases in the wake of 9/11.

Student Conduct: Plagiarism will be reported to college administrators to determine the appropriate course of action. Plagiarism results from buying, stealing or borrowing a paper, using a source too closely when paraphrasing, building on someone else’s ideas without citation, copying from another source (on purpose or not) without citing. Plagiarism is easy to avoid by citing the source of your information. See me if you are uncertain or have questions about sources for a paper.

From the Classroom Student Conduct Policy: “Westfield State College students are prohibited from engaging in behavior or activity that causes the disruption of teaching, learning, research, and other academic activities recognized as necessary to the fulfillment of the College mission... When disruptive behavior occurs in the classroom, a faculty member has the right to remove the student from the classroom. The faculty member will communicate the reason for the removal to the student and indicate the expected appropriate conduct.”

Grading

Weekly essays = 60%

Discussion responses = 20% (Chapters from Text and Methland will require responses, Attendance is included in this grade)

Final POWERPOINT (suggested format) presentation = 20%

Schedule of Readings:

Introduction to Course

Chapter One: Introduction Investigating Difference

CASE STUDY discussion about criminal justice cases with cultural (race, class, gender ethnicity etc.) significance from Gates-Crowley, Katrina, Sotomayor/New Haven case, Utah etc. How do anthropological and cultural studies/identity studies help us prevent criminal justice injustices and even catastrophes?

FILM: "The Lives of Others" on Soviet Culture in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall

Chapter One: Investigating Difference

What is difference, culture, diversity, multiculturalism, ethnicity? General course vocabulary and criminal justice terms.

Chapter One Read and continue defining basic cultural terms.

Chapter Two: Conceptualizing Difference

Study Vocabulary

Chapter Three: Privilege and the Construction of Crime

Chapter Four: Talking Through our Differences: Intercultural and Interpersonal Communication

Chapter Five: Social Class, Crime, and Justice

How does poverty affect the justice and social control of law enforcement in cases as diverse as Katrina and Haiti natural disasters or local cases such as the US implementation of drug laws?

We will use Methland as an example of class conflict and class encouragement to crime. Does growing up in poverty encourage meth addiction? Addiction seems to affect all class, race and gender groups, but the poorest get prison time and the wealthiest seem to get rehabilitation much more often.

Chapter Six: Stolen Lands, Stolen Lives: Native Americans and Criminal Justice

Supplement with questions: Who Defines Native American Identity? Also study Casino Politics, Reservation Laws, film "Frozen River" and scenes from "Smoke Signals"

Chapter Seven: Exclusion, Inclusion, and Violence: Immigrants and Criminal Justice

Supplement with questions: Why do immigrant groups form their own informal "social control" and police? film "The Godfather"

Chapter Eight: The Significance of Race: African American and Criminal Justice

Supplement with questions about case studies: OJ Simpson, Gates-Crowley arrest, Susan Smith false accusation murder case etc.

film "Ghost Dog"

Chapter Nine: Unwelcome Citizens: Latinos and the Criminal Justice System

Supplement with the debates about the recent appointment of Judge Sonia Sotomayor

Chapter Ten: Perpetual Outsiders: Criminal Justice and the Asian American Experience

Supplement with studies of Yakuza

Chapter Eleven: Women's Difference in the Criminal Justice System: Constructions of Victims, Offenders

and Workers

Supplement with "Monster" scenes from documentary on Eileen Wuornos, Susan Smith case, Yates case etc. Violent crime among women is on the rise but still only about 7% of total violent crimes.

NY Times article on "Godmother's of the Italian Mafia" link through the WSC Portal/ Course on Plato

Chapter Twelve: Gay Men, Lesbians, and Criminal Justice

Supplement with the response to the AIDS crisis, and with scenes from "Tough Guise" and Gay/Lesbian Civil Union and Marriage Laws

Chapter Thirteen: Old Enough and Knowing Better: Aging and Criminal Justice

Changing economy and job market means older criminals-article

Chapter Fourteen: Youth Crimes and Justice in a Changing Society

Majority of Crime committed by young men, also majority of victims are young men.

Supplement with scenes from documentary "Girlhood" and fiction film "Thirteen," and new laws that lower the age of which a person can be charged as an adult

Chapter Fifteen: The invisible Minority: Individuals with Disability

Supplement with laws on disability rights and how they benefit everyone.

Religion, persecution, cults and prophets: We will study the Waco Branch Davidian Case, Heaven's Gate in California, Jim Jones in Guyana as well as the Aum Shinriko in Japan and recent terrorism post 9-11.

Chapter Sixteen: In Whose God We Trust? Religious Difference, Persecution, and Criminal Justice. From Salem to today. Also cults, prophets and secret societies as subcultures of control and power.

Chapter Seventeen: Undocumented immigration as moral panic: Casting difference as threat

Supplement with early American moral panics over alcohol, marijuana and immigrant influence, also the politicization of "terror threat" colors in Tom Ridge's book. Look at new laws on immigrant rights/schooling/healthcare/driver's licenses/workers visas or green cards, compare US to Germany etc. gastarbeiter

Read and discuss Methland, the story of a small town and the causes and consequences of Meth addiction and production in the Midwest US.

ELY LIBRARY RESEARCH DAY FOR FINAL CASE STUDIES

Preparation for Student final projects: What is your topic for a final presentation to class. Using our text, prepare a cultural case study of your own. I suggest using POWERPOINT to convey your ideas in a brief but clear manner.

Student final projects week. ELY LIBRARY RESEARCH DAY. If you need extra help, meet with Professor Stassinis at Ely Library and meet with your project group or individually to work on your project. Projects done alone get 5-7 minutes, in group get 10 minutes to present research and a thesis to the class.

Final Project is worth 10% of your grade. Powerpoint presentations are encouraged as is visual creativity and presentation of qualitative and quantitative data. Each group member should contribute 3-5 slides with evidence of research, contribution towards the group thesis or argument of your project with use of our text and discussion from this course.

For example, possible project questions might include:

Are there differences between the type and frequency of crimes committed on Native American Reservations than crimes in the general American population? What is the role of race, ethnicity and class in the relationships between Native American Reservations and police?

What are the roles of gangs and teenager/juvenile crime in Chinese communities as compared with gangs in Latino, Black and Irish communities? What race, class and gender factors might allow for the corruption and escape of Whitey Bulger as opposed to the executed gang leader Tookie Williams?

What is contributing to the increase of arrests and violent offenses by women and girls in the US?

What are "hate crimes?" Are there differences between US and Japan and Italy for "hate crimes" or crimes of similar motivation (if the definition is different in different countries? What cultural factors influence bullying and violence in schools and the workplace?

Final Projects and any late work due last day of course.