

Sociology 10: Issues in Crime and Social Control
Fall, 1999

Instructor: Dr. Bohsiu Wu

Office: Amandor 453c

Office Hours: MW 12:00 –1:00 p.m., or by appointment

Campus Phone: 278-6678

Introduction

Opinion polls in the US consistently show that Americans are very concerned about crime. People are disgusted with criminals and the damage they create but are frustrated with how the criminal justice system handles them. People are also intrigued by crimes and criminals per se--just go through the list of movie titles to see how many of them are about crimes and criminals. Pretty much everyone has a theory about why some people commit crimes while others in the same circumstances do not. Also, pretty much every concerned citizen has a pet strategy in dealing with criminals. “Lock them up and throw the key away” was once a headline in a prominent regional newspaper. Some of these ideas sound good intuitively, but whether they make any logical sense deserves a careful examination. This course gives students an opportunity to learn how to carefully examine ideas and policies related to crime.

This course serves as an introduction to the study of crime and social control from a sociological perspective. Unlike a common sense understanding of crimes, which often focuses on individualistic factors, such as greed, anger, etc., this course will lead students to examine the broader social contexts that affect the occurrence of crimes and implementation of social control. A combination of lecture, class discussion, small group discussion, and other class activities will be used to lead students into the field of sociological study of crimes.

Textbooks*

Huff, Ronald. *Gangs in America*. 1996. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Walker, Samuel. *Sense and Nonsense about Crime and Drugs*. 1998. 4th edition.
Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

*Supplemental reading material will be handed out in class by the instructor.

Grading Policy

Students' grades will be based upon exams (60%), quizzes (10%), attendance/participation records (10%), and a term paper (20%).

Exams:

There will be a midterm (30%) and a non-cumulative final (30%) exam for this course. All question items will be multiple choice. The exams will cover reading materials from both textbooks and supplemental readings handed out in class. No make-up exams are allowed unless a documented medical emergency prevents a student from taking the scheduled exams. If such an unfortunate case occurs, students are responsible for contacting the instructor to schedule the make-up exam, which may include extra materials. Each week the instructor will read one or two questions in class to familiarize students with the style of exam questions. Modification of the read questions will be adopted for the midterm and final exam.

Quizzes:

There will be two announced quizzes in the semester to refresh students' comprehension of discussed materials. As with the exams, all quizzes will be multiple choice.

Attendance/Participation:

There will be various types of classroom activities designed to facilitate students' critical thinking abilities; therefore, active participation and regular class attendance are necessary for a satisfactory class performance. Students will be evaluated by their degree of participation and attendance records throughout the semester.

Paper:

A 1500-word paper is required for this course. Since this is an introductory course in crime and social control, students are encouraged to discuss and explore possible topics with the instructor as early as possible. All topics have to deal with subject matter covered in the course. The paper should focus on the research findings involving the chosen topic. The paper should not become an opinion essay where a certain unexamined position is advocated. For example, if the topic is on the death penalty, a paper that expresses one's feelings toward criminals and capital punishment only shows that the author neglects or even does not understand the complicated effects of the death penalty on violent crime rates, the perception of the criminal justice system, etc.. A strong paper dealing with the same topic should discuss the interactive relationship between death penalty and the public's sentiment toward punishment based on solid research findings.

To complete the term paper, students need to submit a topic proposal in the early part of the semester. The instructor will evaluate the feasibility of the submitted topic and make subsequent recommendations. Topic proposal needs to spell out the specific topic and include a 50-word description on the content of the paper. At least five academic references, which can be books or research journals, are required for the final paper. Textbooks for this course cannot be counted as references. All written assignments need

to be typed to be accepted.

The term paper is due on the last day of class, December 8, 1999!

Course Schedule

Week of Aug. 30

Diversity and Change in US Gangs (J. Short, Jr., **GIA**: vii-xviii)
Introduction (R. Huff, **GIA**:xxi-xxvii)

Week of Sept. 6

Defining Gang Homicide (C. Maxson and M. Klein, **GIA**)
Estimating the National Scope of Gang Crime From Law Enforcement Data
(G. Curry et al., **GIA**)

Week of Sept. 13

Gangs, Drugs, and Neighborhood Change (J. Fagan, **GIA**)
The Criminal Behavior of Gang Members and Nongang At-risk Youth
(R. Huff, **GIA**)

Week of Sept. 20

The Criminal Behavior of Gang Members and Nongang At-risk Youth
(R. Huff, **GIA**)
Breaking the Bonds of Membership (S. Decker and J. Lauristen, **GIA**)

Quiz #1 (Sept. 22)

Week of Sept. 27

Southern California Gangs (J. Vigil and S Yun, **GIA**)
Gang Violence in Chinatown (K. Chin, **GIA**)

Week of Oct. 4

Girls, Delinquency, and Gang Membership (M. Chesney-Lind et al., **GIA**)
What Happens to Girls in the Gang (J. Moore and J. Hagedorn, **GIA**)

Topic proposal due (Oct. 4)

Week of Oct. 11

The Community Response to Gangs (**GIA**)

Midterm (Oct. 18)

Week of Oct. 18

Crime and Policy (**Walker**: Chap 1)

Week of Oct. 25

Models of Criminal Justice (**Walker**: Chap 2)

The Going Rate (**Walker**: Chap 3)

Week of Nov. 1

The Career Criminal (**Walker**: Chap 4)

“Get Tough”: *The Conservative Attack on Crime*

Unleash the Cops (**Walker**: Chap 5)

Week of Nov. 8

Deter the Criminals (**Walker**: Chap 6)

Lock ‘Em Up (**Walker**: Chap 7)

Week of Nov. 15

Close the Loopholes (**Walker**: Chap 8)

The Middle Ground: Guns and Victims

Protect the Victims (**Walker**: Chap 9)

Quiz #2 (Nov. 17)

Week of Nov. 22

Control Gun Crimes (**Walker**: Chap 10)

Reform: The Liberal Prescription

Treat ‘Em (**Walker**: Chap 11)

Week of Nov. 29

Reform the Law and the System (**Walker**: Chap 12)

The Drug Problem

Sense and Nonsense about Drugs (**Walker**: Chap 13)

Week of Dec. 6

The Paradox of Crime and Crime Policy (**Walker**: Chap 14)

Conclusion

Final Exam: Dec. 13