

Sociology 155 Criminology
Gated Communities for the Poor:
The Prison Industrial Complex: Principles, Processes, Products

T-W-Th 10:30-1pm, Summer 2005
250 Amador

Kevin Wehr
453d Amador 278.4277
Open hours 1-2 T-W-Th
kwehr@csus.edu
www.csus.edu/soc/kwehr

Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty. These problems often are veiled by being conveniently grouped together under the category “crime” and by the automatic attribution of criminal behavior to people of color. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.

Angela Davis, 1998

At various times in history, prisoners have been thought of as sinners, deviants, or members of an oppressed class. As we approach the twenty-first century, they have now become mere commodities in the eyes of global entrepreneurs.

Marc Mauer, 1999

This course in criminology will examine a series of perspectives on crime and crime control; in particular we will deeply examine one concept for understanding the modern U.S. criminal justice system: the prison industrial complex. This approach is intended to offer a framework for understanding the wide array of political, historical, and theoretical issues that are at play in the U.S. today. The course will ask students to examine the criminal justice system with a critical eye: questioning assumptions and thinking creatively about solutions. Students will be evaluated based on several short paper assignments and written lecture responses.

There are three required texts, available at the Hornet Bookstore, and one required reader, online at my website (listed above). A copy of all texts will also be on reserve at the Library. **Students are expected to keep up on the readings and come to lecture**, where we will discuss the readings. There will be no exams. Instead, students will be given the opportunity to explore ideas and issues in a series of response papers: The emphasis of the course is on ideas.

I am available outside of the office hours above—email me to set up an appointment. ***Please use my office hours!*** The more that people come to raise issues and to ask clarifying questions, the better I can improve the quality of the course. ***Your best bet for a quick response is to email me.*** I check this regularly (usually several times a day).

Required Texts:

- *Online course reader.*
- *Criminological Theories.* Ronald Akers (3rd or 4th edition)
- *Malign Neglect.* Michael Tonry
- *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Angela Davis

Week 1. Intro, policing

Reader: “Critical thinking”; “White privilege”; “The rich get richer”

Tonry: Preface-123

Week 2. Courts, prison, death

Tonry: 124-209

reader: “Sing Sing”; “Riker’s High”; “To Kill or not To Kill”

Week 3. Sociological theories I

Akers pp. 45-67, 17-42, 81-158, 159-189, 219-234

Week 4. Sociological theories I

Akers pp. 191-244, 245-266

Week 5. Inequality and Crime

Reader: “Race, Crime and Urban Inequality” ; “White collar crime”

Week 6. The Prison Industrial Complex

Reader: “The PIC”

Davis, 9-115

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS

Catalog description

The social dimensions—causes and consequences—of adult crime and deviant behavior in American society. There will be some international comparisons. Police, courts, and prison are examined. We will pay special attention to current issues in crime and deviance. This is a General Education course in area D2.

Learning objectives

1. To understand social and spatial variations in crime patterns. 2. To explore the impact and effect of diversity (race, class, gender) on the criminal justice system. 3. To become familiar with crime causation theories. 4. To explore international comparisons in criminal behavior patterns. 5. To become familiar with some of the major social issues prominent in the criminal justice system. 6. To evaluate research efforts of women and minority scholars.

COURSEWORK COMPONENTS AND FINAL GRADES:

There are 3 distinct components of coursework for this class:

- 18 IN-CLASS COMMENT CARDS (one per lecture)
- 6 TWO-PAGE RESPONSE ASSIGNMENTS (one each week)
- 1 TEN-PAGE (TYPED DOUBLE SPACED) ESSAY

These coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. The IN-CLASS RESPONSE PAPERS are to be a thoughtful response to the lecture that critical engages with the substantive material of the course. The TWO-PAGE RESPONSE PAPERS are designed to engage the readings for the week. The ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS give you a chance to engage with an entire section of the course: readings, lectures, and outside material. All assignments will be assessed as “PASS” or “NO PASS.” *You will receive a “no pass” on an assignment if you do not engage with the readings, if the paper is not understandable due to grammar/spelling, or if you plagiarize.*

To receive a passing grade (D-) for this course you must submit (on time) at least half of ALL of the assignments for each of the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS (9 cards, 3 response papers and 1 essay). . (NOTE: I reserve the right to add new assessment tools to this syllabus, including, but not limited to pop quizzes, exams, or reading journals.)

Your final grade is then based upon whether you complete the rest of the assignments for each COURSEWORK COMPONENT or not. Therefore,

To earn a D, you must complete the above PLUS 1 COURSEWORK COMPONENT

To earn a C, you must complete the above PLUS 2 COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn a B, you must complete all of the COURSEWORK COMPONENTS

To earn an A, you must complete ALL coursework components and have your work be CONSISTENTLY OUTSTANDING. This is indicated by a STAR on the returned assignment. This is not difficult to achieve, but requires more effort than simply doing the “busy work.” Grades of C+ or A- (etc.) will be assigned for partial work, partial completion of a component, or for other circumstances. **It is always to your advantage to turn in a partially completed assignment.**

PLEASE NOTE:

- **THERE IS NO NEED TO EXPLAIN YOUR ABSENCE FROM LECTURE.**
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS, EMAILED PAPERS, PAPERS PUT IN MY MAILBOX, OR UNDER MY OFFICE DOOR.**
- **YOU CANNOT TURN IN MULTIPLE PAPERS OF THE SAME COMPONENT IN ANY GIVEN LECTURE.**
- **PLAGIARISM IS A VERY SERIOUS ISSUE AND WILL BE DEALT WITH FIRMLY.**

It is expected that you will turn in your own work. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting or paraphrasing without citation, using another student’s work from this semester or the past, using your own work from another class (either this semester or from the past), or using quotes or full papers from the internet. If you don’t know what plagiarism is, please go to <<http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMP14150.htm>> to educate yourself. Above all, please act with integrity—do not risk your academic career, it’s not worth it.

COURSEWORK COMPONENT GUIDELINES

The coursework components are designed to give you credit for attending lecture, reading, thinking critically about the content of lectures and readings, and writing down your ideas on the content of lectures and readings. The point is to engage with the ideas in the class. All assignments will be assessed as “PASS” or “NO PASS.”

The **IN-CLASS RESPONSE PAPERS** are to be a thoughtful response to the lecture. Write your comments on the normal 3x5 card provided during each lecture. Though they are informal, the cards do need to be thoughtful and insightful. I will accept personal observations or the relating of personal experiences only if they apply directly to the content of the lecture. I will not accept personal experiences if they are banal and relate only tangentially, or if the relation is not clearly stated. For instance, an acceptable response paper might read: “Racial profiling is certainly a problem, even in Sacramento. While racial profiling is a national problem, it is also a local one. I was pulled over one time when everyone else on the highway was driving the same speed, but I feel that because I am black I was singled out...etc, etc.” An unacceptable response paper might say “The pigs pulled me over for speeding one time, but I think it was really racial profiling. It sucked, man.”

The **TWO-PAGE RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT** is a more in-depth response to the readings, but you are limited to just two pages. This is designed to give you an opportunity for more in-depth comment and analysis of the readings for the. As with the response paper, you should stick to just a few ideas and carefully explain your response to them. Consider this a formal assignment: it should be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. You can only turn these in during lectures that you attend.

The **ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS** give you a chance to engage with an entire section of the course: readings, lectures, and outside material. The essay should be typed, double-spaced, and copy-edited. Treat this as a formal essay of about six pages (1500 words). It should tie together the readings, lecture, and at least **two** outside academic sources (that is, scholarly journals or books), and it **must** include a bibliography and inter-textual citations. ***Internet sources, newspaper articles, and magazines are not accepted unless you get prior approval.*** As with any formal essay it should have an introduction, the substance of your argument, and a conclusion. This assignment is meant to give you an opportunity to think carefully and deeply about a single topic. Choose one idea or subject that was covered in the readings or discussed in lecture. Think through your approach to the topic: what interests you about it? What do you know already and what do you want to know? Design a question or thesis about the topic, and then search for outside sources. Write up your thoughts on the material you researched in a formal six-page essay. Feel free to use creative forms of presentation—but check with me first. Your paper at the very least should demonstrate your understanding of the issues involved and arguments made regarding crime in the US—especially in regards to social, spatial, and economic variation—as well as the impact of diversity on crime and the criminal justice system and the contributions of people of diverse backgrounds.