

APPENDIX B

Sociology 443: Crime & Society

Dr. Jana Pershing
Course Syllabus
Spring Semester, 2005

Office: Nasatir Hall, Room 207
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:15-1:45 p.m. (&, by appointment)
Office Phone #: 594-4844
E-mail: jpershin@mail.sdsu.edu

Introduction and Goals of the Course

All of us know what crimes are. They are acts forbidden by public law and, consequently, make the alleged offenders liable to formal punishment. However, this definition is limited. In this course, a broader conception of crime will be employed, which entails examining how specific behaviors and social conditions become defined and reacted to as criminal. Central to this conception of crime is how societal fears and perceptions about crime are socially constructed.

The course is a survey course divided into substantive topics within the field of criminology. For example, we will look at factors correlated with crime like age, gender and social class. We will also examine different types of crimes including vice, violent and elite crimes. With each substantive topic, we will discuss different theoretical orientations that shed light on the sources of crime and its causes. Towards the end of the course, we will examine how the criminal justice system operates, both in theory and in practice, and will discuss some longstanding controversial crime control issues. In addition to learning about the sociological study of crime, you will have the opportunity to apply course materials to contemporary, controversial crime control issues, which will require you to weigh several sides of a 'problem' and to critique your own perceptions.

Lectures and assignments are designed to provide current sociological theories and research in response to three over-arching questions that serve as a foundation for studying crime and serve as our *course objectives*:

- 1) *How is 'crime' a social construction (or, a relative phenomenon)?*
- 2) *What myths surround crime and criminal justice and what are the sources of these myths, misperceptions and misinformation?*
- 3) *What are the causes and correlates of crime in the United States, and does the criminal justice system effectively address the true sources of crime?*

Course Readings

** Course readings can be purchased at Aztec Shops. There are two required readings:

1) Criminology: A Contemporary Handbook, edited by Joseph Sheley. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. 2000, 3rd edition.

- *This is your primary text—it parallels and supplements the lecture material.*

2) Kotlowitz, Alex, There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America. New York, NY: Anchor Books. 1991.

- *This case study of two boys growing up in an under-class, urban community will be the basis of your critical reading essay assignment.*

Course Requirements and Grades

Exam 1: 25%
Exam 2: 25%
Critical Reading Essay: 15%
Group Debate: 15% (*this is a group grade*)
Debate Critique: 10%
Attendance on Group Debate Meeting Days: 5%
Attendance on Group Debate Delivery Days: 5%

NOTE: While 15% of your course grade is based on your group's debate presentation, 85% of your grade is determined exclusively by you.

Course Policies

- 1) Although attendance is not monitored (exceptions noted below) on standard lecture/discussion days, attendance is required and expected in order for you to do well in the class. You are responsible for missed lecture material. If you are absent on the day that handouts are circulated, you may pick up copies that will be available in a file folder on my office door (Nasatir Hall, Room 207).
- 2) NO exam make-ups and NO rescheduling of presentation dates; late essays NOT accepted.
- 3) Group debate assignments will be made on **Tuesday, February 8th**. Attendance is required on this date in order for you to be assigned to a group. If you are absent, you will not be assigned to a group and will receive a zero for the group debate project assignments (which is 30% of your grade). Time will be set aside for you to meet in your groups on four other class dates: **February 24th, March 1st, April 5th, and April 19th**. Attendance will also be monitored on these dates.
- 4) When you convene in your groups for the first time, exchange names, telephone numbers and E-mail addresses with one another. Please inform me if one or more group members drops the class. As a courtesy, notify your group if you drop the class.
- 5) TURN CELL PHONE RINGERS AND PAGER BEEPERS OFF.

Exams

You will be responsible for taking two exams. The first exam will cover the first five weeks of course material, and the second exam will cover the next six weeks of the course material. The exam format will be multiple choice questions. You will need to bring a scantron form (882-ES-LOVAS or 882-ES (green and white form)) and a #2 pencil to each exam.

Critical Reading Essay

You will write one essay (4-6 pages in length), applying course material learned throughout the semester to issues addressed in the book, *There Are No Children Here*. Instructions for this assignment are included at the end of the syllabus. I will discuss the instructions in class on Thursday, March 10th, and the essay is due Thursday, April 28th.

Group Debate, Essay, and Attendance

You will have the opportunity to conduct a 30-minute group debate with three other classmates on one controversial crime control issue (i.e. 'Should the death penalty be abolished?'). Debates will be delivered the last three weeks of the semester. In addition to delivering a presentation, you will write a short (2-3 page) critique of your debate

group's presentation. Attendance is required on group meeting days as well as the actual presentation/delivery days. Detailed instructions for all debate assignments are distributed separately and will be explained in detail on **February 8th** when you are assigned to a group.

Extra-Credit

You will have two opportunities to receive extra-credit:

1. If you regularly participate in class discussions, I will raise your final course grade by one-third of a letter-grade. Example: if your final course grade is a "B-", I will raise your grade to a "B". To receive this form of extra-credit, participation must be *thoughtful* and *constructive*.
2. If you improve your second exam score by at least one full-letter-grade, I will raise your final course grade by one-third of a letter-grade. Example: if you receive a "C" on the first exam and then receive a "B" (or better) on your second exam, I will raise your final course grade by one-third of a letter-grade (i.e. from a "B-" to a "B").

Weekly Outlines: Exam Dates and Other Due Dates

Week 1

Topic: Introduction to Criminology

Readings: "Introduction" (pp. 1-9), Chapter 2 (pp. 33-44 only) [Sheley text]

Week 2

Topic: Research Methods & Measurement of Crime

Readings: Chapters 1 & 3 [Sheley text]

Week 3

Topic: Correlates of Crime- Age & Gender; Micro-Level Theories of Crime

Readings: Chapters 4, 13 (pp. 356-365 only) & 14 (pp. 379-383 only) [Sheley text]

*** FEBRUARY 8th: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE DAY--** GROUP DEBATE MEETING #1 following the assignment of debate groups

Week 4

Topic: Vice Crime- Prostitution; Labeling Theory

Readings: Chapters 9 (pp. 238-243 only) [Sheley text]

Weeks 5 & 6 (Tuesday)

* **EXAM 1**-- February 22nd

* **FEBRUARY 24th: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE DAY**-- GROUP DEBATE MEETING #2A
- I will meet with Groups 1 through 6 to discuss group outlines.

* **MARCH 1st: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE DAY**—GROUP DEBATE MEETING #2B
- I will meet with Groups 7 through 12 to discuss group outlines.

Weeks 6 (Thursday) & Week 7 (Tuesday)

Topic: Vice Crime- Drugs

Readings: Chapters 9 (pp. 233-238 & 251-257 only) & 19 [Sheley text]

Weeks 7 (Thursday) & Week 8

Topic: Correlates of Crime- Class & Race; Structural & Cultural Explanations of Crime; Violent Crime

Readings: Chapters 5, 7, 20, 13 (pp. 349-356 only) & 14 (pp. 376-379 only) [Sheley text] AND “Preface” & Chapters 1-6 [Kotlowitz book]

Week 9

Topic: Issues in Crime & Social Control

Readings: Chapters 22 & 14 (pp. 388-392 only) [Sheley text] AND Chapters 7-10 [Kotlowitz book]

SPRING BREAK: March 28 – April 1

Weeks 10 & 11

Topic: Elite Crime

Readings: Chapters 11 [Sheley text]

* **APRIL 5th: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE DAY**— GROUP DEBATE MEETING #3

* **EXAM 2**-- April 14th

Week 12

Topic: Group Debates

Readings: Chapters 11-25 (Kotlowitz book)

*** APRIL 19th: MANDATORY ATTENDANCE DAY-- GROUP DEBATE MEETING #4**

Week 13

Topic: Group Debates

Readings: Chapters 26-31, "Epilogue" & "A Note on Reporting Methods" [Kotlowitz book]

*** Critical Reading Essay Due (at the beginning of the class period, April 28th)**

Week 14

Topic: Group Debates

Readings: none

Week 15 (Tuesday)

Topic: Group Debates

Readings: none