

Honors Criminal Behavior 0912 Syllabus: Fall Semester 2009

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Wood, Department of Criminal Justice
Office: Rm 527, Gladfelter Hall
Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:00 or by appointment
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Class location and time

T/Th 12:30-1:50, Weiss Hall 642

Course description

The media feeds us with a steady dose of sensational headlines that both shock and enthrall. This course is designed to captivate students, engaging them in thinking deeply about how to understand criminal behavior and how to address it in order to reduce harm to our society. Our focus will be on street-level crime. What lies behind gang-related crime, violence and drug markets, and what is to be done about these serious and complex social problems? We will explore a range of causal factors, such as influences of family and peers, and economic drivers including the lure of illegal drug markets. And we will examine how the urban and social environment encourages (or inhibits) opportunities to commit crime. We will debate alternative policy responses and think critically about our criminal justice system and why it is limited when it comes to making our society safer. And just in case it isn't clear, this class does not have anything to do with crime scene investigation, though we might critique a show or two in light of our course...

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Understand the complex nature of human behavior
- Apply different theoretical perspectives to problems of gangs, drugs and violence
- Critically analyze existing responses to crime
- Critique the ways in which crime, and responses to it, is presented in the media (film, news)
- Think creatively about innovative responses to crime
- Compare crime issues in Philadelphia and the US with those in other countries

Readings

Most course readings will be posted on Blackboard. Some readings will be available in portable document format (PDF) for your individual, educational use only (in accordance with copyright law). If you don't already have the PDF reader software you can download this for free at www.adobe.com. Readings will be posted at least two weeks ahead of the relevant class period.

Course requirements

You will be assessed in a variety of ways as follows:

Attendance and participation	20%
Reaction papers (2 X 10%)	20%
Field assignment	20%
Film commentaries (2 X 10%)	20%
Conference proposal	20%

Attendance and participation (20%)

I will take attendance at the start of every class. It is essential that you are punctual both to minimize class disruption and to ensure that your name is recorded. Participation in class discussions and activities is vital and of course it helps makes the class more fun. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. I will also take note of the level and quality of your participation throughout the semester. To receive a high attendance grade you will need to come to class regularly and participate actively and consistently throughout the term.

Reaction papers (2 X 10%)

There will be two small writing assignments (to be announced) in which you reflect on a specific question about a class reading, video, field trip or guest presentation, etc... **Questions and due dates for these papers will be announced in class.**

Field assignment (20%)

This is your chance to do some fun field work and test your knowledge about environmental influences on criminal behavior. You will be asked to identify one campus location and one Center City location that you think an offender might select to commit a crime (more later). You will then write a narrative that describes why you selected those locations, documenting the characteristics of each place that make the location amenable to crime. **This report will be due on Tuesday, September 29th.**

Film commentaries (20%)

You will attend two films that will be shown as part of the Monday Night Film Series hosted by the Department of Criminal Justice. Your assignment will be to prepare a commentary on each of these two films, centering on the ways in which each portrays the nature and causes of criminal behavior (and human behavior more generally). These two films are:

Crips and Bloods: Made in America (2008, Stacy Peralta) – shown on Monday, October 12th, Tuttleman 101 at 5:15 pm

Your commentary on *Crips* will be due Tuesday, October 20th (more details to follow)

November 30: *Requiem for a Dream* (2000, Darren Aronofsky) – shown on Monday, November 30th, Tuttleman 101 at 5:15pm.

Your commentary on *Requiem* will be due December 3rd

Note that these films are being shown on Monday nights on campus. I encourage you to watch it at Tuttleman because it will be shown on the big screen and you'll have the opportunity to talk to other students and the film series coordinator, Dr. Kate Auerhahn, about your reactions to the film. However, if it is impossible to view the films at these times you will need to make alternative arrangements such as renting from your local video store or Netflix.

Check out our entire criminal justice film series which is really cool. You can find the listings on our Department of Criminal Justice website at <http://www.temple.edu/cj/>.

Conference proposal (20%)

This assignment will serve as your final take-home exam. You will be asked to prepare a detailed proposal for a hypothetical conference on a specific crime topic (to be discussed). The conference should be designed to offer an inter-disciplinary perspective. You will prepare a detailed outline of the kinds of speakers you would invite and the topics of their presentations. This assignment will be due on **December 17th at 10:30am.**

One additional note: It is possible that I may organize a field trip to a relevant criminal justice landmark or site of interest which would occur during a class period. If this occurs I will give you at least two weeks advance notice.

Class timetable

This outline is subject to change and topics roughly approximate to one week of classes.

1. Intro week
2. Causes of criminal behavior I
3. Causes of criminal behavior II
4. Crime and the media
5. Gangs
6. Drugs
7. Violence
8. Philadelphia stories I
9. Philadelphia stories II
10. Crime in other societies
11. Responding to crime: Courts and corrections
12. Responding to crime: Policing
13. Responding to crime: Beyond criminal justice
14. Responding to crime: Citizen responses
15. Review

Contacting the Instructor

My office is on the 5th floor of Gladfelter Hall, room 527. **My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00pm to 3:00pm.** You may also wish to schedule an appointment via phone or e-mail. My office phone number is 215-204-8055 (on campus ext: 1-8055) and my e-mail address is woodj@temple.edu. I endeavor to respond to voice mails or e-mails as soon as possible unless I am out of town (in which case you'd be given advanced warning). **I prefer to be contacted via e-mail.**

Disability services

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Instructor or Teaching Assistant privately to discuss the situation as soon as possible. Prior to speaking to me, you should contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 (they are at 100 Ritter Annex near the subway station). They can provide support and resources that will be useful for your overall educational experience.

Class Policies

Please note the following rules:

1. Consuming food in the class is disturbing – don't do it.
2. Use of mobile phones and other electronic devices is both distracting and disrespectful – switch them off in class.
3. Deadlines are not negotiable. Completion of all assessed items is compulsory. There are no make-up assessments or extra credit for this class.
4. **Assignments that are submitted late will lose 10% of their individual value for each 24 hours (or part thereof) of a working day that the assignment is late.** This includes days where the Instructor is not in attendance and where the class is not sitting. If I'm not available to receive your assignment, then you must bring it in person to the main office (room 512) of the Criminal Justice Department and leave it for me, after asking one of the office staff to note the date and time on the assignment, and initial it. Written assignments that are more than five days late will not be graded and you will receive 0% for that assignment.
5. It is your responsibility to avoid computer problems by making electronic back-up copies of your assignments in different locations (e.g. hard drive, virtual drive ('my backpack'), or thumb drive). It is also strongly advised to have a back-up hard paper copy. Corrupted or otherwise 'lost' files are not my responsibility, and do not constitute a valid reason for submitting a paper late. In other words, late penalties will apply in such situations.

Academic honesty

The university takes academic honesty very seriously. Plagiarism and academic cheating will not be tolerated. You are encouraged to collaborate and deliberate with your peers in discussing ideas. However, all written work must be your own and other sources must be cited properly. The APA citation guide is posted in Blackboard under the 'course information' tab. The following section in italics is quote verbatim from the Temple University Bulletin for 2006-2007.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for courses -- papers, examinations,

homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations -- is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources -- journals, books, or other media -- these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources -- suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language -- must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.

Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course which was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person.

Students must assume that all graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are to be completed individually unless otherwise noted in class and on the syllabus. I reserve the right to assign a grade of "F" for the given paper, quiz or test and to refer any case of suspected plagiarism or cheating to the University Disciplinary Committee.

Pre and Co-requirements

There are no pre-requisites for this course. This course fulfills the general education human behavior requirement or the core 'in' requirement.

Dropping the course in the first two weeks

During the first two weeks of a session, a student may withdraw from a course with no record of the class appearing on the transcript. This is accomplished with a Schedule Revision (Drop/Add) form, which the student must obtain, and which is processed through a registration office.

The last day to drop this course is **Monday, September 14th**.

Withdrawal from class in weeks three to nine

From week three to week nine, a student may withdraw from a course with the permission of an advisor. The course will be recorded on your transcript with the instructor's notation of 'W'. Withdrawal is accomplished with a Schedule Revision (Drop/Add) form, which the student must obtain, and which is processed through a registration office. The last effective day for withdrawal in this manner is **Monday, November 2nd**.