

Communities and Crime
Sociology 480
Spring 2011
Tuesday, Thursday 12:30 – 1:45 PM

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Office hours: Tuesday, Thursday 2-3 PM and by appointment

This syllabus is a contract. You are responsible for abiding by all policies contained within.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of some of the major sociological topics related to communities and crime. We will analyze the various theories and research that have been done to examine the community context of crime and criminality, as well as consider some of policy implications that may be derived from this research.

In general, each week I will spend Tuesday lecturing on that week's topic, while Thursday will be spent talking about and attempting to answer the discussion questions that students will be required to address.

READINGS:

Required:

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

Paulsen, Derek J. and Matthew B. Robinson. 2004. *Spatial Aspects of Crime: Theory and Practice*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Articles will be available through the course BlackBoard site. Readings marked by an asterisk will be available through the course's electronic reserve site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

• ***EXAMS:***

There will be two take-home essay exams that will cover material from class readings **AND** lectures. Generally, for each exam you will choose 3 out of 4 questions and address each question in about 3 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins.

• ***PAPER***

There will be one 10-12 page paper which should be loosely based on one of the topics we cover in class. The paper should be a synthesis of research studies that are integrated into one theoretical or conceptual framework, like the systemic model, social disorganization theory, routine activities theory, race and community crime rates, parenting and community delinquency rates, etc. This paper will be similar to a literature review of a particular theoretical framework, with an eye towards an original critique of that framework.

All topics must be approved by me by the date of the midterm (March 24). Please see the Writing Guide and Paper Guidelines on BlackBoard for more specifics.

• ***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS***

Each week, students will be given a list of discussion questions that they are to respond to, in writing, and in class. Students will also compose one question of their own. Student responses will be collected every Thursday.

• ***GIS EXERCISES***

Two weeks will be spent in SOCQRL, getting acquainted with GIS and crime-mapping. There will be two related exercises.

• ***ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION***

The essence of this class! See COURSE EXPECTATIONS below.

GRADING

1. Midterm exam:	100 points
2. Final exam:	100 points
3. Paper:	100 points
4. Discussion questions:	100 points
5. Class participation:	100 points
6. GIS Exercises:	50 points
7. Attendance:	50 points
TOTAL	600 points

The grade scale is as follows:

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F= below 60%

IMPORTANT DATES:

Midterm exam handed out:	March 22
Midterm exam due:	March 24
Paper topic due:	March 24
Paper due:	April 19, in class
Final exam due:	May 12, 12 PM

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

I have two general expectations of my students. First, do the assigned readings, and do them before class. Second, attend class, pay attention, and actively participate!

This class *requires* preparation, attention and participation. **Preparation** means critically reading all assigned readings before class, checking Blackboard for any important announcements, and looking over the course schedule to know what we will be doing in class that day. **Attention** means engaging with the material, with me, and with your fellow students; it does not mean reading the newspaper, texting, sleeping or talking with friends. **Participation** means answering questions when asked of you, raising critical comments of the material (using the discussion questions I distribute as a guide), and asking your own questions when you do not understand something.

Attendance and participation are 25% of your grade (more than an exam). Take them seriously!

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Some professors do not care if you attend class. I do! This is an intensive class. I will record attendance randomly throughout the semester. *Anyone who arrives 15 or more minutes late will be recorded as absent.* If you know ahead of time that you have to be late or leave early, notify me the class period before. There are no excused absences. If you are not in class, and I take attendance, you will be marked as absent. Excessive absences (3 or more) will result in a one percentage point deduction from the total grade for each class missed after the 3rd.

Please note that **you** are responsible for obtaining notes for the class material covered on the date missed.

OFFICE HOURS:

I encourage office visits to discuss course material, assignments, or anything else you would like to talk about. Please stop by during regular office hours or contact me by email to set up an appointment; I can usually be available within one day of you contacting me. Please be advised, I will not discuss assignment or exam material via email. Such matters must be discussed in person.

MAKE-UP AND LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

Exams and papers are due in class on the due date, **period**. I do not accept any assignments via email. Make-up exams may be granted only in the case of a *university-excused* absence and must be schedule within 2 days of the original test date.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students should consult the *Undergraduate Catalog* to familiarize themselves with all university policies regarding academic integrity and classroom conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, etc.) or classroom disruption (e.g., arriving late, leaving early, cellphone use, reading materials other than course materials) are subject to the assignment

of reduced and/or failing grades and the initiation of procedures for dismissal from the university.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM:

“Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university” (Undergraduate Catalog 2008-2009:47).

If you attempt to take credit for someone else’s work, without giving that person due credit, you are guilty of plagiarism and will face the consequences described above. If you have questions about how to properly cite someone else’s work, simply ask me!

CENTER FOR ACCESS-ABILITY RESOURCES:

Please notify the instructor if you have special needs. It is NIU policy to provide reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, learning, physical or psychiatric disabilities, and students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or visually impaired. These services are provided by the Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR). If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

COURSE FEE

There is a nominal course fee in this class. The fee is used to support material stored on SOCQRL computer systems. The Sociology lab (DuSable 222) is available for students in to download and print lecture notes, reserve readings, conduct research for projects, etc. In general, the size of the fee represents the amount of lab use anticipated.