

## COMMUNITIES AND CRIME

Sociology 480/580

Spring 2024

Professor Keri Burchfield

Zulauf 907

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Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1-2 PM and by appointment

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

### WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of some of the major sociological topics related to communities and crime, specifically examining the relationship between community characteristics and criminality. 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 and practical implications that may be derived from this research.

### WHAT SHOULD I LEARN?

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Define "community" and explain its sociological relevance for crime.
2. Understand the relevance of the Chicago School for current criminological theory and research.
3. Explain social disorganization and recent theoretical and empirical extensions of this concept.
4. Describe the role of culture in inner-city communities.
5. Understand the role of formal and informal social control in explaining community variations in crime rates.
6. Understand the basics of effective community organizing to address local crime problems.

### A NOTE ABOUT CONTENT:

This class covers a number of topics students may find upsetting or disturbing. I recommend not taking the class if you feel you cannot handle the material. Also, the issues examined in this course may trigger strong emotions and experiences. If for any reason you feel that you would like to talk to someone about any emotions that arise while participating in the class please contact NIU's Counseling and Consultation services any time at [815-753-1206](tel:815-753-1206).

Call 911 if you're experiencing a mental health emergency or are concerned about your or another person's immediate safety.

### HOW ARE WE WORKING TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY?

It is my intention to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official NIU records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- Undocumented students are welcome in this class. If you are undocumented and need assistance with successfully completing courses or a degree at NIU, the coordinator for Undocumented Student Support, Sandy López, can help you with advising, campus services designed for undocumented students, and other university resources. Visit Sandy in the Campus Life Building, room 236 or contact her at [slopez1@niu.edu](mailto:slopez1@niu.edu) or 815-753-2391.

### WHAT BOOKS DO I NEED?

Wilcox, Pamela, Francis T. Cullen and Ben Feldmeyer. 2018. *Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge*.

Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Additional articles will be available through the course BlackBoard site.

## WHERE IS THE INFORMATION I NEED?

The course Blackboard site will contain everything you need to succeed in this class, including this syllabus, important announcements, a course schedule, and calendar with due dates. These items will be modified as needed - depending on the pace of the class - so I recommend that you check it daily to make sure you stay current with the course topics, readings, and assignment due dates. If you have a question, it is probably answered here or somewhere on Blackboard. Please check before emailing me.

## WHAT ARE THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS?

- **MIDTERM EXAM:**

There will be one in-class, open-note essay exam that will cover material from class readings **AND** lectures.

- **COMMUNITY ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT**

If you want to improve a community you need to have a clear, critical understanding of a community's strengths, weaknesses, power structures, and what the residents want. After completing this assignment you should have strong, introductory skills in analyzing and organizing a community.

You will begin this assignment by the 5<sup>th</sup> week of the semester and work on it weekly until the due date. You will present sections of the assignment throughout the semester. Your final product is a 12-page ASA formatted paper. You will use multiple sources of data collection for this assignment including: a literature review of scholarly articles, news articles, and possibly newsletters from local community organizations; Census data; crime data; field work including walking and/or driving tours of your local community; and in-person interviews with residents and key stakeholders from within the community, including residents and one police officer or politician and one community organizer.

- **JOURNAL ENTRIES**

Throughout the semester, you will complete 5 journal entries to reflect on the course material. I will post a prompt Sunday and your entry will be due by Friday at 12 PM. These entries are between you and me only. Explore, examine, analyze, compare. Get personal. Apply your sociological imagination. I may not have time to respond to each journal post individually but I do read them all and will assign points based on their completion.

- **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance will be checked randomly throughout the semester to ensure that everyone is coming to class. In-class participation is always encouraged.

## HOW ARE GRADES DETERMINED?

1. Midterm	100 points
2. Community Analysis Assignments – 3 Sections	150 points (50 points each)
3. Community Analysis Assignment – Final Paper	100 points
4. Journal Entries	150 points (30 points each)
5. Attendance and Participation	50 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>550 points</b>

The grade scale is as follows:

A = 93 – 100%	B+ = 87 – 89%	C+ = 77 – 79%	D = 60 – 69%	F = below 60%
A- = 90 – 92%	B = 83 – 86%	C = 70 – 76%		
	B- = 80 – 82%			

## WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MY GRADE?

You should evaluate your assignments and exams carefully **before** turning them in to be graded. A thorough reading of the descriptions of the assignments, available rubrics and/or exam questions will help you evaluate your work. If, after an assignment has been graded, you find there is a discrepancy in the assessment of your assignment, you are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me to discuss your grade. Students should also regularly check Blackboard to monitor their grades. Grading issues should be discussed immediately after an assignment or exam has been returned (or the grade posted), **not** at the end of the semester. Do **not** wait until the end of the semester to discuss a specific grade or your course grade.

## WHAT DATES DO I NEED TO REMEMBER?

Midterm Exam due:	March 7
Community Analysis Check-In 1 due:	March 8
Community Analysis Check-In 2 due:	March 29
Community Analysis Check-In 3 due:	April 22
Community Analysis Paper Outline due:	May 3
Community Analysis Paper due:	May 7

## MAKE-UP AND LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

You must let me know BEFORE you miss anything! Exams, papers and other assignments are due on the due date. No exceptions. I do not accept any assignments late.

If you encounter an emergency, you must provide official written documentation to be eligible to make-up any missed assignments.

### WHAT DOES DR. BURCHFIELD EXPECT OF ME?

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 coming to class, 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, and asking your own questions when you do not understand something.

### CAN I USE MY LAPTOP IN CLASS?

You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in this class as long as it contributes to your learning. This class, once again, is discussion based. This means that all students are expected to actively listen to one another in order to participate in classroom activities. If you are unable to contribute to the discussion or are otherwise distracted by your computer, cell phone, or tablet, I will ask you to refrain from using it in class. If you have any questions, please contact me.

### WHAT IS THE CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY?

*Why is Class Attendance Important? (From NIU's Attendance Matters)*

1. You retain more when you listen to your instructor; missing just one day could put you behind.
2. Your teacher explains material better than you can learn it yourself.
3. There's a direct correlation between going to class and doing well in it.
4. Your attendance shows your professor the class is important to you.
5. You are paying to be in class.
6. If your grade is borderline, your teacher may give you extra points for good attendance.

**Attendance** and **participation** are almost 10% of your grade. Take them seriously!

Some professors do not care if you attend class. I do! 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.

If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents request it through the Division of Student Affairs. [Health Services](#) will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

Leaves of absence will be granted for volunteer services related to disaster relief in accordance with applicable Illinois statutes or executive orders issued by the State of Illinois in response to emergency situations. To initiate a leave of absence, students should contact their College Dean's office, or the vice provost (or the vice provost's delegate) for any student who has no college affiliation. Following the period of volunteer service, Registration and Records will facilitate reenrollment of the student.

In the case of an absence due to required attendance at a university-sponsored event such as a department trip, performing arts activity, ROTC function, or athletic competition, reasonable attempts shall be made by faculty members to allow the student to make up missed work. Both the sponsoring unit and the student should inform the faculty member as soon as possible in the semester in order for arrangements to be made for completing missed assignments, examinations or other required course work. The student is required to provide each instructor with an official notification in advance of the absence (e.g., a letter from the chair of the sponsoring department, the head of the sponsoring unit, or the coach).

If you do miss class, it is **YOUR** responsibility to keep up with happenings in the course. Specifically, you are responsible for all materials covered in class while you were gone as well as any in-class exercises, videos, schedule changes, and / or deadlines announced or given during the class you missed.

### WHAT IF I HAVE TO MISS CLASS?

You must let me know BEFORE you miss classes. If you encounter an emergency, you must provide **official written** documentation to be eligible to make-up any missed assignments.

If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents **request it** through the Division of Student Affairs. [Health Services](#) will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

### **HOW DO I SCHEDULE MEETINGS WITH DR. BURCHFIELD?**

I encourage online office visits through Blackboard Collaborate to discuss course material, assignments, or anything else you would like to talk about. Please check-in during weekly office hours or contact me by email to set up an appointment; I can usually be available within one day of you contacting me.

### **HOW SHOULD I FORMAT MY WRITING?**

ALL written submissions, including Journal Entries, should be submitted in a font and page set-up that is readable and neat. Students should try to adhere to a consistent format, as described below:

- Typed in double-spaced format with a readable style and font and submitted online
- 12 – point Times New Roman font
- Page margins Top, Bottom, Left Side and Right Side = 1 inch, with reasonable accommodation being made for special situations and online submission variances.

Assignments completed in a narrative essay format must follow ASA guidelines and include citations where appropriate. Students should use the citation and reference style established by the American Sociological Association (ASA), in which case students should follow the guidelines set forth in ASA Style Guide (5th ed.)

### **WHAT IF I CHEAT?**

Don't.

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 responsible for 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 responsible for, 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. In short, any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated.

If you have questions about academic integrity, the University has provided some tutorials here:

<https://www.niu.edu/academic-integrity/index.shtml>

*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!***

A faculty member has original jurisdiction over any instances of academic misconduct that occur in a course which the faculty member is teaching. The student shall be given the opportunity to resolve the matter in meetings with the faculty member and the department chair. If the facts of the incident are not disputed by the student, the faculty member may elect to resolve the matter at that level by levying a sanction no greater than an F for that course. The faculty member shall notify the student in writing whenever such action is taken, and the [Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct](#) shall receive a copy of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report indicating final disposition of the case, which will be placed in the student's judicial file. In all matters where the charge of academic misconduct is disputed by the student or if the faculty member feels a sanction greater than an F in the course is appropriate (such as repeated offenses or flagrant violations), the faculty member shall refer the matter to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct making use of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report.

### **WHAT IF I NEED COURSE ACCOMMODATIONS?**

If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located in the Campus Life Building, Suite 180, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or [drc@niu.edu](mailto:drc@niu.edu).

Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### **WHAT IF THINGS CHANGE DURING THE SEMESTER?**

This syllabus is a guide and every attempt is made to provide an accurate overview of the course and its requirements. However, certain circumstances may make it necessary for me to modify the syllabus during the semester for your benefit and the changes may depend, in part, on course progress and our needs. I will announce any change to the syllabus on Blackboard as early as possible so that you can adjust your schedule.

## Schedule of Topics and Readings

Articles available through the course BlackBoard site

### Week 1: January 16-18 – What is Community?

#### Readings:

Orum, Anthony M., 1997. "The centrality of place: the urban imagination of sociologists." Great Cities Institute, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago. A Great Cities Institute Working Paper.

Lee, Barrett. 2001. "Taking neighborhoods seriously." Pp. 31-40 in Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter (eds.), *Does it take a village? Community effects on children, adolescents and families*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

### Week 2: January 23-25 – Understanding the Role of "Community" in Communities and Crime

#### Readings:

Reiss Jr., Albert J., 1986. "Why are communities important in understanding crime?" *Crime and Justice* 8: 1-33.

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 1.

**Due:** Journal Entry 1

### Week 3: January 30 – February 1 – Social Disorganization Theory

#### Readings:

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 2 – 3.

Kasarda, John, & Morris Janowitz. 1974. "Community attachment in mass society." *American Sociological Review*, 39, 328-339.

### Week 4: February 6-8 – New Directions in Social Disorganization Theory

#### Readings:

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, & Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy." *Science* 277: 918-924.

Kubrin, Charis. E., & Ronald Weitzer. 2003. "New directions in social disorganization theory." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 40(4): 374-402.

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 8.

**Due:** Journal Entry 2

### Week 5: February 13-15 – Social Networks and Social Control

#### Readings:

Burchfield, Keri B. 2009. "Attachment as a source of informal social control in urban neighborhoods." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 37: 45-54.

Carr, Patrick J. 2003. "The new parochialism: The implications of the Beltway case for arguments concerning informal social control." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(6): 1249-1291.

Browning, Christopher R., Seth L. Feinberg, & Robert D. Dietz. 2004. "The paradox of social organization: Networks, collective efficacy, and violent crime in urban neighborhoods." *Social Forces* 83(2): 503-534.

**Due:** Journal Entry 3

### Week 6: February 20-22 – Culture and Crime

#### Readings:

*Communities and Crime*, Chapters 5.

Sampson, Robert J, and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. 1998. "Legal cynicism and (subcultural?) tolerance of deviance: The neighborhood context of racial differences." *Law and Society Review* 32: 777-804.

**Week 7: February 27-29 – The Code of the Street**

**Readings:**

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 4

Anderson, Elijah. 1994. "The code of the streets." *Atlantic Monthly* 273: 80–94.

**Due:** Journal Entry 4

**Week 8: March 5-7 – Community Analysis Check-in 1**

**Tuesday:** Presentation and discussion

**Thursday:** Midterm Exam

**March 12-14: Spring Break**

**Week 9: March 19-21 – Communities and Opportunity**

**Readings:**

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 7

Weisburd, David, Elizabeth R. Groff, & Sue-Ming Yang. 2014. "The importance of both opportunity and social disorganization theory in a future research agenda to advance criminological theory and crime prevention at places." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 51: 499-508.

**Week 10: March 26-28 - Community Analysis Check-in 2**

**Tuesday:** Presentation and discussion

**Thursday:** SSRL

**Week 11: April 2-4 – Communities and The Criminal Justice System**

**Readings:**

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 6

Hinkle, Joshua C. 2013. "The relationship between disorder, perceived risk, and collective efficacy: a look into the indirect pathways of the broken windows thesis." *Criminal Justice Studies* 26: 408-432.

Rose, Dina, & Todd Clear. 1998. "Incarceration, social capital, and crime: Implications for social disorganization theory." *Criminology* 36: 441-479.

**Tuesday:** Lecture

**Thursday:** Mark Schuller, guest lecture on Community Organizing

**Week 12: April 9-11 – Community Organizing**

**Tuesday:** Film

**Thursday:** Finish Film and discussion

**Due:** Journal Entry 5

**Week 13: April 16-18 – Community Analysis Check-in 3**

**Tuesday:** Presentation and discussion

**Thursday:** SSRL

**Week 14: April 23-25 – Looking Ahead**

**NO CLASS ON APRIL 25**

**Readings:**

*Communities and Crime*, Chapter 9

**Week 15: April 30 – May 2**

**Community Analysis Presentations**

**Papers due May 7**