

## **CCJS 418F: Crime on TV**

**Mondays/Wednesdays 3:30-4:45 (2012 Shoemaker)**

### **Instructor:**

Professor Robert Stewart, Ph.D. ([robstew@umd.edu](mailto:robstew@umd.edu))  
Office: 2165A LeFrak Hall  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-1pm or by appointment  
Class Zoom: <https://go.umd.edu/ccjs418f>

### **Disclosure:**

The shows we will watch graphically depict poverty, sexuality, drug-use, and violence. Several of the shows include profanity, offensive slurs, and vulgar language. As such, students who may be offended or uncomfortable with such language and themes may not wish to take this course.

### **Course description:**

This course uses television shows to explore criminological perspectives on law, crime, and justice. The premise of this class is that we can learn a great deal about lawbreaking and social control from watching (and analyzing) television shows. We will critically examine how (and to what extent) various television series represent or distort prevailing knowledge about crime and punishment. Topics will include the causes and consequences of lawbreaking, policing, race and the “war on drugs,” mass imprisonment, the culture and social relations of prisons, prisoner “re-entry,” and reimagining justice.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you will:

1. be able to think critically about law, crime, punishment, justice, politics, and media;
2. have mastery of a significant body of knowledge about how criminal legal institutions work, how they reinforce or counter social inequalities, and alternative visions of justice; and,
3. have the ability to interpret and evaluate your own ideas and experiences related to law, crime, and justice within a broader sociological context.

### **Course Format:**

Our regular meetings will include some lecture, but the majority of our time will be focused on class discussions, your questions, and activities. All television episodes, other course materials, and assignments will be available on ELMS and Perusall. You will be expected to complete assigned materials before class meetings. Assigned materials for a typical class will include 1-3 television episodes and a reading.

### **Face Mask Policy**

All University of Maryland faculty, staff, students, and visitors are required to wear an acceptable face mask while indoors. KN95 masks must be worn in classrooms, which are available in the

Stamp. Thank you for following the policy and helping to keep all of us healthy and safe during this difficult time.

### **Courses in the Time of COVID:**

I understand that this course is being offered in a time of continued uncertainty, and I recognize that you (and I) may encounter unexpected challenges during this semester. That includes challenges related to health and illness, technology, caregiving responsibilities, work responsibilities, and more.

My goal this semester is to support you in doing the best work you can in light of the challenges you face. I understand that college students face tremendous pressure to work hard, get “good” grades, and be as “successful” as possible. That said, I encourage you to remember that your health and well-being are far more important than the work you do in this class or any class. And I encourage you to take the time you need to care for yourself and for your loved ones.

If you are finding it difficult to balance your health and well-being with your work in this class, please let me know. It is okay to ask for help and to acknowledge when you are struggling, and I am happy to help connect you with resources and services on campus and also make accommodations to our course plan as needed. I am accessible by email, and I will do my best to respond to messages within one business day. I will also have virtual office hour appointments available for you to meet with me to discuss any questions or concerns or thoughts you have about the course or the material or sociology more generally.

I also ask that you be patient with me if the challenges of this semester force me to make last-minute changes to the course plan. I will do my best to communicate any changes clearly and make them with respect for the inconvenience, frustration, and confusion that change may cause.

### **Class Conduct:**

Respect is of paramount importance. Respect for each other, respect for yourself, respect for me, and respect for the people whose lives are affected by the criminal legal system (from all sides of the law). The topics we discuss in CCJS classes can prove more controversial or contentious than subjects in other departments. Respect for the ideas, opinions, and experiences of others is our first priority.

Undoubtedly there will be students in this class who either have been victims of crime or who have a family member/friend who has been a victim of crime. There will also likely be students who have had personal experiences with the criminal justice system as well. If you would like to share your experiences, you are welcome to, but in no way should you EVER feel compelled or required to share your personal experiences relating to these issues if you are not comfortable doing so.

The goal of this course is to provide tangible yet fictional portrayals of criminological concepts and ideas that we will discuss in class. If you find any of the material offensive, or anything at all offensive that we do in class, please come and talk to me.

### **Grading and Self-Assessment:**

Grading for this course will be by contract. You will determine what you want to get out of this course, how much work you plan to complete in order to meet that goal, and then commit to doing so. Together, those commitments will form the basis for your grade. You will have the choice of three contracts (A, B, or C), each of which includes a different standard you will need to meet to earn that grade. You will choose which contract works best for your learning goals, schedule, and abilities this semester, and commit to doing the work that is entailed by the contract. If you meet the conditions of your contract, you earn the letter grade for which you contracted.

You will determine the grade you receive by fulfilling a contract you will submit for my approval by Wednesday, February 2. Your written contract will detail the requirements you will meet in order to receive the grade for which you have contracted. If you have accommodations, you may need to request specific, reasonable adjustments to the standard contract (this includes ADS support, religious observances, etc). For example, if your accommodations include additional absences from class or extensions on written assignments beyond what is already given in the contract, you should specify what particular modifications you would like to request.

At the midterm, you will revisit and assess your contracts and reflect on your progress toward fulfilling them. If, by that point, you are not on track to fulfill your contract, I reserve the right to request that you shift to a different contract--e.g., from an "A" to a "B," or from a "B" to a "C." Likewise, if you are exceeding the terms of your contract, you may request to shift contracts in the opposite direction. Within contracts, I also reserve the right to adjust grades as I see appropriate. At my discretion, I may adjust your grade upwards (from a "B" to a "B+," for example, to acknowledge fulfillment of a B contract with work that I find to be exemplary) or downwards. **Please note:** In order to evaluate your progress, you need to keep track of your work, including days of class missed, participation, and so on. More details about the contracts can be found on ELMS.

### **Other Policies:**

**Academic Dishonesty:** Don't cheat. It's bad news for everyone. If you are having trouble – again, just communicate with me.

**Incompletes:** I can only give an incomplete if the majority of coursework has been completed, and you experience some kind of emergency. If this happens, contact me as soon as possible so we can come up with a plan.

**Disability Support:** I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Academic Support Services (ADS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland ADS Accommodation form. Just let me know.

**Credit:** The substance of this class was inspired in part by a previous class designed by Joshua Page. The contract grading elements were informed by Erin Pineda's teaching.

**Class Outline:**

Below is a general outline of what we will be doing this semester. I note that this outline is certainly subject to change with the uncertainty of COVID, and that additional details and assignments are listed on ELMS, so you should always reference ELMS modules.

DATE	WATCH	READ
Mon 1/24	None	None
Wed 1/26	The Wire, S01E01-02	Anderson, <i>Code of the Street</i> , ch 2
Mon 1/31	The Wire, S01E03-04	Ryan Schroeder, "Social Bond Theory" Moskos, <i>Cop in the Hood</i> , ch 4
Wed 2/2	The Wire, S01E05-06	Anderson, <i>Code of the Street</i> , ch 3
Mon 2/7	The Wire, S01E07-08	Reinarman, "The Social Construction of Drug Scares"
Wed 2/9	The Wire, S01E09-10	Panfil, <i>The Gang's All Queer</i> , introduction and ch 3
Mon 2/14	The Wire, S01E11-13	Forman Jr., <i>Locking Up Our Own</i> , ch 5
Wed 2/16	Breaking Bad, S01E01-02	Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie"
Mon 2/21	Breaking Bad, S01E03-04	Erickson et al., "Meth Cooking as a Job"
Wed 2/23	Breaking Bad, S01E05-06	Anna Gunn, "I Have a Character Issue" in NYT
Mon 2/28	Breaking Bad, S01E07 The Wire, S03-01	Katz, <i>Seductions of Crime</i> , ch X Michael Sierra-Arévalo, "Police, Culture, and Inequality"
Wed 3/2	The Wire, S03E02-03	Herbert, "Hard Charger or Station Queen"
Mon 3/7	The Wire, S03E04-06*	Miller et al., "Diversity in Blue"
Wed 3/9	The Wire, S03E07-08	Herbert et al., "Policing Social Marginality" Beckett et al., "From Crisis to Care"
Mon 3/14	The Wire, S03E09-10	Pettit and Western, "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course"
Wed 3/16	The Wire, S03E11-12	Page and Soss, "It Can't be a Lie"
Mon 3/21	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
Wed 3/23	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
Mon 3/28	The Sopranos, S01E01-02	Finckenauer, "Problems of Definition: What is Organized Crime"
Wed 3/30	The Sopranos, S01E03-04	Sutherland and Cressey, "A Sociological Theory of Criminal Behavior"
Mon 4/4	The Sopranos, S01E05-07*	van Dijk et al., "Children of Organized Crime Offenders"

Wed 4/6	The Sopranos, S01E08-09	Leverso and Hess, "From the Hood to the Home"
Mon 4/11	The Sopranos, S01E10-11	Selmini, "Women in Organized Crime"
Wed 4/13	The Sopranos, S01E12-13	Albanese, "The Causes of Organized Crime"
Mon 4/18	OITB, S01E01-02	van der Leun, "“No Choice But to Do It”"
Wed 4/20	OITB, S01E03-04	Owen et al., <i>In Search of Safety</i> , ch 2
Mon 4/25	OITB, S01E05-06	Owen et al., <i>In Search of Safety</i> , ch 4
Wed 4/27	OITB, S01E07-09*	Owen et al., <i>In Search of Safety</i> , ch 5
Mon 5/2	OITB, S01E10-11	Owen et al., <i>In Search of Safety</i> , ch 6
Wed 5/4	OITB, S01E12-13	Owen et al., <i>In Search of Safety</i> , ch 7
Mon 5/9	Last Day	Page and Goodman, "Creative Disruption"