

CCJS 418Q: Crime and Place

VMH 1207

Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Lauren Porter

Office: 2220G LeFrak Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11-12pm

Email: lporter1@umd.edu

Course Description:

In this course we will explore the following question: *Why does crime vary across places?* Material presented will cover theory and research related to this question, which will include perspectives from sociology, criminology, environmental psychology and geography. By the end of this course you should be able to...

- (1) Connect theory and research on the criminology of place
- (2) Extrapolate from theory and research to predict where crime should be high or low
- (3) Apply course material to real-world problems related to crime and place
- (4) Understand the key methodologies and measurement issues in this field of research, and
- (5) Critically assess interventions or approaches to problems of spatial crime concentration

Required Books (available via bookstore):

Weisburd, D., Groff, E. R., & Yang, S. M. (2012). *The Criminology of Place: Street segments and our understanding of the crime problem*. Oxford University Press.

Jean, P. K. S. (2008). *Pockets of crime: Broken windows, collective efficacy, and the criminal point of view*. University of Chicago Press.

All other readings available on ELMS.

Prerequisites: CCJS 100, CCJS 105, and CCJS 300.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Assignments	Points	Due Date
What's your neighborhood?	25	February 10
Social Systematic Observation	50	April 7
In-Class Assignments	25	TBA
Midterm	100	March 10
Final Exam	100	May 15
Total	300	

Where's your neighborhood? (25 pts). For this assignment students will have to think carefully about how they define their own neighborhoods and then compare this conceptualization with how the Bureau of the Census defines their census tract.

Social Systematic Observation (50 pts): This assignment requires students to work as a two-person team and do some (virtual) fieldwork on the streets around a recent shooting in Baltimore City.

In-Class Assignments (25 pts): These assignments will be unannounced and each one will be worth 5 points. They may be completed individually or require group work. Each student is allowed to miss one assignment without it affecting their grade.

Exams: There will be a midterm and final exam, each worth 100 pts. The exams will be true or false and multiple choice format and the final will be cumulative.

Course Policies:

Late or Missed Work:

Students will not be permitted to turn in late work or make-up exams except for in the following circumstances: a medical problem, a death in the immediate family, a religious holiday, participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, or other compelling circumstances beyond the students' control – such as a zombie apocalypse.

Class Etiquette

Students are expected to watch lecture material and to complete work on-time. If students have questions about material, an assignment, or a grade, they may email me to set up a time to meet via Zoom.

Addendum on Medical Absences:

The new university medical excuse policy is found [here](#), which allows one student-signed honor statement attesting to illness except in the case of a major scheduled grading event. In the event you become chronically absent, missing more than two consecutive weeks of class due to the same persistent illness, this must be verified by a health professional in writing and be brought to my attention in writing. Any absences from Major Scheduled Grading Events will be counted as zeroes in the event you have failed to inform me of these developments within one week of the grades for the remainder of the class being posted on *ELMS*.

Grade Disputes:

If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe I should review them, you must submit a written request over email to me that describes your concern in detail. This request must be submitted **within one week** of the day that grades for the relevant assignment are disseminated.

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and any violations will be reported to the Honor Council. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication of information used in assignments, plagiarism, and knowingly facilitating the academic dishonesty of another. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Honor Council, please visit the following website: <http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/Default.aspx>.

Students with Disabilities:

I will make necessary accommodations for students who are registered with the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland ADS Accommodation letter. This form must be presented to me ASAP. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with ADS or who do not provide me with documentation that has been reviewed by ADS.

Athletes:

Official athletic schedules must be submitted to me. Practices do not count as an excused absence; in cases of an excused absence (e.g., a game), students are expected to arrange with me make-up exams/assignments. Athletes who miss exams/assignments due to games or other commitments, yet never submitted an official athletic schedule, and never spoke with me, will receive a grade of zero for the relevant assignment.

SCHEDULE:

*Course schedule and assignments may change throughout the semester

Week & Date	Topic	Readings & Media Due	Assignments
Week 1 (Jan 27 & 29)	Introduction & Macro-criminology		
Week 2 (Feb 3 & 5)	The Growth of the City	Park, Burgess and McKenzie "The City" Bursik and Grasmick, Ch. 1 Listen: Ellora Derenoncourt	
Week 3 (Feb 10 & 12)	The Chicago School	Bursik and Grasmick, Ch.2 Bouffard, L. A., & Muftić, L. R. (2006). The	Where's your neighborhood due Feb 10

		<p>“Rural Mystique”: Social Disorganization and Violence beyond Urban Communities. <i>Western Criminology Review</i>, 7(3).</p> <p>Listen: Robert Sampson</p>	
Week 4 (Feb 17 & 19)	Opportunity & Culture	<p>Bursik and Grasmick, Ch.3</p> <p>Anderson: Code of the Street</p>	
Week 4 (Feb 24 & 26)	Urban Decay & Disorder	<p>Wilson and Kelling. “Broken Windows”</p> <p>Sampson and Raudenbush. “Systematic Social Observation”</p> <p>Keizer. “The Spreading of Disorder”</p>	
Week 5 (March 3 & 5) No Class March 5!	The Criminology of Place	<p>The Criminology of Place, Chapter 1</p> <p>Sherman, “Hot Spots of Predatory Crime”</p>	
Week 6 (March 10 & 12)	Midterm		Midterm Tuesday March 10
Week 7 (March 17 & 19) – Spring Break			
Week 8 (March 24 & 26)	Hot Spots	<p>The Criminology of Place, Chapters 2-3</p> <p>Listen: Erich Muehlegger</p>	
Week 9 (March 31 & April 2)	Hot Spots, Cont’d	<p>The Criminology of Place, Ch.5-6</p> <p>Guest Lecture on Crime Mapping</p>	
Week 10 (April 7 & 9)		<p>“Where’s the Crime”- Porter et al</p> <p>Pockets of Crime, Ch 1-2</p>	Due April 7: Social Systematic Observation Assignment
Week 11 (April 14 & 16)	The Built Environment	<p>Pockets of Crime, Ch. 4</p> <p>Clarke: Situational Crime Prevention</p> <p>Listen: Aaron Chalfin</p>	
Week 12 (April 21 & 23)	Offender Decision-making	<p>“The Criminogenic Properties of Vacant Housing”-Porter et al.</p> <p>Brantingham and Brantingham, “The Theory of Target Search”</p>	
Week 13 (April 28 & 30)	Offender Decision-making	Pockets of Crime: Chapters 5-6	
Week 14 (May 5 & 7)	Living in Hot Spots	<p>Sharkey et al. “Navigating Dangerous Streets”</p> <p>DaViera, Andrea L., et al. "Safe spaces embedded in dangerous contexts.”</p>	
Final Exam, May 15 – 4-6pm			