What if man is not really a scoundrel, man in general, I mean, the whole race of mankind – then all the rest is prejudice, simply artificial terrors and there are no barriers and it's all as it should be.

~Fyodor Dostoevsky

Crime and Punishment

PROFESSOR

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OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday 2:00-3:30 pm
Wednesday 2:00-3:30 pm
By Appointment

MEETING TIME

Tuesday 4:00 – 6:45  LeFrak 1221

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course utilizes a variety of theoretical and empirical readings to examine three interconnected domains surrounding the intersection of race, crime, and criminal justice: 1) racial and ethnic relations in society 2) racial differences in crime and violence, and 3) racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system. It draws on social and legal research to examine the social construction of racial identity, the causes of racial differences in offending, and the consequences of race and ethnicity in criminal case processing. A variety of specific topics will be addressed, including sociological theories of racial and ethnic antagonism, racial and ethnic differences in violence, racial disparities in punishment such as the death penalty, and correctional problems surrounding the overrepresentation of minorities in American prisons. The goal of the course is to provide a foundation for critically assessing the often controversial issues surrounding race, ethnicity, crime, and criminal justice in society.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

The course will rely heavily on student participation and student lead discussions of the material. Students will be expected to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental role that race and ethnicity play in the social organization of society as well as their specific implications for the study of crime and criminal justice. In particular, students should be able to identify racial and ethnic differences in offending patterns and be able to account for them using relevant theoretical perspectives. Students will also gain familiarity with racial and ethnic disparities at a variety of stages of the criminal justice system and should be able to account for these disparities with current perspectives on criminal justice decision making. The ultimate goal of the course is to provide the student with background knowledge on the relationship between race/ethnicity, crime, and criminal justice, and to encourage them to think critically about the myriad ways that race/ethnicity, crime, and criminal justice are intertwined in modern society.

COURSE READINGS:
Reading requirements for this course include several texts as well as a variety of academic articles published in scholarly journals. You are responsible for obtaining copies of the required texts. Journal articles will be made accessible for you to copy.

**Required Texts:**

**Suggested Readings and Excerpts:**

**COURSE GRADING**

Grades for this course will be determined by class participation in conjunction with several short writing assignments and one final paper which the student will present to the rest of the class. Students will be expected to write several short papers and they will be responsible for writing a final research paper and presenting it to the class. Each week, class discussion will be lead by a different student leader. Final grades will be assigned following this scale:

- **Class Participation:** 20%  
  A  93 or higher  (95)
- **Leading Discussion:** 25%  
  A-  90-92  (91)
- **Writing Assignments:** 25%  
  B+  87-89  (88)
- **Final Term Paper:** 30%  
  B  83-86  (85)
  B-  80-82  (81)
  C  70-79  (75)

**ONLINE COURSE MANAGEMENT**

Online course resources including the syllabus and course readings are available at elms.umd.edu.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION AND LEADING DISCUSSION**
This course relies heavily on student participation and class discussion. Its success largely depends on student initiative to thoughtfully analyze readings and to come to class prepared to discuss their significance. You will receive one grade for your overall participation and effort in the class, which includes your attendance record and class preparedness each week. You should come ready to identify the key points of the readings and to critically assess their strengths and limitations. Students will also be responsible for leading the class discussion at least once during the semester. The goal of student led discussion is to introduce additional information on the week’s topic that is not covered by the readings and to give the students a more active role in guiding the direction of the class. Your grade as a discussion leader will be determined in part by the instructor and in part by your fellow classmates who will grade you on your ability to present new and interesting material and to solicit interesting discussion.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Throughout the semester you will be asked to complete three short writing assignments that apply the weekly readings to larger issues in society. These assignments should be no longer than 3 pages in length and should rely on course readings and outside references to construct a thoughtful and cogent essay. Topics for the writing assignments are provided in the weekly schedule below. It is up to you to choose topics that are of greatest interest, although all students are required to turn in the weekly writing assignment for Week 5. If there are additional topics of interest not covered in the course syllabus, the student should approach the instructor for permission to write on any outside areas of interest.

TERM PAPER AND CLASS PRESENTATION

In addition to the short writing assignments, you will also be expected to write a final term paper on a substantive topic of your choice. This final paper should be between 15 and 20 pages and should be an in-depth treatment of an issue touched upon in class that is of personal interest to you. The final research paper can take various forms. It can be a research proposal that identifies an unanswered question and proposes a study to address it. It can be a theory paper that develops an innovative theoretical argument to explain some phenomenon surrounding the race crime nexus, or it can be an empirical paper that takes some existing data to conduct preliminary analyses. The goal of the term paper is to take a concept or idea that we discuss and expand it beyond the scope of what is covered in class. This will require you to do independent research on your topic so start early! A one page summary of the initial paper topic must be turned in and approved by the instructor by October 29th. Students will present the main ideas and insights from their research to the rest of the class (time permitting).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Be certain to properly cite the work of other scholars when writing weekly assignments and especially in the construction of your final research paper. Failure to properly credit other works is akin to plagiarism and will be dealt with in accordance to the official printed policy of the University of Maryland.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability, please contact Professor Johnson by September, 10th 2013.

WEEKLY READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:
Note: This is a tentative schedule subject to change. Additional readings/assignments may be given during the semester.
SECTION 1: RACIAL AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN SOCIETY

Week 1: Sept 3rd Course Overview

"Is the notion of race ‘real’ -- or is it mythology? We make certain assumptions about people based on skin color. Is this some mass delusion we’re all participating in? ~David Henry Hwang

Description of the Course
Syllabus/Grading/Expectations
Selection of Discussion and Snack Leaders based on Race/Crime Quiz
Implicit Association Test at www.understandingprejudice.org.

Week 2: Sept 10th Racial Stratification and Group Conflict in Society

The Socio-Historical Construction of Race

The whole conception of ethnic groups is so complex and so vague that it might be good to abandon it altogether. ~Max Weber (1922)

Racial Classification http://www.pbs.org/race/002_SortingPeople/002_00-home.htm
Sorting People – “Begin Sorting”


Theories of Racial Group Interaction

“The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the colour line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men...” ~ W.E.B. Du Bois

Racial Group Threat Theory


The Psychology of Prejudice


Writing Assignment 1: What is racism? Are racial stratification and group conflict inevitable aspects of a multiracial society? Explain with reference to the social and biological roots of race and ethnicity in society.

Week 3: Sept 17th African American Social Status in Society

“Racism is [not] as powerful a force today as what it’s left in its wake – the cycle of cultural
poverty that gets perpetuated.” ~Shelby Steele

Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime. ~Aristotle

Racial and Ethnic Social Status in Society

Kotlowitz, Alex (1992). There Are No Children Here. (Begin Book)
In Anderson and Massey (Eds.) Problem of the Century. New York: Russell Sage. (recommended)

Writing Assignment 2: Access the validity of Wilson’s argument for the emergence of a unique underclass of “truly” disadvantaged in today’s society. Which of his arguments do you agree and/or disagree with? Explain how his claims are applicable to the study of race and crime in society.

Week 4: Sept. 24th – No Class – Teaching in China – Begin Working on Papers

Week 5: Oct 1st  Racial Politics in America

“Running through much popular commentary on race and politics in America today is a kind of weariness and pessimism, a reflection, perhaps, of the complexity and enormity of the problems facing the country” ~ Donald Kinder

The Politics of Racism

Kotlowitz, Alex (1992). There Are No Children Here. (Continue Reading)

Race, Media and Public Opinion


Writing Assignment 3: Why is American public opinion split along racial/ethnic lines? What role do politics play in shaping racial policies and what role do racial policies play in shaping public opinion?

SECTION 2: RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN CRIME AND CRIMINALITY

There is nothing more painful to me than to walk down the street and hear footsteps and start
thinking about robbery, then to look around and see someone white and feel relieved.

~ Reverend Jesse Jackson

Week 6: Oct 8th  Racial Difference in Offending and Victimization

Statistics? You can prove anything with statistics – 14% of people know that.

~ Homer J. Simpson

Self-Reports and Official Data


Racial Patterns in Crime Trends and Victimization

Rennison, Callie (2001). Violent Victimization and Race. BJS

Writing Assignment 4: Collect and examine data from either the Uniform Crime Reports or the National Crime Victimization Survey and analyze racial and ethnic differences in offending. What can you conclude about the association of race with different types of offenses?

Week 7: Oct. 15th  Exploring Racial Differences in Crime

It is incontestable and deplorable that Negroes have committed crimes; but they are derivative crimes. They are born of the greater crimes of the white society ~Martin Luther King Jr.

Kotlowitz (1991). There Are No Children Here. Finish Book (at least first 150 pages)

Writing Assignment 5: Provide a critical analysis of Anderson’s work and discuss how his perspective complements and contradicts other theoretical explanations of the relationship between race and crime.

Week 8: Oct. 22nd  Race, Ethnicity and Violence

“Violence shapes and obsesses our society.” ~ Edward Bond
Exploring Racial Differences in Violence

Empirical Studies of Race, Ethnicity and Violence

Writing Assignment 6: How do racial and ethnic differences in criminal behavior compare to racial and ethnic differences in violence? How might you explain this difference? Is it cultural, structural or both?

Week 9: Oct. 29th Beyond the Black/White Dichotomy
“This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again.” -- James Baldwin

Immigration and Crime

Asians, Native Americans and Hispanic Groups

Writing Assignment 7: Identify and critically analyze 1 empirical study of Asians or Native Americans not covered in class.

SECTION 3: RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESSING
Week 10: Nov. 5th Racial Perceptions and Disparities in Crime and Justice

*A crime is anything that a group in power chooses to prohibit*
~ Freda Adler

*With reason, African Americans tend to grow up believing that the law is the enemy*
~ Brent Staples

Overviews of Criminal Justice Disparities

Tonry (2011). Punishing Race. Chapters 1-4. (Chapters 5 and 6 optional)
Crutchfield et al. 2010. How much Disparity is Too Much? JCCL 100(3): 903-932. (optional)

Racial Perceptions of Crime and Justice


The War on Drugs

*“Working class addiction to crack (cocaine) is a crime. But, middle- and upper-class addiction to drugs or alcohol is a disease.”* ~Sabina Virgo

Mauer, Marc. (2002). Race to Incarcerate. Chpt. 8 (recommended)

Writing Assignment 8: What is “implicit bias” and how might it contribute to racial disparities in different stages of the criminal justice system? How does this perspective dovetail with other mainstream theoretical arguments in criminal justice to explain potential racial differences in criminal case processing?

Week 11: Nov. 12th Racial Disparities in Policing

Policing Minority Populations

*“For the middle class, the police protect property, give directions, and help old ladies. For the*
Police, Minority Relations and Racial Profiling


Writing Assignment 9: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of current research on race/ethnicity in policing. What do you see as the future of research in this area?

Week 12: Nov. 19th  No Class – ASC Meetings – Continue Working on Papers

Week 13: Nov. 26th  Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Prosecution and Sentencing

Overviews of Sentencing Disparity

Zatz, M (2000). “The Convergence of Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Class” NIJ. (recommended)

Race and Sentencing


Writing Assignment 7: Are racial disparities in sentencing necessarily the result of prejudice and discrimination on the part of judges and other court actors? Why or why not? Explain.

Week 14: Dec. 3rd  Penology and Corrections

“While there is [still] a soul in prison, I am not free.” ~ Eugene Victor Debs
“Penology...has become torture and foolishness, a waste of money and a cause of crime...a blotting out of sight and heightening of social anxiety.” ~ Paul Goodman

Race/Ethnicity, Imprisonment and Mass Incarceration

Empirical Studies of Race and the Prison
Rose and Clear (1998) Social Disorganization and Incarceration... Criminology (recommended)

Race and the Death Penalty

"Let us call [capital punishment] by the name which, for lack of any other nobility, will at least give the nobility of truth, and let us recognize it for what it essentially is: a revenge.”
~Albert Camus


Week 15: Dec. 10th

Student Presentations and Final Paper Due

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open to complete evaluations for fall semester courses between Tuesday, December 3 and Sunday, December 15. Please go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations starting December 3.