Instructor: Dr. Lauren Porter  
Office: 2220G LeFrak Hall  
Office Hours: Wed 10:30-12:00pm or by appointment  
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Course Description:

This course will focus on the following question: *Why does crime vary across communities?* One possibility is that people with differing criminal propensities settle in such a way to generate this variation at an aggregate level. However, another more intriguing explanation is that neighborhoods themselves play a part in generating criminal behavior. In this course we will consider social, physical, and geographical aspects of communities and debate the utility of different theories, methodologies, and units of analysis in understanding aggregate variation in crime. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to this topic, discussing research from sociology, criminology, geography, and public health. By the end of this seminar you should have a firm grasp of relevant theory, research, and limitations/future directions in this area.

Required Text:

Sampson, Robert J. *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect.* University of Chicago Press.


*Other Readings will be available on Canvas.*

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Final Exam: 100 points  
Research Proposal: 100 points  
Field Work Assignment: 25 points  
Discussion Leader: 25 points  
Class Participation: 25 points  
Presentation: 25 points  
Total: 300 points

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be open book/note and it will be essay format.  

**Research Proposal:** You will be required to write a research proposal that will include an introduction, literature review, data and methods section. This should be the beginning of a paper that you will hopefully complete after the course has concluded. Although you are not required to include any data analysis or results for this assignment, it is encouraged.
**Field Work Assignment:** Your field work assignment will entail spending 1-2 hours traveling down Rte 1 from College Park to Washington D.C. Along the way, you will make observations about changes in your surroundings. You cannot drive and take notes at the same time, obviously, so you will need to take a bus or have a friend drive. You will then write a 1-2 page summary of your observations and relate these to relevant theory from class. We will draw on your experiences for class discussion as well. More details will be provided after class starts.

**Discussion Leader and Class Participation:** Each student will be required to lead discussion one week. For this week, the student must formulate at least five discussion questions based on the readings. These should be emailed to all students and the professor **at least 24 hours** before class. In addition to these questions, the student must locate one article that is not on the syllabus, but that is relevant to that week’s readings. S/he will summarize and critique the reading for other classmates. Other students will be expected to participate in class discussions and will be evaluated for paying attention, responding to questions, and keeping up with readings.

**Presentation:** On the last day of class each student will present his or her research proposal. This should be a formal presentation, including a powerpoint or other visual aids. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes.

**SCHEDULE**

8-31 Introduction to the Class

Sampson, Chapter 1 & 12


9-7 No Class – Labor Day

9-14 Historical Context and The Chicago School


Sampson, Chapter 2

9-21  Social Disorganization Theory


9-28  Social Disorganization Theory, Cont’d


Bursik and Grasmick, Chapter 2

Sampson, Ch. 3


10-5  Informal Control, Collective Efficacy, and Networks


Sampson, Ch.7

10-12 Structure and Culture

Bursik, Robert J., Jr. 2013. “Social Sources of Delinquency and the Second Coming of Shaw and McKay.” Advances in Criminological Theory

Elijah Anderson and The Code of the Street


10-19 Routine Activities and Theories of Opportunity


10-26 Disorder and Incivility


11-2 Disorder and Incivility, Cont’d

FIELDWORK ASSIGNMENT DUE

Hipp, John R. "Resident perceptions of crime and disorder: How much is ‘bias’ and how much is social environment differences?" Criminology 48, no. 2 (2010).

Sampson, Ch. 6


Optional Readings


11-9 The Criminology of Place

Weisburd, Groff, and Yang – Ch.1-3


11-16 The Criminology of Place, Cont’d

Weisburd, Groff, and Yang – Ch.5-8


Wouter et al., Forthcoming. “Where the Action is in Crime: An Examination of Variability of Crime across Different Spatial Units." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*

11-23 Offender Decision-making and Routine Activities


Sampson, Ch.11


Optional Reading:


Clear, Todd. 2007. *Why Incarceration Makes Neighborhoods Worse*. Ch.3


