CCJS 498E: The Social Construction of Homicide  
Fall 2016  
University of Maryland College Park @ Shady Grove  
Building III Room 4220

SECTION SG91 Tuesday, 2:00pm-4:30pm

Instructor: Dr. Tom Alexander  
talexand@umd.edu  
Cell: 301-573-0742

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description
The course will take a structural, sociological, and real world approach to exploring the nature of homicide in contemporary society of the United States. This approach will examine all the different ways look at homicide such as from the media, data gathering, theoretical, police investigator, different types, and the role of capital punishment. We will also examine what research has revealed to us regarding the crime of homicide.

Learning Objectives
In this course, the overall Goal is to increase the student’s overall understanding of the realm of Homicide. In accomplishing this goal the Objectives are:

1- Define and give examples of legal and criminal homicide  
2- Describe official sources of information about homicide and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these sources.  
3- Describe the role of the media in regards to our perceptions of homicide.  
4- Discuss the different ways we report homicides (raw numbers, rates, ratios, percentage).  
5- Describe the trends or patterns of homicide to include demographics such as race, age, class, and gender.  
6- Demonstrate an understanding of victim-offender relationships in homicides, methods of killing and circumstances.  
7- Explain the handling of homicide in the Criminal Justice System such as the legal defenses and legal outcomes.  
8- Demonstrate an understanding of the different theoretical explanations offered in criminology for explaining violence/homicide.  
9- Explain the role of capital punishment in response to the offense of homicide.  
10- Discuss different strategies for reducing homicides (the death penalty, gun control, public health programs, and community involvement).  
11- Understand and critique some of the major issues regarding homicides.  
12- To assess the empirical knowledge regarding the social theories of homicide.  
13- To examine methodological issues regarding the study of homicide.  
14- To describe the homicide research regarding specific groups (intimate partners, serial murderers, etc.)  
15- To understand the role of drugs and alcohol in homicides.  
16- To be able to identify the seminal literature relating to homicide.

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**ISBN-13**: 978-1483384146

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**Course Philosophy**: The Social Construction of Homicide looks at the crime of homicide from several different perspectives. We will be looking at areas such as the History of Homicide, Homicide data, Sources of Data, the Role of the Media, Theoretical approaches to violence and homicide, Victims and Offenders, Types of Homicides, and different strategies for reducing homicides. We will also integrate the actual role of the police into this social construction. You will be responsible for all assigned readings PRIOR to class. Class time will be spent on further exploring concepts as well as class discussion. Your involvement in class is an important part of the learning environment. There are numerous other sources that I will be using to supplement my lectures. I have included this list at the end of the syllabus. These readings are not required however they play an important role in my class discussions. When needed, I will supply you with specific information taken from these sources.

**ELMS/CANVAS**

I will be using CANVAS to post the syllabus, grades, and some handouts. Go to http://www.elms.umd.edu/ and log in with your Directory ID (logon ID) and password to use this feature.

**Course Requirements**: There are multiple requirements for this course, described below. Exams and the Final Paper/Exam are considered to be Major Scheduled Graded Events and therefore the University medical excuse policy which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does not apply to them.

**Grading**: There will be two exams (which will collectively make up 50% of your grade). These exams will be both objective (multiple choice, true/false, short answer) and subjective (essay questions) which address specific class topics. These questions will cover all assigned material presented in lectures, readings, and class discussion. The course schedule will list exam dates. There will also be a Final Paper due at the end of the semester (30% of your grade). More details will be placed on ELMS and discussed in class throughout the semester. When you are working on any outside class assignment, students MUST work alone but you may use any resources available to them (e.g., textbook, lectures, academic literature, etc.).

**Class Participation**: Class participation will be measured by regular class participation as well as through any additional in-class assignments. Class participation will also be evaluated through the collection of any in-class
group assignments, and through observation of classroom and group discussions. There will be several times during the semester when Discussion Questions will be posted on ELMS relating to class material. You will be expected to respond to the weekly discussion question and make sure your post is substantive and does not parrot another student’s response. Class participation makes up 20% of your grade. Absent students will not be permitted to make-up any in-class assignments without documentation for an excused absence.

**Religious Observances:**
Please refer to the Online Catalog Policy on Religious Observance. Please remember that accommodations are not made for travel to and from the religious observance.

**Disability Support**
I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than September 12, 2016. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM’s DSS Office after September 12, 2016.

**Grading Schema**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>50% of your grade</th>
<th>30% of your grade</th>
<th>20% of your grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (Mid-term and Final)</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
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**Final Grades**

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**Exams**
There will be two exams (which will collectively make up just over one half of your grade). These exams will not be cumulative and will consist of multiple choice, matching, true/false, and short answer questions. The exams will cover all assigned material presented in lectures, readings, and class discussion. Exams will be taken in a computer lab during the scheduled class time. All exams are closed-book and are to be completed independently unless otherwise specified by the instructor. Make up exams will be given only if the instructor is provided documentation of an excused absence and the student notifies the instructor of his/her absence prior to the start of the exam. The instructor holds the rights to provide make up exams in an alternative format. All make up exams must be complete within 2 weeks of the original exam.

**Make-Up Policy**
Opportunities to make-up missed in-class work will only be given in cases of excused absences and official documentation is required. **Exams and research projects are considered to be Major Scheduled Graded Events and therefore the new University medical excuse policy which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does not apply to them.** Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, required school activities, and required court appearance. If a doctor will not write you a note, you will need to get a copy of your medical record from them to verify your illness. By law, you are entitled to get
a copy of this and it is your responsibility to do so. I must be notified in person or by phone or email PRIOR to missing a in-class assignment for me to consider giving you a makeup. If you know you will not be in class for in-class work or a date a project is due for an excused reason it is your responsibility to turn in the work PRIOR to the due date.

Sending Email
Please use the subject line “CCJS498E” whenever you send an email, which will increase the probability of us not considering it junk mail. The professor will mainly rely on email in order to communicate with students. The professor prefers communications be send via Outlook rather than through ELMS. Please check your email regularly.

Use of Technology
In this class, students are encouraged to bring their laptops to class to take notes only. If a student is found to be using a laptop for any other reason than taking notes, then that student will lose the privilege of bringing his/her computer to class. All technological devices, except a laptop computer, are prohibited in this class including MP3 devices, smart phones, phones, calculators, gaming devices, etc. If these devices are seen and/or used during the class, the student will be asked to leave the class immediately. If these devices are seen and/or used during an exam, the exam will be collected from the student and the student will no longer be allowed to continue taking the exam. The exam score will be noted as 0”.

Code of Conduct
Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another, the teaching assistant, or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Security. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

By September 12, 2016, students must provide the instructor, in writing, a request for a make-up exam for an exam date on the syllabus you are unable to make due to a specific religious observance (specify). Please refer to the Online Catalog Policy on Religious Observance. Please remember that accommodations are not made for travel to and from the religious observance.

Academic dishonesty of any form will absolutely NOT be tolerated. Academic dishonesty encompasses the traditional behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc., but also includes activities such as possessing and/or reviewing previous semester's exams and computer assignments. Additionally, students will be asked to write the University approved Honor Pledge on each exam and project. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally Recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html

Grade Disputes
If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe the professor should review them, you must submit a written request over email to the professor 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.
Copyright
The lectures I deliver in this class and the course materials I create and distribute are protected by federal copyright law as my original works. My lectures are recorded or delivered from written lectures in order to ensure copyright protection. You are permitted to take notes of my lectures and to use course materials for your use in this course. You may not record, reproduce, or distribute my lectures/notes for any commercial purpose without my written consent. Persons who sell or distribute copies or modified copies of my course materials, possess commercial copies of my notes (i.e. Terpnotes), or assist another person or entity in selling or distributing those materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, Part 9(k).

Course Evaluation
I take your course evaluation very seriously. Each semester, I revise my syllabus, course assignments and exam questions based on the feedback I receive on the course evaluation. I am not only interested in the scores that you give this class but I am also very interested in the specific comments you have about this course. I want to encourage each student in this class to evaluate not only my class but all of your classes. One important campus-wide evaluation is the online evaluation at the end of the semester. I will announce the dates the evaluations are available during our semester. Students can go directly to the website (www.coursesevalum.umd.edu) to complete their evaluations.

Disability Support
I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than September 15, 2016. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM’s DSS Office after September 15, 2016.

Academic Deadlines
* Cancel Registration August 26, 2016
* Change from Full-time to Part-Time (See Schedule Adjustment) August 26, 2016
http://registrar.umd.edu/current/registration/ScheduleAdjustment.html
* Add a Course September 12, 2016
* Apply for Graduation September 12, 2016
* Change Credit Level September 12, 2016
* Change Grading Option September 12, 2016
* Drop a course without “W” (Withdrawal) September 12, 2016
* Drop a Course with “W” (Withdrawal) November 7, 2016
http://registrar.umd.edu/current/registration/ScheduleAdjustment.html

Class Cancellations
If for any reason a class needs to be cancelled at the last minute, a notice will be posted through the class email list as well as in the Announcements on ELMS. Staff will also post a notice on or near the Classroom door.

Inclement Weather
In the event of inclement weather or other emergency conditions, you should follow delays and closures for the "Universities at Shady Grove or USM Shady Grove Center," rather than any individual participating USM institution. Closures and delays will be sent over the e2Campus notification system, as well as being reported on local radio and television news stations. You may also call USG at 301-738-6000 for recorded updates related to...
closures or delays. I would highly suggest that students The Universities at Shady Grove e2Campus system allows the University to contact you during an emergency by sending text messages to your: E-mail (school, personal, or other) Cell phone, Pager, Blackberry type device. See: http://www.shadygrove.umd.edu/campus-services/public-safety/campus-alerts

Additional sources:


CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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| Week 1   | Tue., Aug 30 | Introduction to the course  
Topic 1: *Introduction- The Data  
*Definitions  
*The Nature of Homicide in Contemporary Society  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapters 1 and 2  
| Week 2   | Tue., Sep. 6 | Topic 2: History of Homicide  
Topic 3: Methodological Issues in the Study of Homicide  
Topic 4: Trends and Patterns of Homicide  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapter 3  
Instructor material  
| Week 3   | Tue., Sep. 13 | Topic 5: Theories of Homicide  
*Individual Explanations  
*Social Structural Explanations  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapter 4  
| Week 4   | Tue., Sep. 20 | Topic 6: Theories of Homicide  
*Continuation with Social Structural Explanations  
-Confrontational  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapters 4 and 5  
| Week 5   | Tue., Sep. 27 | EXAM 1  
| Week 6   | Tue., Oct. 4 | Topic 7: *Special Types of Homicide  
-Intimate Partner  
-Familial  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapter 6 and 7  
| Week 7   | Tue., Oct. 11 | Topic 8: *Special Types of Homicide  
School Killings  
Workplace Mass Killings  
| Class Preparation: | Read Chapters 8 and 9  
Instructor Material  
| Week 8   | Tue., Oct. 18 | NO CLASS  
Work on take home assignment  
| Class Preparation: | Discussed in class  

| Week 9  | Topic 9: Special Types of Homicide  
|         | Terrorism  
|         | Serial Killings  
|         | Gangs  
|         | Topic 10: Special Issues in Homicide  
|         | Guns, Gun control, and Homicide  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Read Chapter 10, 11, and 12  
| Instructor Material | |
| Week 10 | Topic 11: Solving Homicides  
|         | The Literature on Homicide  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Read Chapter 13  
|         | Instructor Material | |
| Week 11 | EXAM II | |
| Week 12 | Topic 12: The Role of the Police and Courts  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Read Chapter 14 | |
| Week 13 | Topic 13: Victims  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Read Chapter 15 | |
| Week 14 | Topic 14: The role of Capital Punishment  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Instructor Material | |
| Week 15 | Topic 15: Overall Review and Paper Discussion  
| Class Preparation:  
|         | Instructor Material | |
| FINAL EXAM: Thursday December 15th 10:30am-12:30pm | |
Academic Integrity Pledge

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards in this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.shc.umd.edu. Academic dishonesty of any kind will NOT be tolerated. All students are expected to abide by University rules governing academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty encompasses behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc. Any cheating will be immediately turned over to the Office of Judicial Programs. To further exhibit your commitment to academic integrity, remember to sign the Honor Pledge on all examinations and assignments: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)."

By signing this document, I am testifying that I have read in full both the University Code of Academic Integrity and this document, understand the policies and vow to adhere to them.

Student Name

Signature

Date
### 2016 - 2017 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

**Fall Semester 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Day of Classes</td>
<td>August 29, 2016 (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>September 5 (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanksgiving Recess</td>
<td>November 23-27 (Wednesday-Sunday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last Day of Classes</td>
<td>December 12 (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Day</td>
<td>December 13 (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>December 14-20 (Wednesday-Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commencement- Main Ceremony</td>
<td>December 20 (Tuesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commencement- College/Department Ceremonies</td>
<td>December 21 (Wednesday)</td>
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