Course Description:

This course will focus on a question that criminologists have been asking since the 19th century: *Why does crime vary across places?* One possibility is that people with differing criminal propensities have settled 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 or Recommended Texts:


Course Requirements and Evaluation:

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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Research Proposal</td>
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<td>Field Work Assignment</td>
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<td>SSO Using Google Earth</td>
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<td>Discussion Leader</td>
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<td>Class Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
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**Final Exam**: The final exam will be a take-home exam and essay format.

**Research Proposal**: You will be required to write a research proposal related to communities and crime 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, this 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. and making observations about changes in neighborhoods along this path. 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 be expected to write a 1-2 page summary of your observations and to relate these to relevant theory from class. We will also draw on your observations for class discussion. More details will be provided after class starts.

**SSO Using Google Earth:** For this assignment you will observe and code an urban environment using Google Earth. Your assignment will require creating nominal definitions and a codebook for “disorder.” You will also learn how to use Google Earth to observe street environments and spatially code your observations.

**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**

8-28  Introduction to the Class  
Sampson, Ch.1  
Bursik and Grasmick, Ch.1

9-4   No Class – Labor Day

9-11  Historical Context and The Chicago School  


9-18 The Rise and Fall of Social Disorganization Theory


9-25 Resurrection and Elaboration of Social Disorganization

Bursik and Grasmick, Ch. 2

Sampson, Ch. 3 and Ch.7


10-2 Fear of Crime and Informal Control


10-9 Structure, Culture, and Inequality

Elijah Anderson and The Code of the Street


Sampson, Ch.5


10-16 Disorder and Incivility


10-23 Disorder and Incivility, Cont’d

Sampson, Ch.6


10-30 Routine Activities and Theories of Opportunity


11-6 The Criminology of Place


11-13 The Criminology of Place, Cont’d


11-20 Offender Decision-making and Place


11-27 Offender Decision-making and Place, Cont’d

Jean, Peter KB St. *Pockets of crime: Broken windows, collective efficacy, and the criminal point of view*. University of Chicago Press, 2008. Ch.5-6

12-4 Residential Mobility/Attainment and Offending

Sampson, Ch.11


Vogel, Matt, Lauren C. Porter, and Timothy McCuddy. “Hypermobility, Destination Effects, and Delinquency: Specifying the Link between Residential Mobility and Offending.” Forthcoming in *Social Forces*

12-11 Student Presentations