Violent Crime
(27:202:517)
Fall Semester, 2017
Instructor: Mercer L. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Course Information

Class time: Thursdays, 6-8:40PM
Location: CLJ 572
Instructor: Mercer L. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Instructor's Office:
   Room 557
   Center for Law and Justice
   123 Washington St.
Office Hours: Thursdays, 5-6PM or by appointment.
Phone: 973-353-5931
Email: mercer.sullivan@rutgers.edu

Course Overview/ course description

This course covers theories and research on criminal violence. Students will read and discuss classic and contemporary writings from the literature of social scientific studies of violence. The goals of the course are to cover the major theories advanced to explain violence, the methods used in the scientific study of violence, and important research findings about correlates, patterns, processes, and trends related to criminal violence. The approaches covered span a range of academic disciplines, including biobehavioral, social structural, cultural, developmental, and situational perspectives. The focus of the course is on interpersonal violent behavior that is under the purview of criminal law (rather than warfare or other forms of state-sponsored violence).

Prerequisites: none
Expected learning outcomes

Students will learn the major theories about sources and processes of criminal violence. Students will learn the characteristics of the major forms of criminal violence. Students will acquire an overview of the most important approaches to preventing and controlling violence. In addition, students will improve their general scholarly abilities to conduct critical analyses and evaluations of high-quality social science research on violence and the programs and policies intended to prevent and control violence.

Course Requirements and Processes

Course requirements include:
- regular reading of weekly assignments and participation in class discussions;
- leadership of two portions of the weekly class discussion; a 4-5 double-spaced reaction paper on that set of readings is due before the scheduled class.
- preparation of data presentations on a time trend for violent crime and demographic change in a selected community
- participation in a crime prevention/control planning workgroup
- a mid-term examination;
- a take-home final examination.

Grading

The final grade will be based on class participation, class leadership and associated short papers, the grade for the mid-term examination, and the grade for the final paper. Class participation grades will be heavily dependent on the instructor's perception that the student has studied the assigned materials before arriving for class.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>RP1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Crime Trend Exercise</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Participation A</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mid-Term</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>RP2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Census data exercise</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Group Project memo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Participation B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
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Schedule and Readings

The course will use the online Blackboard system for communication and for distribution of the readings. Most of the required readings, with the exception of book-
length readings, will be posted on Blackboard. In addition, prior to each class session, the professor will post one or more questions or topics for discussion during that session. Students are expected to prepare for discussion of the posted question or topic and arrive in class prepared for the discussion.

We will read the following books in their entirety. They will be placed on reserve in the Don Gottfredson Criminal Justice Library and may be purchased from various suppliers:


All other readings are posted on Blackboard. Topics and readings for each week are set out below but are subject to revision as the semester proceeds.

**Week One  September 7**
**Topics:** Introduction

**Week Two  September 14**
**Topics:** Historical and Cross-National Perspectives; Measurement
**Activities:** Presentation by Phyllis Schultze, Don M. Goffredson Library of Criminal Justice
**Assignments Due:** none


Supplementary:

Week Three September 21
Topics: Biosocial Perspectives; Research Methods


Supplementary:


Week Four September 28
Topics: Cultural Perspectives
Activities: Workshop on accessing Uniform Crime Report Data


Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America Fact Sheet

**Supplementary:**


**Week Five October 5**

**Topics:** Community perspective; Trends

**Activities:** Workshop on accessing census data on demographic trends.

**Assignments due:** UCR data presentation due


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Week Six  October 12**

**Topics:** Developmental Perspectives

**Activities:** Workshop on accessing census data on demographic trends, continued.


**Supplementary:**


**Week Seven** October 19  
**Topics:** Situational perspectives  
**Assignments due:** demographic data presentation


**Week Eight** October 26

Mid-Term Examination

**Week Nine** November 2  
**Topics:** Gangs; The Great Crime Decline of the 1990's.  
**Activities:** Screening of the film *Moral Panic*


**Week Ten** November 9  
**Topics:** Rampage and School Violence; Mental Illness; Media Effects


**Week Ten, Supplementary:**


**Week Eleven  November 16  Topic: Robbery**


**Week Twelve** November 23  
**Topics:** Violence against Women and Intimate Partners


**Week Thirteen** November 30  
**Topics:** Drugs, Alcohol, and Violence; Guns

(We will read selections from the following, TBA.)


**Week 14 December 7**

**Activities and Assignments Due:** Group project presentations.

**Take-home exams and group project memos due:** Friday, December 15, by 9:00 AM.

**General information (School and University)**

**Academic Integrity**

As a member of the Rutgers University community you are not to engage in any academic dishonesty. You are responsible for adhering to basic academic standards of honesty and integrity as outlined in the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students ([http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html](http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html)). Your academic work should be the result of your own individual effort, you should not allow other students to use your work, and you are required to recognize and reference any material that is not your own. Violations of the university’s policy will result in appropriate action.

**Students with Disabilities**

As stated in the Manual for Students and Coordinators of Services for Students with Disabilities ([http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/docs/studentmanual.pdf](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/docs/studentmanual.pdf)), Rutgers University “is committed to providing equal educational opportunity for persons with disabilities in accordance with the Nondiscrimination Policy of the University and in compliance with § 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.” For students with disabilities, review the manual and then contact the office of the Student Disability Coordinator, 973-353-5300, located in room 352 in the Robeson Campus Center.

**Psychological and Counseling Services**

If you experience psychological or other difficulties as a result of this course, or because of other issues that may interfere with your performance in the course, please contact the university’s psychological and counseling service center ([http://www.counseling.newark.rutgers.edu](http://www.counseling.newark.rutgers.edu); 973-353-5805), which is located in Blumenthal Hall, room 101. The center offers a variety of free, confidential services to part-time and full-time students who are enrolled at Rutgers.