

Youth Violence

47:202:422

Spring 2025

Lectures:

**Tuesday and Thursday: 11:30 AM – 12:50 PM
Hill Hall 107**

I. Course Information

Professor: Keisha April, J.D., Ph.D. (keisha.april@rutgers.edu) (Pronouns: she/her/hers)

Office Hours: Tue 1:00 – 2:00 pm and by appointment

Office Location: School of Criminal Justice, Rm 544

Teaching Assistant: Isabella Polito (ip284@scarletmail.rutgers.edu) (Pronouns: she/her/hers)

Office Hours: Wed 4:00 – 5:00 pm via [Zoom](#) and by appointment

Office Location: School of Criminal Justice, Rm 577

Course Description:

This course focuses on the assessment, development, prevention, and treatment of youth violence among children and adolescents. Understanding and preventing youth violence is a major focus of the nation's policy agenda and involves research and practice in the mental health, public health, psychiatry, and criminal justice communities. Using a multi-disciplinary approach, the course reviews the biological, social, and psychological underpinnings of youth violence, and discusses how policymakers and practitioners at all levels deal with this problem.

Prerequisites: None

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the historical roots of youth violence within a criminal justice context.
2. Describe theory and research findings about causes of youth violence.
3. Understand the correlates and implications of special issues within youth violence
4. Assess the consequences of youth violence to individuals, families, and communities.
5. Analyze and critique the evidence-base about policy prescriptions for the prevention and treatment of youth violence.

II. Course Requirements:

Textbook/Readings:

All readings for the course can be found as links on Canvas or contained in the course book:

Required text:

Seifert, K. (2011). Youth violence: Theory, prevention, and intervention. Springer publishing.

eBook available via Rutgers Library: <https://bit.ly/4ejUOjw>
ISBN: 9780826107411

The textbook can be found for **free** via Rutgers library. You must log in with your RUID. You can download the book to your device or read it online.

You are expected to **read all assignments for the week before coming to class**. Failure to do so will make it difficult to do well on the quizzes and to participate competently in the class sessions.

Slides will be utilized during lecture to assist in presenting and discussing material but are not meant to replace content covered in the readings. Thus, it is critical you engage with the readings to ensure you are well-prepared for your assessments. Slides will be made available online for your reference/review at the end of each week.

Canvas is the main course site that will be used for this class. The syllabus and any additional reading assignments not found in the text will be posted on Canvas, as well as course updates/communications and your grades. **It is your responsibility to make sure you can access resources on Canvas** well in advance and bring access issues to the instructor's attention immediately.

III. Course Structure and Schedule

The following table lists the topics to be covered each week and due dates for assignments. Weekly readings will pull from the Seifert text and additional sources as listed on the Syllabus. All readings outside of the Seifert text are available on Canvas under **Modules**. All assignments are to be submitted via Canvas by the date specified.

This schedule is *subject to change* at the Professor's discretion. If I do change something, I will send an email and upload a new syllabus to reflect those changes. It is your **responsibility** to regularly check your email, keep track of assignments/due dates and read assignment instructions carefully (see note on Professionalism in Section VI).

Sample Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments
1	1/21 & 1/23	Introduction	Seifert Ch. 1 – Prevalence & Trends	
2	1/28 & 1/30	Defining & Understanding Youth Violence	Seifert Ch. 2 – Demographic factors Woolard & Fountain – Serious Juvenile Offenders Seifert Ch. 3 – Classifications	
3	2/4 & 2/6	Theories of Youth Violence (1)	Seifert Ch. 4 – Theoretical Perspectives (p. 41-54) Vallabhajosula (2015) – Violence and the adolescent brain	Quiz 1 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)
4	2/11 & 2/13	Theories of Youth Violence (2)	Seifert Ch. 4 – Theoretical Perspectives (p. 55 – 63)	Quiz 2 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)
5	2/18 & 2/20	Individual Contexts	Seifert Ch. 5 – Individual Factors Juvenile Forensic Report – “Jayden”	Quiz 3 (<i>Tue in Class</i>) DQ # 1 Due 2/20
6	2/25* & 2/27	Social Contexts	Seifert Ch. 6 – Environmental Factors Rogers (2022) – Youths’ exposure to violence in the family Anderson et al. (2016) – Screen violence and youth behavior	Quiz 4 (<i>Thu in Class</i>)
7	3/4 & 3/6	Assessing & Identifying Youth Violence	Seifert Ch. 9 – Violence Risk Assessment Juvenile Forensic Report – “Gabe”	Quiz 5 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)
8	3/11	Special Issues: TBD	Readings TBD	Quiz 6 (<i>Tue in Class</i>) CAP Outlines Due 3/13
Spring Break (No Class 3/18 & 3/20)				
9	3/25 & 3/27	Special Issues: School Violence	Seifert Ch. 7 – Bullying Cornell & Stohlman (2022) – Violence in schools Bushman et al. (2016) – Youth violence: What we know and what we need to know	Quiz 7 (<i>Tue in Class</i>) DQ # 2 Due 3/27
10	4/1 & 4/3	Special Issues: Peers & Gangs	Elsaesser (2021) – Small becomes big fast Juvenile Forensic Report – “Mark” Jennings & Gonzales (2016) – Gangs	Quiz 8 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)

11	4/8 & 4/10	Special Issues: Dating & Sexual Violence	OJJDP (2022) – Teen dating violence Hoffman (2009) – Teenage girls stand by their man Ryan & Otonichar (2016) – Juvenile sex offenders PBS News Hour – Should a juvenile sex offender be locked up indefinitely?	Quiz 9 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)
12	4/15 & 4/17	Special Issues: Mental health	Aebi & Steinhausen (2018) – Violent juvenile offenders: A psychiatric and mental health perspective Hagerty (2017) – When your child is a psychopath	Quiz 10 (<i>Tue in Class</i>) CAP Final Paper Due 4/17
13	4/22 & 4/24	Prevention & Intervention	Seifert Ch. 10 – Violence Prevention Programs Seifert Ch. 11 – Interventions Butts & Szkola (2022) – The juvenile justice response to violence	Quiz 11 (<i>Tue in Class</i>) DQ # 3 Due 4/24
14	4/29 & 5/1	Policy & Practice Implications	Seifert Ch. 12 – Policy Implications Goldstein (2016) – What's justice for kids who kill?	Quiz 12 (<i>Tue in Class</i>)

IV. Assessments

I. Weekly Quizzes – 50% of grade

- a. There will be 12 in-class quizzes, consisting of multiple choice, true/false questions and/or fill-in questions. 10 of the quizzes will count toward your final grade and the two lowest quiz grades will be dropped. **Each** quiz will be worth 5% of your grade (10 quizzes x 5% = 50% of total grade).
- b. Weekly quizzes are meant to be used as a comprehension check and to make sure you are keeping up with the readings. Further, they aim to reduce the weight of a large exam and avoid “cramming” large amounts of information. Thus, there is no “midterm” or “final” exam.
- c. Quizzes are to be completed **in class**, during the regular class session. If you are not in class on the day of a quiz, **you will not be able to take it**. But you can miss two quizzes before it will impact your grade.
- d. Attempting to take a quiz when you are not present (i.e., asking for a code from a friend) is a **violation of the course’s academic integrity policies**. The quiz-taker and the person who shares the code will receive a “0” for any falsely submitted quizzes and their names will be submitted to the University’s academic policies board. Do NOT do this.

2. Discussion Questions (DQ) – 15% of grade

- a. There will be 3 discussion prompts posted on Canvas. Each response is worth 5% of your total grade. You may choose to complete them *earlier* than the posted deadline, **but no extensions will be given** for missed discussion responses.
- b. For each post, you will have TWO tasks to complete. You must write your own response to the question but must also engage with and provide **feedback** on one other classmate’s post to get full credit.
 - i. **Response (7 pts)** – Discussion post responses are opinion based. They do not require you to do “research” to support your point, but some may ask you to look up materials and analyze them (e.g., find a recent news article about youth violence). You will not be graded on whether an answer is “right or wrong” (it is your opinion so there is no “right or wrong”), but instead on the thoroughness or thoughtfulness of your response. Satisfactory responses will likely be between 1 - 2 paragraphs in length (can be longer or shorter, as long as you sufficiently respond to the questions).
 - i. **Be mindful** – questions will have multiple parts. If you do not answer all parts of the question, you will not get full credit for your response!
 - ii. **Feedback (3 pts)** – After you have completed and posted your response select **one other classmate’s response** on the discussion board to read and provide feedback on (by replying to the post). Feedback on a classmate’s post must reflect engagement with and critical analysis of the response. Feedback *does not* mean to give your classmate an evaluation

or “score” of their response (e.g., “good job,” “poor job”). Instead, it means you should be providing your own analysis of their ideas. Your responses could include asking questions, constructively challenging a point or assumption, sharing materials or ideas you’d like them to think about, explaining how your classmate’s responses changed, strengthened, or made you reconsider your own viewpoint, etc.

- i. For example, you could comment that your classmate’s perspective is interesting or has expanded your understanding or way of thinking about the issue because [insert reason].
 - ii. Or you could attempt to push your classmate’s perspective forward, by commenting on their perspective and providing thoughts as to other things they might want to consider (e.g., “I found your response really interesting because [ABC] but I wonder how you think [XYZ] should be addressed given this stance?”)
 - iii. **Remember** professionalism is required in all interactions in this course.
- c. **Note:** You must complete both your response AND peer feedback by 11:59pm on the date the post is due. Thus, you should not wait until the last minute to complete your response. It is, however, fine for multiple students to comment/provide feedback on the same post (e.g., 3 different students could leave separate feedback on one student’s post).

3. Critical Analysis Paper (CAP) – 25%

- a. You will complete a critical analysis paper, choosing from one of two case studies (posted under Assignment on Canvas). These cases are real-life juvenile forensic assessment reports (that have been edited and deidentified to protect the youths’ identities). You will use what you have learned in the course to analyze the young person’s history and make determinations about what may have led to their offending and what interventions this young person may need.
- b. Detailed instructions, case files, and the grading rubric can be found under Assignments on Canvas ([Critical Analysis Paper](#)), but the paper must include four sections:
 - i. **Introduction** – explain why we study youth violence and how analysis of your case can contribute to understanding in this area
 - ii. **Case Analysis** – describe the young person’s background, history of offending, protective factors, and your assessment of their risk of violence
 - iii. **Recommendations** – describe what you believe this young person needs to help them and how this can be achieved
 - iv. **Conclusion** – synthesize your findings and describe how this process of analysis contributes to understanding of youth violence and how it may impact policy and practice
- c. Papers must be between 4-6 pages double-spaced and should include at least 4 scholarly references on a separate References page at the end of the paper (References and Title

page do not count toward page limit).

- d. Papers must be in **APA format**. This means papers should be double-spaced, use a 1" margin, and 12-point font. References should also be in APA style. If you are not familiar with APA citation style, please make sure you research how to use it, as you **will lose points** for improper use of citations. There are many resources online (e.g., [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)). You may also want to make use of the Rutgers Writing Center.
- e. Due Dates
 - i. You must **submit an outline** for us to review and provide feedback on during Week 8 (3/13). See Canvas for instructions. We have provided a worksheet.
 - ii. Final papers are due via upload to Canvas by **April 17, 2025**, at 11:59 pm.

4. Attendance & Participation – 10% of grade

- a. Being present in class will be integral to your ability to do well, as content may be included in class that we do not cover in the readings. Your ability to understand the material will also be assessed in a multitude of ways, including in-class discussions. You will gain credit for in-class activities simply by participating in them. However, if you are *not* in class when an in-class activity takes place, then you are not able to get credit for it (i.e., they cannot be “made up”). Low participation grades reflect poor attendance and/or class engagement.
- b. Signing in for attendance when you are not here is a violation of the course’s academic integrity policy and will result in a “0” grade.

V. Grading

- 1. Grades will be based on quizzes (50%), discussion question responses (15%), critical analysis project (25%), and participation (10%) for a total of 100%
- 2. You can check how you are doing at any time by going to the "Grades" section of Canvas.
- 3. Grades represent the level of quality of a student’s performance in this course. The following grading scale will be used for individual assignments, and for the final course grade:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90 - 100%
B+	87 - 89%
B	80 - 86%
C+	77 - 79%
C	70 - 76%
D	60 - 69%
F	< 60%

Late or Missing Assignment Policy:

- It is your responsibility to keep track of due dates.
- Assignments will be penalized 10% for every day (24 hrs.) late.
 - 1 day late (1 to 24 hrs.) = 10% reduction
 - 2 days late (24 to 48 hrs.) = 20% reduction
 - 3 days late (48 to 72 hrs.) = 30% reduction
- **A zero (0%) will be entered for any missing assignments**

VI. Course Policies

Community Agreements

1. All members of this class are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner. This includes coming to class prepared and on time, reducing disruptions (e.g., putting phones on silent), paying attention (i.e., no web-browsing or working on other assignments during class), and participating.
2. In this class, we may have discussions that challenge our assumptions about crime and justice, as well as race, gender, sexuality, morality and culture. Students should be prepared to engage honestly and openly about this material and are encouraged to examine their own beliefs about the issues.
3. While we hope that the course materials will spark interesting discussion, personal insults or other types of demeaning, disrespectful, or threatening comments toward other class members about their experiences, backgrounds, or statements will NOT be tolerated, are considered disruptions, and will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs.

Student Belonging

1. Students come from a variety of different backgrounds (first generation full-time employees, international, caregivers, justice-involved, differently-abled, returning to school, etc.). There are many reasons why students (yourself included!) may feel as if they don't belong in these spaces.
 - a. For example, your professor is a first-generation college student, child of immigrants, and grew up just 20 minutes from campus. College can be very intimidating when you feel you are struggling and don't know how to manage or how to get help. One of the important things I learned in my first semester was that it is important to ask for help. I felt discouraged in courses where professors told me I couldn't be helped, and the most confident in classrooms where instructors listened to me and valued my input. Those were the experiences that made me believe I belonged. When I started to ask for help, I began to get more out of my college experience and was better able to take advantage of the place that I had earned. You earned being here too!
2. Please let us know if any situations arise that may impact your ability to do your best and get the most out of the learning experience. We can work with you to connect you with important resources available within the University.
3. Ask questions and get to know your instructors and classmates. More people may be sharing your experiences than you know. We should all be open to and respectful of these differences.

Professionalism

1. This is a college-level course, and you are expected to be responsible for reviewing the materials, coming prepared to class, keeping track of due dates and carefully reading instructions.
 - a. Failure to follow instructions is not an excuse for handing in inaccurate work and assignments will be graded based on the instructions as provided.
2. You should be **checking your Rutgers email** as any communications for the course will come through this format. While I will strive to update you on changes during the class period, not checking your email is not an appropriate reason for missing an assignment or change in the course schedule.
3. When contacting course instructors, it is important to communicate professionally and

constructively. You should make it clear what you are requesting and how the instructor can help. For example:

- a. Subject: Question about assignment for Delinquency course

Dear/Hello/Hi [Dr. X, Prof. Y, Ms. Z],

I am writing about [the assignment due on March 7th, the group project, the paper on Y]. I am [having trouble understanding X, unclear about Y, wanting to know if Z]. I have [tried X, looked on the syllabus, reviewed the assignment], but am still having trouble. Can you [help clarify, confirm Y, find a time to meet, etc].

Thank you,

[Student name]

4. You should also **make sure to communicate using your Rutgers email**, so communications are not lost. If you do not hear back from me within 48 hours, it is absolutely appropriate to send a follow up to make sure that I have seen your email.
5. Taking the time to thoroughly read your syllabus is important and can help answer many questions to support your success. It can also have added benefits. Send Dr. April an email with a picture of your favorite animal by 1/30 and you will receive one point of extra credit.

Office Hours:

1. Office hours are meant to be utilized as a supplement to enhance your learning, and thus you should take advantage of them in a way that best suits you.
2. Office hours are not mandatory, and each meeting will be driven by students' interests. You *should* come prepared with questions or topics you want to discuss or review (feel free to also send questions in advance). Topics might include: review of course content, elaboration on content covered or topics adjacent to course content, questions pertaining to current events or developing situations in juvenile justice, professional development (e.g., careers), research interests, etc.
3. Importantly, office hours are not only a space for when students are struggling or have concerns. They are also an opportunity to meet with the teaching team and peers in a smaller setting. I am excited about getting to know you and happy to share office hours as a time to explore your interests or learn more about you.
4. Please also feel free to chat with us informally before or after lecture :)
5. If you want to meet with one of us one-on-one, you can also send an email to set up an appointment.

VII. General Information for all Undergraduate Courses

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://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity>
- Your academic work should be the result of your own individual effort. You should not allow other students to use your work, you should not copy or reproduce your work from other courses, and you are required to recognize and reference any material that is not your own. Violations of the University's policy will result in immediate and appropriate action.

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the RU-N ODS website (ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 Students requesting a letter of verification should submit information using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/Verification>.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works

with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm> or emailing careteam@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805. Additional support is available through Uwill services:

- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.
- Umatch: Free teletherapy with flexible and convenient scheduling, starting with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your Netid. Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

If you are interested in finding out more about the:

- Accelerated Master's Program (B.S. /M.A.)
- Criminal Justice National Honor Society (Alpha Phi Sigma)

Please refer to the School of Criminal Justice website <http://rscj.newark.rutgers.edu/>