

Gangs and Society
Sociology 438/538
T-TH 11:10a-12:30p
Social Science 330/338
Fall 2015

Instructor:

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to introduce students to contemporary research in the criminological investigation of gangs and the methodological approaches that have been implemented to study them. Although portrayals of gang issues in the media might lead to the conclusion that gangs are a “modern” phenomenon, empirical studies of gangs have been a major focus in criminology since 1927. We will begin with an examination of the operational issues associated with gangs and how it is that they are distinct from “cliques” and other peers groups. We will then focus on the distribution and nature of gangs in America and the characteristics of youths who comprise them. Next, the focus turns to the role of gangs in crime and delinquency with particular attention being paid to the connection between gangs and violence. The final section of the course will cover the methodological approaches that have been implemented to study gangs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course is organized around the following six learning objectives:

- Objective One: to understand the difference between gangs, cliques, and adolescent peer groups. The information pertaining to this objective is covered in the material for weeks 1-3.
- Objective Two: to understand the migration of gangs and gang members across the United States. The information pertaining to this objective is covered in the material for weeks 4 and 5.
- Objective Three: to understand how gang members are stratified by gender, age, race and class. The information pertaining to this objective is covered in the material for weeks 6 and 7.
- Objective Four: to understand the connection role of delinquency and violence within gangs. The information pertaining to this objective is covered in the material for weeks 8-11.
- Objective Five: to understand the strengths and limitations of the methodological approaches used to study gangs. The information pertaining to this objective is covered in the material for weeks 12-14.
- Objective Six: to understand the technical and critical writing styles used within sociology. This objective is emphasized throughout the course in free writing assignments, Moodle discussion question posts, and in particular the annotated bibliography.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Brotherton, David C. and Luis Barrios. 2004. *The Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation: Street Politics and the Transformation of a New York City Gang*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Egley, Arlen Jr., Cheryl L. Maxson, Jody Miller, and Malcolm W. Klein. 2006. *The Modern Gang Reader 3rd Edition*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Huff, C. Ronald. 2002. *Gangs in America 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Short, James F.Jr, and Lorine A. Hughes. 2006. *Studying Youth Gangs*. New York: AltaMira.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Self Introduction Paper (25 points). The first assignment you will be asked to complete is a self introduction paper. The purpose of this paper is to tell me what you know about gangs, what you see the role of sociology in the study of gangs as, and to tell me what you hope/expect to learn in this course. Additionally, it will allow you to discuss what you feel are your strengths and weaknesses as a writer.
- Discussion Questions (75 points). Each place in the schedule where readings are assigned you will be required to submit a discussion question. These questions must be informed by the assigned readings for the day and are due at 5:00pm on Monday afternoon. The questions are to be submitted on Moodle and will comprise, in part, the topics that the discussants will organize for us on Tuesday.
- Free Writing Assignments (50 points). During two class meeting times outlined in the course schedule below, you will be asked to discuss and then write on a daily topic in class (25 points each). The topics are organized such that you should have enough information to organize a thesis statement and then write a supporting paragraph outlining your position on the issue. These assignments will be hand-written and submitted to me during the class session when they are completed. On one of these (you get to choose which one), you will have an opportunity to respond to the formal feedback to your initial submission and revise and resubmit the draft for regarding.
- Annotated Bibliography and Future Research Presentation (125 points). You will be required to conduct research on a topic associated with street gangs. Your topic must be something that has been examined enough in the past 10 years that there are at least 10-12 peer review articles have been published on a course related topic of your choosing. In the final meeting times at the end of the semester you will be asked to give a 15 minute in-class presentation outlying the information that is covered in the paper you are writing and your informed opinion on what we can expect to see in future research on the topic.
- Class Attendance and Participation (100 points). As this course is an advanced seminar, you will be expected to participate in class discussions. It is important that you read the assigned readings in advance and come prepared to discuss them and respond to the questions and comments of your peers. As part of this requirement, you will serve as a discussant where you will direct the daily discussion and as a note-taker where you will assist a peer by taking notes on the day that they operate in the capacity of discussant. One the day that you serve as note-taker, you will be required to submit a type-written copy of your notes on Moodle with all members of the course.

MEETING THE UPPER DIVISION WRITING CRITERIA:

The content outlined in this syllabus meets the requirements for upper-division writing courses in the following ways:

- Registration is restricted to more than 25 students.
- Course content is organized to address each of the seven learning outcomes.
- Detailed instructions are available on Moodle for all out-of-class writing and are given verbally for in-class free writing exercises; rubrics for assessing student performance are also provided on Moodle.
- Writing assignments specify writing to be directed to a specific audience, with a specified purpose and genre.
- Feedback will be provided on all writing assignments; students will have an opportunity to “revise and resubmit” at least one formally graded assignment.
- A total of 21 pages of writing (2 self introduction paper; 7 discussion questions; 2 free writing; 10 annotated bibliography) will be required constituting 73% (275 out of 375) of the total points available in the course.

GRADES:

As shown above, there are a total of 375 points available in the course. Grades will be based on an average of the number of points each student earns in relation to the total points available. Grades will be distributed along the following cut-offs:

Letter Grade	Grade Percent
A	90-100 percent
B	80-89 percent
C	70-79 percent
D	60-69 percent
F	59 percent or below

GENERAL ISSUES:

This is a seminar course. The purpose is to help you become knowledgeable about some of the major issues in the empirical investigation of gangs and to prepare you for your own scholarly pursuits. It is expected that each of you have gone through a lower division writing course, the core courses for the general sociology degree, as well as the core courses for the criminology emphasis. It will be extremely difficult to do well in the course if this foundation is missing. Furthermore, this is an upper-division writing course. Analytic, organization and writing skills are a necessity for this class. Although part of the focus is to build and foster these skills, I will be challenging you to write and think in a critical and analytical manner that is the standard within professional sociological writing.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY (UM OFFICIAL STATEMENT):

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the university. All students must be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#). The code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

FINAL NOTE:

Feel free to come and see me if you need to discuss the course material or anything else related to your academic concerns. Our relationship will work best if we are able to openly discuss issues. I am readily available to students out of class and although you should make every effort to see me during office hours, I will remain responsive to issues and concerns that arise.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE (Discussant Days are Tuesdays)

Unit One: Introduction to American Gangs

Week 1 (August 31st – September 4th): Introduction

Egley et al. Ch's 1, 2

Researching Peer Review Articles in the Mansfield Library Digital Databases

Week 2 (September 7th – September 11th): Changing Boundaries of American Gangs

Egley et al. Ch's 3, 4

Huff Ch 1

Hughes and Short Ch 1

Writing in the discipline I/Gang Mecca-Chicago PT I Gangster City

**** Self Introduction Paper Due Tuesday, February 1st in Class***

Week 3 (September 13th – September 18th): Getting In and Getting Out

Egley et al. Ch 5

Hughes and Short Ch 2

Huff Ch 4

Social Learning Theories

Unit Two: Distribution and Structure of American Gangs

Week 4 (September 21st – September 25th): Patterns and Evolution of American Gangs

Egley et al. Ch's 7, 8, 9

Writing Center Workshop #1/Gang Mecca-Chicago PT 2 Black P Stones

Week 5 (September 28th – October 2nd): Structure and Movement of American Gangs

Egley et al. Ch's 10, 11, 12

Free Writing Assignment #1 (Do Gangs Grow through Franchising?)

****First half of research article summaries for Annotated Bibliography due in class on Oct 1st**

Unit Three: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and the American Gang

Week 6 (October 5th – October 9th): Gender Differences and Gang Involvement

Huff Ch 2, 12

Egley et al. Ch's 14, 17, 18

Strain Theories

Week 7 (October 12th – October 16th): Ethnicity and Gangs

Egley et al. Ch's 15, 16

Huff Ch 14

Writing in the Discipline II/The Secret Society of Chinatown

Unit Four: American Gangs and Crime

Week 8 (October 19th – October 23rd): Gangs and Delinquency

Egley et al. Ch 20

Huff Ch. 8

Free Writing Assignment #2 (Are Gangs Criminal Enterprises?)

Week 9 (October 26th – October 30th): Gangs and Violence I

Egley et al. Ch's 19, 21, 22

Writing in the Discipline III/Gang Mecca-Los Angeles PT I 18th Street Gang

Week 10 (November 2nd – November 6th): Gangs and Violence II

Egley et al. Ch's 23, 24

Writing Center Workshop #2/Gang Mecca-Los Angeles PT II LA Bloods

****2nd half of research article summaries for Annotated Bibliography due in class on Nov 5th**

Week 11 (November 9th - November 13th): Gangs and Drugs

Egley et al. Ch 25

Huff Ch 3

Social Control Theories

Unit Five: Methodological Issues in the Study of American Gangs

Week 12 (November 16th – November 20th): Place Explanations

Hughes and Short Ch's 3, 4, 5

Social Disorganization Theory

Week 13 (November 23rd – November 27th): Project Workday and Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 14 (November 30th – December 4th): Gangs as Social Networks and Social Capital

Hughes 2006 (PDF)

Hughes and Short Ch's 6, 7

****Annotated Bibliography Due Thursday, December 3rd in Class**

Week 15 (December 7th – December 11th): Student Presentations

Week 16 (December 14th – December 18th): Finals Week

**** Final Meeting Time: TBA****