

SOCIOLOGY 389: CRIME AND THE MEDIA

Spring Semester 2022

M/W 1:00-2:15

PAIS 290

Professor: Dr. Sonal Nalkur

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will provide an introduction to critical issues and approaches in the study of criminology with a specific focus on the role of mass media in influencing public perceptions of crime, justice, and safety. While there are many ways to approach the study of crime and the media, this course will focus on helping students understand how children's entertainment, crime drama, film, podcasts, and various news media construct crime and justice.

This course will focus on how perceptions of crime and justice are framed in the media and in popular culture. We will discuss the various ways that criminals, law enforcement, courts, and corrections are framed by media content. In considering the social construction of crime, we will also ask questions around why it's important to consider the media depictions of crime and criminals. What do they tell us about our perception of society? What do they tell us about how we conceive of social justice and punishment? What implications might the social construction of crime have on policy?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Learning Outcome 1: Students will learn to distinguish the uses of evidence in the sociology of media and the sociological study of crime. To do so, students will compare and contrast the evidence and approaches used in existing scholarly work.

Learning Outcome 2: Students will evaluate and analyze evidence they have gathered based on approaches used by scholars who have explored topics in the sociological study of crime and media. In class, we will learn to evaluate evidence according to criteria established in the discipline/course. Students will analyze evidence thoroughly (systematically and methodically), and will be given the tools to do so over the course of the semester.

Learning Outcome 3: Students will develop an understanding of the history of media's relationship with crime and will identify the various ways that media depicts crime and crime control.

Learning Outcome 4: Students will practice synthesizing the literature on crime and media.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. **Textbooks:** Surette, R. (2011). *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice*. 4th Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. ****Please wait until our first class meeting before purchasing!****

2. Reserve readings

There are also additional **required** readings, which will be available on our CANVAS site.

Some of the readings are more difficult than others. I will give you guidance on “how” to read the articles, particularly the more difficult ones. I will use lectures to give you additional information not found in the readings, and I will also provide frameworks for understanding and integrating the readings with the lecture material.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Participation (25% of final grade)

All assigned **readings** should be completed **before** class to ensure active participation in class discussions and activities. Students will be expected to interact with their fellow classmates in an effort to develop their own scholarly and intellectual community (this should be both fun and helpful!).

For the month of January, when the classes are still remote, short lectures will be posted on Canvas for asynchronous engagement. On Mondays and Wednesdays, students will be assigned to small group discussion sections that will run during class time and will be led by Dr. Nalkur. Students will be expected to participate in real-time (synchronously). Details will be provided in class and on Canvas. I will post my lecture notes for you at the end of each week.

2. Staged Assignment (Research Project in Parts – subject to changes) (45% of final grade)

I will give students detailed instructions for each part of the staged assignment in class. For this project, students will choose a film or TV program for independent study. The assignment will be research-based, and students will be expected to submit short papers for each stage of the assignment. The final stage will involve either an in-class presentation or a video presentation. Further instructions will be discussed in class.

Stage 1 (10% of final grade)

Stage 2 (15% of final grade)

Stage 3 (20% of final grade) [This includes your final presentation.]

3. Weekly Response Papers (30% of the final grade)

Response papers are due by 10:00am every Monday morning. Papers should be 250-400 words in length and submitted via Canvas. Papers should be well-written and will require engagement with the week’s readings. Late papers will receive a zero grade. Students will be able to drop two paper grades over the course of the semester.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The use of cell phones and/or pagers is not permitted in this class. Please turn OFF your phones and pagers before entering the classroom.

General Communication

I provide very detailed information and instructions in all of the course documents. I will also send periodic Canvas announcements and emails about any further course information.

- **Please read all of the written course communications thoroughly!**
- If you have questions after you have read everything in a particular course document (syllabus, paper instructions, study guide), then feel free to ask me.
- **Please do NOT ask/email me questions that I have already answered** in a course document or via posted announcement/emails.

Zoom Communication

Students are expected to treat Zoom classroom sessions, Zoom calls, and Zoom office hours as professional interactions.

1. Please take your calls in a quiet space that is without distractions.
2. If you do not have a neutral background, or are taking calls from your personal room, please blur your background using Zoom tools.
3. Please try to avoid taking calls outdoors as sound quality diminishes significantly.
4. When you are on a call, please avoid speaking with other people around you and remain focused on our calls.
5. I will do my best to keep calls short and focused, and I expect you to be focused on our calls as well. Thank you!

If you anticipate any of these guidelines to be difficult, please email Dr. Nalkur as soon as possible.

Email Communication:

I generally try to respond to emails within 1 business day, but I do not guarantee a response within 24 hrs. I do not answer emails on weekends.

General Classroom Conduct:

Please be mindful of the general code of conduct that you would use in any classroom setting. I expect us all to be respectful of one another.

- **Please do not arrive late to class.**
- Once in class, please refrain from carrying on private conversations with your neighbor(s). This is distracting for everyone else in the room.
- Please refrain from texting, checking Snapchat/Facebook/Instagram, or any other non-class activities during all class meetings. If you are found to be engaging in these activities, you will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class.

Missed Classes: You are responsible for missed material. Please get notes from one of your classmates. After you have read all of the missed material, if you still have questions, please come to my office hours. (Please do not email me to ask about missed class material.)

Video/Audio: You may not video or audiotape lectures without my express consent.

Extra Credit: There are no extra credit assignments available in this course.

Peer Tutoring Writing Support

Tutors in the Emory Writing Center and the ESL Program are available to support Emory College students as they work on any type of writing assignment, at any stage of the composing process. Tutors can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to websites and other multimedia projects. Writing Center and ESL tutors take a similar approach as they work with students on concerns including idea development, structure, use of sources, grammar, and word choice. They do not proofread for students. Instead, they discuss strategies and resources students can use as they write, revise, and edit their own work. Students who are currently enrolled in an ESL-supported section of English 101, English 123, or English 221 or who plan to take one of those courses next semester should see ESL tutors, as they are specifically trained to support students in ESL Program courses. To learn more about ESL tutoring or to make an appointment, go to tinyurl.com/eslemory. All other students in the college should see Writing Center tutors who are trained to work with this broader population. Learn more and make an appointment at writingcenter.emory.edu. Please review tutoring policies before your visit.

Accommodating Disabilities:

If you have or acquire any sort of condition that may require special accommodation(s), please inform me as soon as possible so that we may make the appropriate arrangements. Proper documentation from the Office of Disabilities Services will be required. They can be reached at 404-727-1065 or via the web at <http://www.emory.edu/EEO/ODS/>.

Academic Conduct:

All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the policies of Emory College with respect to conduct and academic honesty. Anyone engaging in acts that violate these policies, such as plagiarism or cheating will be referred to the Honors Council. For more information see: http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html

Late Policy:

Unless otherwise stated on the assignment sheet or in class, an assignment submitted after the deadline will be penalized 5% for each day it is late, from the moment it is past due. If you require an extension due to illness, you must notify Dr. Nalkur *prior* to the deadline, and provide a note from your doctor.

Make-Up Policy:

My permission is needed to makeup exams and assignments. If you are going to miss an exam or assignment, please make every effort to notify me before the missed class and to gather appropriate material to justify your absence. If you are unable to notify me before the class/due date, please try to have a friend, roommate, etc. contact me via e-mail and inform me of your absence. A mutually convenient time will be arranged for you to make up the assignment or exam. Makeup assignments will *only* be allowed in a situation of an excused absence (e.g., illness, family emergency, etc.). A note from the Dean will be required to make up the final exam.

The use of cell phones is not permitted in this class or during Zoom calls.

You are not permitted to use laptops or other devices in the classroom unless you have special permission from Dr. Nalkur.

Please turn OFF your phones before entering the classroom.

If you are found using phones or devices in class, you will be asked to leave.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

- Jan 12th: **Introduction**
- Jan 17th: *MLK Day Observance – no class*

I. CRIME AND CRIMINALS IN FILM & TELEVISION

- Jan 19th: **Law vs. Morality**
Nielsen, L. B., Patel, N. A., & Rosner, J. (2017). “Ahead of the Lawmen”: Law and Morality in Disney Animated Films 1960–1998. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 13(1), 104-122.
Film to watch: *The Little Mermaid*
- Jan 24th: **Myths and The Social Construction of Crime**
Film to watch: *The Armstrong Lie* (2013)
- Jan 31st: Film to watch: *The Loving Story* (2012)
Reading: [Blogpost on the Social Construction of Crime](#)
- Feb 2nd: **Does Genre matter?**
Film to watch: *The Witness* (2015)
Reading: Bruzzi, S. (2016). Making a genre: The case of the contemporary true crime documentary. *Law and Humanities*, 10(2), 249-280.
- February 7th: **Myth and Mobsters**
Film to watch: *The Godfather* (1974)
Reading: “Godfatherhood: The Making of the Godfather” *The New Yorker*
- February 9th: Reading 1: Cawelti, J. G. (1975). The new mythology of crime. *Boundary 2*, 325-357.
Reading 2: Kappeler, V. E. (2004). Inventing criminal justice: Myth and social construction. *Theorizing criminal justice: Eight essential orientations*, 185-194.

- February 28th: **Framing Crime: Marx & Cultivation Theory**
 Film to watch: *Dead Man Walking* (1995)
 Reading: Rafter, N. (2001). American criminal trial films: An overview of their development, 1930–2000. *Journal of law and society*, 28(1), 9-24.
 Optional Reading: Yar, M. (2010). Screening crime: Cultural criminology goes to the movies. *Framing crime: Cultural criminology and the image*, 68-82.
- March 2nd:
 Reading 1: Sarat, A., Chan, M., Cole, M., Lang, M., Scholnik, N., Sidhu, J., & Siegel, N. (2014). Scenes of execution: Spectatorship, political responsibility, and state killing in American film. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 39(3), 690-719.
 Reading 2: Welsh, A., Fleming, T., & Dowler, K. (2011). Constructing crime and justice on film: Meaning and message in cinema. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 14(4), 457-476. [*Dead Man Walking*]
- February 14th:
 Show to watch: *The Sopranos* (Episodes available on Course Reserves – please watch all three)
 Reading: van Ommen, M., Daalmans, S., Weijers, A., de Leeuw, R. N., & Buijzen, M. (2016). Analyzing prisoners', law enforcement agents', and civilians' moral evaluations of *The Sopranos*. *Poetics*, 58, 52-65.
- February 16th: **Crime & The Culture of Fear**
 Film to watch: *No Country For Old Men*
 Reading 1: Glassner, B. (2004). Narrative techniques of fear mongering. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 71(4), 819-826.
 Reading 2: Raney, A. A., & Bryant, J. (2002). Moral judgment and crime drama: An integrated theory of enjoyment. *Journal of communication*, 52(2), 402-415.
- February 21st:
 In-Class Work on Research Projects
 In-Class Screening: *Orange Is The New Black*
- February 23rd:
 Enck, S. M., & Morrissey, M. E. (2015). If Orange Is the New Black, I must be color blind: Comic framings of post-racism in the prison-industrial complex. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 32(5), 303-317.

II. CRIME AND THE NEWS

February 28th: **Framing Crime: The News**
Reading: Fishman, M. (1978). Crime waves as ideology. *Social problems*, 25(5), 531-543.
Podcast: *Serial*, S1E1

March 2nd: Reading: Boling, K. S. (2019). True crime podcasting: Journalism, justice or entertainment?. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 17(2), 161-178.
Podcast: *Serial*, S1E2

March 7-11: Spring Break – enjoy!!

March 14th: Snow, D. A., Vliegenthart, R., & Corrigan-Brown, C. (2007). Framing the French riots: A comparative study of frame variation. *Social forces*, 86(2), 385-415.

Orsini, M. M. (2017). Frame analysis of drug narratives in network news coverage. *Contemporary drug problems*, 44(3), 189-211.

March 16th: **Audience Reception and Media Effects**
Chiricos, T., Eschholz, S., & Gertz, M. (1997). Crime, news and fear of crime: Toward an identification of audience effects. *Social problems*, 44(3), 342-357.

March 21st: Fishman, M. (1978). Crime waves as ideology. *Social problems*, 25(5), 531-543.

Starr, P. (2008). Democratic theory and the history of communications. In *Explorations in communication and history* (pp. 41-51). Routledge.

March 23rd: “The Jeffrey Epstein Case was Cold, Until a Miami Herald Reporter Got Accusers to Talk,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 2019.

“The Failure to see what Jeffrey Epstein was doing,” *The New Yorker*, August 18, 2019.

“The Renegade Sheriffs,” *The New Yorker*, April 23, 2018.

“The Day Jeffrey Epstein Told Me He Had Dirt on Powerful People,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 2019.

- March 29th: Class time to work on Final Projects
- March 30th: Tanner, J., Asbridge, M., & Wortley, S. (2009). Listening to rap: Cultures of crime, cultures of resistance. *Social Forces*, 88(2), 693-722.
- “How a Notorious Gangster was Exposed by His Own Sister,” *The New Yorker*, July 30, 2018.
- “The Great Crime Decline,” *The New Yorker*.
- April 4th: **Moral Panics**
 Reading 1: Singer, A. J., Chouhy, C., Lehmann, P. S., Walzak, J. N., Gertz, M., & Biglin, S. (2019). Victimization, fear of crime, and trust in criminal justice institutions: A cross-national analysis. *Crime & Delinquency*, 65(6), 822-844.
 Reading 2: Altheide, D. L. (2009). Moral panic: From sociological concept to public discourse. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 5(1), 79-99.
- III. MEDIA USE**
- April 6th: Stuart, F. (2019). Code of the Tweet: Urban Gang Violence in the Social Media Age. *Social Problems*.
- Broussard, Meredith. (2015). “When Cops Check Facebook.” *Atlantic Online*.
- April 11th: Smith, J. M., & Huber, C. (2018). Colombian Criminals, Moral Whites: Reproducing and Resonating Hierarchy in US Film. *Sociological Inquiry*, 88(1), 106-130.
- April 18th: Final Presentations in class
- April 20th: Final Presentations in class