

Race, Class and Crime (SOC 424:002)
MWF 8 am to 8:50 am, Dane Smith Hall Room 233
Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. María B. Vélez
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 to 4:00 pm, Fridays 1:30 to 2:30 pm; and by appointment

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 1:30 pm.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course provides an overview of the sociological approach to understanding the *overrepresentation* in US crime statistics and criminal justice institutions of racial minorities and persons with low economic standing. Two dominant explanations exist: 1) the poor and racial/ethnic minorities simply commit more crimes (differential offending levels) and/or 2) the criminal justice system is set up to discriminate against the poor and racial/ethnic minorities (systematic bias against these two statuses). We will examine sociological and criminological writings that address these two perspectives and study in varying detail: public perceptions of the relationship among race, economic status, and crime; the distribution and patterning of crime across whites, minorities, and persons of varying economic levels; research geared to explain these associations; and how these statuses play out in the criminal justice system. The ultimate goal is provide students with a sophisticated understanding of the complex social, economic and political forces shaping the relationships between race/ethnicity, class, crime, and punishment in the US. To that end, every other Friday we allocate class time (discussion days) so that we can work on specific issues related to readings, the writing assignment, and/or class materials in groups and/or individually.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Students are responsible for reading the following two books.

Butterfield, Fox. 1995. *All God's Children: The Bosket Family and the American Tradition of Violence*. New York: Avon Books.

Miller, Jody. 2008. *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence*. New York: New York University Press.

Books can be purchased at the University of New Mexico Bookstore, located at 2301 Central NE. Their phone number is (800) 981-BOOK or (505) 277-5451.

Twenty-two additional readings are also required and are available on the course website at WebCT. The readings are available on WebCT. There are two ways to access the readings on WebCT. (1) Log into *myunm* using your NetId and password and click on the *my courses* tab and then click on *SOC 424*. Then click on “readings”. (2) Go to <http://vista.unm.edu> and log in using your NetId and password and click on *SOC 424*, then click on “readings”.

- Students should download the readings as soon as possible. Waiting until the day before the test to download articles is strongly discouraged
- Students are encouraged to put all of the readings in a three-ring binder

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. There are two exams. Tests will cover material from lectures, class discussions, and readings. About ½ of each exam will consist of multiple choice/fill in the blank questions and about ½ will consist of short answer and essay questions. You are responsible for all assigned readings, even if they are not discussed in class. Exams are not curved. Exams are worth 60 percent of your final grade.

Make-up policy. If students miss the first exam, they must wait two weeks after the original test date before taking the make-up exam. After two weeks have passed, the student needs to set-up a time and date for the make-up exam with my consent. Students who fail to show up for the alternate exam (for what ever reason) will receive a score of zero on the exam. Students who miss the final exam will receive an incomplete for this course, and must take a make-up during the next semester following the same procedures.

2. Writing Assignment.

Connecting Theory and Research to the Issue of Disproportionate Minority Contact. A primary goal of this course is to facilitate students' ability to understand and explain the relationships between race/ethnicity, class, crime, and punishment in the US. In this assignment, students are required to write up theoretically guided explanations to explain some research based findings regarding disproportionate minority contact in New Mexico in 2007-08. Further information about this project will be provided in a detailed handout on Monday, September 14th. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, December 9th. This assignment is worth 30 percent of your final grade

NOTE: It is your responsibility to make sure that you complete and turn in each assignment. *Assignments that are not turned in to me at the beginning of class on their due date will be considered one day late. Late assignments will be penalized 5 percentage points for each 24 hour period that they are late.*

3. Class participation.

Class participation is essential for grasping course materials and thus is rewarded; it is worth 10 percent of your final grade. This grade will be based on your participation that contributes *constructively* to class discussion and exercises. I also utilize attendance records to quantify participation.

COURSE GRADE

Grades will be determined as follows:		Grades are based on the following scale:			
Exam 1	30 %	Grade	% of total points	Grade	% of total points
Exam 2	30 %	A+	100-97	C	76-73
Writing Assignment	30 %	A	96-93	C-	72-70
Class Participation	10 %	A-	92-90	D+	69-67
Total	100%	B+	89-87	D	66-63
		B	86-83	D-	62-60
		B-	82-80	F	Below 60
		C+	79-77		

All grades (except final grade) will be posted on our WebCT course website.

KEYS TO PERFORMING WELL IN THIS CLASS:

1. *Attend all class meetings.* The surest way to perform poorly in this class is to miss days. It is nearly impossible to get the required information discussed on the day missed, and you are likely to miss important information like course adjustments and miscellaneous deadlines.
2. *Take detailed notes.* A common theme for students who perform poorly in this course is to have poor notes. Another common theme is that students do not understand their own notes – this means that students do not understand the material during lecture and thus have almost no chance of correctly answering questions covering that material. Taking notes is not easy, so be prepared to work. A helpful suggestion is to type up your notes after each class.
3. *Ask questions.* At times I may speak too fast, the material may be complicated, you may miss a line of argument, etc. But I cannot clarify unless I am made aware that something needs to be clarified. Times to ask questions are during class, before class, or in my office hours.
4. *Take advantage of my help.* Discussing lecture, reading material and especially the research project with me during my office hours can really help students. The key here, however, is to take advantage of this opportunity early.
5. *Take notes on the readings.* In particular, make sure you take notes on the questions I ask about the readings. A list of these questions is available on WebCT and is labeled as “Guide for readings”.

Classroom Business:

1. For important Fall Semester deadlines (e.g. dropping, withdrawals etc.), please visit <http://registrar.unm.edu/schedule/Fall2009/DeadlineDates.pdf>.
2. **Students with disabilities:** In accordance with University Policy 2310 and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. For further information, contact the Accessibility Resource Center at 277-3506.
3. I will follow University policy for academic misconduct. University policy states that each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments as well as claiming credit for work not done or done by others. When a violation of the regulation occurs in connection with a course, the faculty member is authorized to take whatever action is deemed appropriate, but no penalty in excess of an “F” in the course and the involuntary withdrawal of the student from the class may be imposed. Whenever this penalty is imposed; the instructor may report the case in full detail in writing to the Dean of Students, who may impose additional sanctions or refer the matter to the Student Conduct Committee for a determination of whether additional sanctions are warranted.
4. In situations in which a student believes that he or she has been unfairly or improperly treated by a faculty member, the student should first try to resolve the grievance informally by discussing the grievance with the faculty as soon as possible. If the student and faculty cannot reach agreement, the student should discuss the grievance with the chairperson of the department, Dr. Beverly Burris. If the grievance is still not resolved, the student should discuss the grievance with the appropriate Dean. If you have any questions, please contact the Dean of Students Office at 277-3361.
5. Sociological inquiry often involves examining sensitive and controversial issues. This will be the case for our class in that we will discuss sensitive issues such as the relationship between biological, psychological, or demographic characteristics and criminal involvement. Issues surrounding racism and bias in the criminal justice system and other institutions are frequently raised and will be discussed in detail in this class. In addition, many of us have strong personal feelings about and/or experiences with crime, and as we will find over the semester, there is often conflict in society over these issues. Consequently, we can expect to find differing perspectives across individuals in our classroom

discussions. It is important to always remember during the course of the semester that **ALL** students are expected to treat other students (and their opinions) with respect. No personal attacks will be tolerated. An important strategy to maintain an open and respectful classroom is to try to always tie your views to theories, readings, and research that are part of this course's materials.

6. During lectures, I expect for you to demonstrate respect to me and other students by paying attention and by avoiding activities that could disrupt me and/or others in the class. It is not acceptable for students to sleep, read, converse with others, or otherwise engage in disrespectful and/or disruptive behavior during the class. It is nearly impossible for me to concentrate on lecturing and guiding discussions, and for others to hear, pay attention, and participate in discussions when students are behaving in disrespectful and/or disruptive ways. Individuals who violate these expectations will receive one warning from Prof. Vélez (i.e., call attention to your violation and remind you of the policy). A second violation will lead to a failing grade in the course and a report of the academic misconduct to the College.
7. If you miss a class meeting, ask a fellow student for a copy of his/her class notes. I do not lend out my notes. If you come late or miss a class, it is your responsibility to make sure to ask other students or myself after class if I made any announcements or distributed handouts. You will need to come to my office during office hours to pick up missed handouts or see exams. If you need to leave class early, please let me know before class begins. Because I do not lend out my notes, I strongly encourage students to get phone numbers or email addresses of a classmate or two so that you can get copies of her/his notes if needed.
8. Students who email me during the week (Monday through Thursday) should expect a response in 24-36 hours; students who email me during the weekend (Friday through Sunday) should expect a response by the following Tuesday, midday. Please make sure your email queries are concise and expect my responses to be concise as well.
9. When emailing Prof. Vélez use your University of New Mexico email address (e.g., jvaldez@unm.edu) and include "SOC 424" in the subject.
10. All pagers and cell phones need to be silenced when class begins.
11. I do not lend out videos shown in class.
12. Please do not telephone either me or the teaching assistant at home. I can be reached during the daytime by calling the office number listed on page 1 of this syllabus, and you may leave a voice mail message at that number anytime.
13. Additional appointments are possible but missing an appointment without prior notification is unacceptable and this privilege will be lost.
14. If you enter the classroom after class has started, make sure to sit at the back of the room. **PLEASE DO NOT WALK RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.**

Below is the course outline; note that it is subject to modification. All non-book readings are available on WebCT.

Class Schedule of Topics and Readings		
WEEK 1 (8/24-8/28)	Wednesday	Friday
Introduction to the Course; hand out syllabus (1. Sampson and Wilson “Toward a Theory...”; 2. Hindelang “Race and Criminal Involvement”	What are the <i>theoretical</i> connections between race, class and crime? (Differential offending versus differential treatment)	Discussion Day
WEEK 2 (8/31-9/4)	Wednesday	Friday
Definitions of Race, Ethnicity, Class and Crime (3. Baldwin “Black Belts and Ivory Towers”; 4. McNulty “Assessing the Race-Violence...”)	Measuring Crime and its distribution	Methodological issues
WEEK 3 (9/7-9/11)	Wednesday	Friday
NO CLASS (Labor Day)	Methodological issues (5. Farnworth et al. “Measurement in the Study of Class...”; 6. Lee and Ulmer “Fear of Crime”)	Discussion Day
WEEK 4 (9/14-9/18)	Wednesday	Friday
Perceptions (7. Cernkovich et al. “Race, Crime and the American Dream; First half of Butterfield <i>All God’s Children ...</i> ”) Go over Writing Assignment Handout	Perceptions	Anomie/Strain

WEEK 5 (9/21-9/25) Anomie/Strain (Second half of Butterfield <i>All God's Children</i>)	Wednesday Anomie/Strain	Friday Discussion Day
WEEK 6 (9/28-10/2) Culture (8. Bruce et al. "Structure, Context and Agency"; 9. Anderson "Code of the Street chapters)	Wednesday Culture	Friday Culture
WEEK 7 (10/5-10/9) Race and Place (1 st half of <i>Getting Played</i>)	Wednesday Race and Place	Friday Discussion Day
WEEK 8 (10/12-10/16) Review for Exam 1 (2 nd half of <i>Getting Played</i>)	Wednesday EXAM 1	Friday NO CLASS (Fall Break)
WEEK 9 (10/19-10/23) Latinos and Crime (10. Nielsen and Martinez "Multiple Disadvantages and Crime; 11. Morenoff and Astor "Immigrant Assimilation and Crime")	Wednesday Latinos and Crime	Friday Discussion Day
WEEK 10 (10/26-10/30) Latinos and Crime (12. Piquero "Disproportionate Minority Contact")	Wednesday Work on Writing Assignment in Class	Friday American Indians and Crime
WEEK 11 (11/2-11/6) American Indians and Crime (13. Yabiku et al. "The Neighborhood Context)	Wednesday American Indians and Crime	Friday Discussion Day

WEEK 12 (11/9-11/13) Interracial Conflict (14. Eitle et al. “Racial Threat”; 15. Lyons “Defending Turf and Racial Demographics...”)	Wednesday Interracial Conflict	Friday Interracial Conflict
WEEK 13 (11/16-11/20) Interracial Conflict (16. Lynch & Stretesky “Radical Criminology”; 17. Becky’s article on schools and punishment)	Wednesday Conflict/Marxist Theories of Race, Class and Injustice	Friday Discussion Day
WEEK 14 (11/23-27) Conflict/Marxist Theories of Race, Class and Injustice (18. a & b Reiman “...and the poor get prison”)	Wednesday NO CLASS	Friday NO CLASS
WEEK 15 (11/30-12/4) The Criminal Justice System (19. Beckett “Drug Use and Drug Possession”; 20. Lundman and Kaufman “Driving While Black...”);	Wednesday The Criminal Justice System	Friday The Criminal Justice System
WEEK 16 (12/7 – 12/11) The Criminal Justice System (21. Bridges and Steen “Racial Disparities in Official Assessments”; 22. Rios “Hyper-criminalization of Black and Chicano Youth”)	Wednesday The Criminal Justice System Writing Assignment DUE	Friday Review for Exam 2
EXAM 2 (FINAL) Wednesday, Dec. 16 12:30–2:30 p.m DSH 233		