

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
( <http://soci.ucalgary.ca> )

**Sociology 421.02**  
***The Sociology of Gangs and Organized Crime***

Fall 2009

**Course Outline**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Alison J. Sherley
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	Ken Thrower
<b>Time:</b>	M 4:00pm to 6:50pm
<b>Room:</b>	ST126
<b>E-mail:</b>	ajsherle@ucalgary.ca
<b>Office:</b>	E-mail to make an appointment for consultation, or see instructor before or after class.
<b>Office Hours:</b>	By appointment.

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

**Course Description:** Gangs and organized crime are becoming an overwhelmingly prominent aspect of our society. They are complex and diverse phenomena that require an examination of a broad range of topics. Using an integrated approach that combines theoretical and practical perspectives, this course will cover topics including (but not limited to):

- the evolution of street gangs
- theoretical explanations of gangs and organized crime activity
- underlying causes, relationships to larger societal trends
- the role of the media in gang activity
- the role of race and ethnicity
- law enforcement’s role in dealing with gangs
- the differences and links between street gangs and organized crime
- potential solutions to the problem

The objective of this course is to provide the student with a sociological approach to the study of gangs and organized crime and an understanding of the many facets underlying what has become the focus of much media attention. Success in this class depends heavily on assigned readings and class discussions. The intent is to create an interactive and respectful classroom environment that allows the instructors and students alike to listen, learn, critique, debate and discuss. Students are expected to attend and contribute to class discussion and debates.

**Required Texts (3):**

Tobin, Kimberly. (2008). *Gangs: An Individual and Group Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Prentice Hall.

Lyman, Michael D. & Potter, Gary W. (2007). *Organized Crime, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Prentice Hall.

Williams, Stanley Tookie. (2007). *Blue Rage Black Redemption: A Memoir*.

**Course Schedule:** Some changes may be made to course format and content.

WEEK/DATE:	TOPIC/DESCRIPTION:	READING:
1. Sept. 14 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Introduction (review of course outline and requirements)</b></p> <p><b>Definitions of Gangs and Organized Crime</b> We will begin the class with a discussion regarding the varying definitions of gangs/gang members and organized crime and the sources of these definitions.</p> <p><i>Assignment: Research the different sources and definitions of gangs/gang members and organized crime using academic, media, or legal sources (further direction to be given in class). Bring your findings to the next class for discussion.</i></p>	<p>Course outline</p> <p>Tobin Ch. 2 Lyman &amp; Potter Ch. 1</p>
2. Sept. 21 <sup>st</sup>	<p><b>Definitions cont'd</b> Discussion of last week's assignment.</p> <p><b>The Evolution of Gangs and Organized Crime</b> We will also cover the history of gangs and organized crime and their evolution into present day. Effects of media and pop culture on the gang phenomenon and its evolution is also discussed.</p>	<p>Tobin Ch. 2 Lyman &amp; Potter Ch. 1</p> <p>Tobin Ch. 1 Lyman &amp; Potter Ch. 3, 4</p>
3. Sept. 28 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Evolution cont'd</b></p> <p><b>Theoretical Approaches to Gangs and Organized Crime</b> How do we explain the existence of gangs/organized crime in today's society? What theoretical approaches to individual behavior may be used with regards to gang members? Theoretical explanations of gangs and organized crime will be discussed, including theories of social disorganization, strain, control and enterprise.</p>	<p>Tobin Ch. 3, 4 Lyman &amp; Potter, Ch. 1, 2</p>
4. Oct. 5 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>The Organization and Structure of Gangs and Organized Crime</b> Structural differences and network hierarchies will be reviewed as they pertain to various gangs and organized crime groups, including outlaw motorcycle gangs.</p> <p><b>Gang Members</b> Gang membership, tattoos, graffiti, and insignias will be addressed. Also, what roles do race and ethnicity play in gang life? How do female gang members fit into the gang lifestyle?</p>	<p>Tobin Ch. 5 Lyman &amp; Potter Ch.1</p> <p>Tobin Ch. 6, 8, 9 Lyman &amp; Potter pp. 228 - 237</p>

5. Oct. 12 <sup>th</sup>	<b>THANKSGIVING DAY – NO CLASS</b>	
7. Oct. 19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>IN-CLASS MID-TERM EXAMINATION (30%) (90 minutes)</b>	
6. Oct. 26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Organized Crime Groups</b> Organized crime groups with both domestic and international origins will be the focus of class discussion.	Lyman & Potter 7, 8
8. Nov. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Activities and business of gangs/organized crime</b> In what types of criminal activity are gangs most traditionally involved? What types of business ventures typically sustain organized crime groups? Drug trafficking, prostitution, and money laundering will be discussed.	Tobin Ch. 7 Lyman & Potter Ch. 5, 6
9. Nov. 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Prison Gangs</b> We examine issues surrounding the presence of gangs in prison. What are the dynamics? How do they compare to gangs on the outside?  <b>Political and Corporate Alliances in Organized Crime</b> We discuss the far-reaching impact of organized crime on the political and corporate worlds.	Tobin Ch. 10 Lyman & Potter pp. 248 – 259
11. Nov. 16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>IN-CLASS MID-TERM EXAMINATION (25%) (90 minutes)</b>	
10. Nov. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Prevention, Intervention and Controlling Gangs and Organized Crime</b> What can be done about gangs and organized crime? What are the police and judicial responses? What might be some preventative measures to deter gang involvement? Issues surrounding the prevention and responses to organized criminal activity are discussed.	Tobin Ch. 11, 12 Lyman & Potter Ch. 11
12. Nov. 30 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Guest Speaker</b>	
13. Dec. 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Book review and group exercise (15%)</b> We will review the book <i>Blue Rage Black Redemption</i> . Students will be expected to come to class prepared to critically discuss the book and apply the various concepts learned throughout the course. Hand in assignment (see below).	Williams (2007)
	<b>Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 TERM PAPER DUE (30%)</b>	

**\*\* Important notices/topic adjustments will be communicated through Blackboard. Please check blackboard course site regularly.**

**GRADING:**

My expectation is that students will participate to ensure that our class consists of a series of lively discussions. Participation will be expected in terms of preparedness for class (as evidenced by familiarity with the assigned readings), and willingness to engage in class discussion. There are four components to your grade. The first is an in-class midterm examination on **October 19<sup>th</sup>** consisting of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions covering the material up until that particular point. Material for examinations will be taken from assigned readings, lectures, class discussions and videos. This midterm is worth 30% of your final mark. The second midterm will be cumulative in nature and take place in class on **November 16<sup>th</sup>** (worth 25% of your final grade). The third component is your term paper, to be handed in no later than **December 16<sup>th</sup>** (for details, see below). The term paper is worth 30% of your final grade. There will be no final scheduled for the exam period.

**The final 15% of your grade will be based on the book review and group exercise of *Blue Rage Black Redemption*.** It is advised that you begin reading the book as soon as possible in the semester so that you will be able to apply the concepts being learned to this real life example. Reference to the book will be made throughout the course. The culmination of this exercise will occur in class on December 7<sup>th</sup> at which time we will have group/class discussions regarding the assignment. At this time, students will be expected to hand in a 1 to 2 page summary of their thoughts/critique of the book and their application of class material. Further discussion regarding this assignment will take place in class.

**Grading Scheme:**

<b>Final Score (out of 100)</b>	<b>Final Grade</b>
97-100	A+
90-96	A
85-89	A-
81-84	B+
78-80	B
75-77	B-
70-74	C+
65-69	C
60-64	C-
55-59	D+
50-54	D
0-49.9	F

**FINAL TERM PAPER:**

The final term paper will consist of a 3000 – 4000 word paper (not including the reference list) on an ‘issue’ of interest to the student related to gangs and/or organized crime. We will have touched on some of these during lectures but other topics of interest to you are also eligible. Paper topics are to be e-mailed to me in advance no later than November 16<sup>th</sup>. This will allow for any questions, recommendations and adjustments to topics that may help students focus their papers. Papers should consist of the following components:

- i. Introduction to topic and why this is an important issue in the study of gangs/organized crime
- ii. The body of the paper, addressing the issue, taking whatever ‘angle’ you choose.
- iii. Conclusion
- iv. References – sources for the paper **must** include **at least 10 peer-reviewed academic journal articles**, as well as other sources of your choice, such as books.

**Considerations when grading final papers will include:**

- Course content (degree of understanding and incorporating relevant course content)
  - Clarity of argument/position (clear thesis statement, supporting topical sentences and coherent organization)
  - Research resourcefulness (quality of primary research and bibliographic sources)
  - Quality of overall composition and referencing (grammar, spelling and proper referencing format)
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**Additional Notes:**

1. A student seeking reappraisal of graded exams or exercises must discuss this work with the instructor within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is handed back. Consistent with Faculty of Social Sciences regulations, the entire exam or assignment will be remarked, and the mark may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.
2. A student who is unable to write the mid-term examination due to circumstances of illness, domestic affliction, or religious conviction that are fully documented will have the weight of that examination applied to the final exam. No make-up examinations will be given.
3. Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>
4. "The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside instructors' offices, the department office, etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor's office hours; if students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment."
5. For your information: SU VP Academic: Phone: 220- 3911 email: [suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca) and SU Faculty Representative Phone: 220 3913 and email: [socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca)

***Emergency evacuations:***

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom/lab, please proceed to the assembly point by the Food Court in the Professional Faculties Building.

***Deferrals:***

If at all possible you must provide *advance* notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department.

Please note that requests to defer a final examination or to defer term work past the end of a term go through the Undergraduate Programs Office (UPO) and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the U of C Calendar. You can find the forms you need online:

*Deferred Final Exam Application:*

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Winter2008DEFERREDFINALEXAMINATIONS.pdf>

*Deferred Term Work Form:*

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Social Sciences Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre. Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions. To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

**Ethics Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

**Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct are regarded as serious academic offences. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class, or during the instructor's office hours; if a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

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**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, phone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**

**Handing in papers outside of class, return of final papers, and release of final grades:**

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant. Papers will not be accepted in the main Sociology Department office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the main Sociology Department office. The Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place (i.e. outside an instructor's office, the department office etc.) Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will be available for pick-up only during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or at the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are available only online.