

MUSE 30D section 4
CRIME and PUNISHMENT

Instructor: Mona Lynch
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Class meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30-2:45 PM; HB 404
Office hours: Tuesdays 12:00-1:30 PM; Thursdays 9-10:30 & 12:30-1:30 PM.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course, which satisfies the university's D3 General Education requirement, will explore the social problems of crime and punishment using a variety of reading assignments, short critical thought writing assignments, and, most importantly, active discussion in our twice weekly class meetings. Using a number of fascinating case studies, the course seeks to analyze several large questions related to crime and punishment: How do we define criminal acts? Who is subject to criminal punishment? Why do we punish and what purpose does it serve? What are our methods of punishment? How have these things changed over time?

We will begin with a discussion of how deviant behavior comes to be defined as criminal, including how those definitions have transformed with broader social changes over time. This section of the course will include an inquiry into who has been traditionally targeted for punishment, including how race, gender, and class have played a role in the administration of punishment over our history. Using several case studies, we will examine how broader social conditions seem to play a role in our justice practices.

We will go on to explore the range of explanations that have emerged in popular and expert literature about the nature of criminality, from interpersonal explanations to structural ones; and from biological and medical theories to psychological explanations of crime. We will also discuss the social justifications for the treatment of crime and criminals, including such purposes as moral cleansing, rehabilitation, deterrence, and incapacitation; and how and why these explicit goals have waxed and waned in popularity among criminal justice practitioners, politicians, and the general public.

Finally, we will look to the directions in which we appear to be heading in dealing with crime in this country: What do the recent efforts to reinstate some forms of public humiliation and shaming, such as the use of chain gangs and the various paddling proposals, reflect in terms of our punishment goals? Will the current expansion of prison systems across the nation eventually collapse and give way to other forms of punishments? Are there alternative punishments being developed and implemented with any success at present? How might a more social scientifically informed criminal justice system deal with crime as a societal issue?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester you will:

- 1) Be familiar with the complex social issues surrounding the problem of crime and societal responses to crime.
- 2) Know about social science research on crime and punishment.

- 3) Have improved your critical thinking and writing skills through directed paper assignments which require integration of several sets of materials.
- 4) Know how to revise and edit your papers to improve your written communication.
- 5) Know basic library research skills and be information literate.
- 6) Have the ability to present summaries of research in a group setting.
- 7) Know how to substantiate oral and written arguments with evidence.
- 8) Be members of the university community by understanding your rights and responsibilities as SJSU students, learning your way around campus, and developing confidence and expertise as intellectual metropolitan university scholars.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Abramsky, Sasha (2002). Hard time blues: How politics built a prison nation. St. Martin's Press. Available at Spartan Bookstore.

Butterfield, Fox (1995). All God's Children: The Bosket family and the American tradition of violence. NY: Knopf. Available at Spartan Bookstore.

Finnegan, William (1998). Cold new world: Growing up in a harder country. New York: Random House. Available at Spartan Bookstore.

Article Handouts #1-#7: To be supplied in class.

A Spartan Scholar from the Start (2002). Available at Spartan Bookstore.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Given that this is a seminar, the class will ideally be a group effort. Each of you will bring your own unique perspective to a common topic of interest, and will share that perspective with fellow class members. While I have an outline for the general shape of the course, I am looking forward to the intellectual contributions of each of you in our bi-weekly seminar meetings to bring that outline to life. Therefore, I ask that you make an effort to be here for each class session, unless circumstances arise that make your attendance impossible. To further the level of active discussion, each of you will be asked to share in class your comments and/or questions that were generated by the assigned readings. Each Tuesday class will open with a 15 minute period for class members to share their experiences regarding MUSE or other campus activities which they attended during the prior week.

In addition to actively participating in the class meetings as described above, to successfully complete this class, you will need to: 1) complete the required readings **prior** to each class meeting so that you are prepared to discuss them; 2) write up 1-2 questions or comments generated by the assigned reading to bring to each class session; 3) write and turn 2 short (approximately 3 pages) critical thought papers to be assigned in class; 4) make one in-class presentation about a scholarly research article which you will find in the library on a relevant topic; 5) write a summary of that research article, 6) take 5 in-class half-hour quizzes and the in-class

final, 7) attend a minimum of 3 MUSE events or activities and share your experiences in class during our MUSE discussion period; and 8) revise one of your 2 essays for your final assignment.

Your grade for the course will be determined on a percentage basis as follows:

Class participation/reading responses	15%
Essay #1	15%
Essay #2	15%
Research summary/presentation	15%
Quizzes	15%
MUSE participation	05%
Essay rewrite	10%
Final	10%
TOTAL	100%

A range = 90% or above

B range = 80-89%

C range = 70-79%

D range = 60-69%

F = 59% or below

TENTATIVE TOPICS / ASSIGNMENTS / DUE DATES (subject to change if necessary):

WEEK 1 (August 27-29): Introduction, meet your peers & course overview.

READ: Begin Butterfield by Thursday

WEEK 2 (Sept. 3-5): The problem of crime and punishment across American history.

READ: Continue Butterfield by Tuesday

WEEK 3 (Sept. 10-12): 20th century criminal justice practices; introduction to explanations of crime as illustrated by the Bosket family.

READ: Finish Butterfield; read Article hand out #1 by Tuesday.

QUIZ #1

WEEK 4 (Sept. 17-19): Understanding social and structural influences in creating crime.

READ: Article handout 2 by Tuesday.

WEEK 5 (Sept. 24-26): Crime, punishment, and youth: Introduction to Finnegan's Cold New World; Introduction to the library and finding written resources.

READ: Begin Finnegan by Thursday.

MEET IN CLARK LIBRARY, ROOM 511 ON TUESDAY 9-24: HOW TO FIND SCHOLARLY SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

ESSAY #1 DUE Thursday

WEEK 6 (Oct. 1-3): Race, class, gender, and criminal injustices as illustrated by Finnegan's case studies.

READ: Continue Finnegan all week

QUIZ #2

WEEK 7 (Oct. 8-10): Creating the crime problem: Moral panics, media lessons, and criminal justice policy-making.

READ: Finish Finnegan by Thursday

LIBRARY VISIT #2

WEEK 8 (Oct. 15-17): Contemporary crime problems: case studies

READ: Article handout #3 by Tuesday; Introduction and Chapter 1 of Abramsky by Thursday.

WEEK 9 (Oct. 22-24): Contemporary crime problems: case studies.

READ: Chapters 2-4 of Abramsky by Thursday

QUIZ #3

WEEK 10 (Oct. 29-31): Modern methods of punishment.

READ: Chapters 5-6 Abramsky by Thursday.

ESSAY #2 DUE Tuesday

WEEK 11 (Nov.5-7): Modern methods of punishment, continued

READ: Chapters 7-8 of Abramsky; Article handout # 4 by Thursday

WEEK 12 (Nov. 12-14): Receiving punishment: the experiences of the convicted

READ: Finish Abramsky by Tuesday.

QUIZ #4

NO CLASS THURSDAY—LIBRARY WORK

WEEK 13 (Nov. 19-21): The death penalty; student research presentations.

READ: Article handout #5 by Tuesday

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARY DUE Tuesday

WEEK 14 (Nov.26): Giving punishment: the crime control business; student research presentations.

READ: Article handout #6 by Tuesday.

WEEK 15 (Dec.3-5): The future of punishment in America & alternative possibilities; student research presentations.

READ: Article handout #7 by Tuesday.

QUIZ #5

WEEK 16 (Dec. 10): Celebration and final discussion

NO READING

ESSAY REWRITE DUE

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 12:15 TO 1:45 PM.