

University of San José State

Justice Studies

Media and Justice JS 121

Instructor: Kevin Lynch	Call Number: 121-01
Office: Main office	Class Location: MH 520
Office Hours: W 4:45-5:45 p.m., in the main office	Meeting Time: W 6:00-8:45 p.m.
Email Address: klynch4949@gmail.com	Quarter/Year: Spring 2018

Course Description:

This course examines the relationship between criminal justice and its representation in the media, including how movies, newspapers, magazines, documentaries, web sites and social media depict crime and criminal justice. The history of media and its coverage of crime, trials and imprisonment will be explored, with special attention paid to race and class. The force of social media and the galvanizing impact of going “viral” will be contrasted with the corporate obsession with generating “clicks.” The instructor will also attempt to tilt the course to the needs of students. To that end, media rights in covering crime scenes, trials, and on-going cases will also be illuminated. The instructor will fill out the course outline once he receives input from students.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Recognition of the human tragedy of crime (victims and perpetrators) behind sanitized news reports.
2. Understand how media focuses on sensationalism rather than examining the forces behind crime and imprisonment.
3. Understand how the changing face of journalism has impacted its coverage of crime and punishment throughout history.
4. Ability to critically examine how crime is represented in different mediums.
5. Knowledge of reporters’ and citizens’ rights in covering and observing on-going crimes, riots, trials and police reports.

6. Development of a critical approach to media and to its biases, its structural flaws, and to when journalism succeeds as the “Fourth brand of government.”
7. Recognition of when journalism is done right, and when it’s done poorly, with attention paid to what type of writing is most effective, informative and vivid.

Required Materials:

Articles from the popular press, academic journals and book chapters will be posted on Canvas to read each week. Along with readings from the basic text: “Media Coverage of Crime and Criminal Justice” By Matthew B. Robinson.

Classroom Demeanor and Participation:

On the first day of class, make sure to get other students’ contact information should you miss a class. All electronic devices including laptops (unless otherwise specified) must be turned off and put away when class is in session. If you are caught using an electronic device you will be asked to leave immediately.

Course Assignments:

1. **Class Activity:** This class is a lecture/seminar/discussion format, so students are expected to complete the readings and assignments before class and make an effort to contribute during class discussions. Students are required to complete in and out of class assignments weekly on readings, videos, class discussions, and possibly guest speakers. Students will also write a mid-term paper and a final paper on a topic studied during the course.

Assignments and papers will be graded on:

- A. Clarity of organization and ideas.
- B. Strength of analysis.
- C. Writing clarity.

All take home assignments must be typed.

Grading:

1. Class participation – 25%
2. Midterm paper #1 – 25%
3. Final paper #2 – 25%
4. Assignments -25%

Class Discussion:

We will talk about race, gender, transgender and other controversial and difficult topics. These discussions can only be productive in a safe environment. There are few absolutes in media and justice, so please respect each others’ truths, agree to disagree, and try to use “I” statements rather than “You” statements. Also, please refrain from giving advice and let’s provide everyone the space to express their views without interruption. Let’s try our best to learn from each other. Learning and the vibrant exchange of ideas is viewed as a sacred practice by many and is seen as uniquely human. Let’s explore ideas without judgment and with the utmost respect.

Justice Studies Department Reading and Writing Philosophy:

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

Course Outline:

Week	In Class	Readings	Assignments
1	Introductions, Syllabus rundown	• Ghettoside handout. “A Circle of Grief” Pages 4-12. “A Killing” Pages 13-15.	Answer course questions, and questions on Ghettoside readings.
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

Class readings could be changed. Students will be notified well ahead of time.

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