

# **Class, Race, Gender and Crime**

## *Spring 2010*

Course: **CRJ 206 00 2**  
Credits: 3  
Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9:30 – 10:45 am

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### **Course Description**

This course explores the social relationship between class, race, gender and crime. It attempts to account for differences in crime social boundaries, social make-up and social status. It further examines the behavior of law itself and how the making of laws is influenced by class, race, and gender.

### **Course Objectives**

Through this course, the intent is to assist the student to develop and use critical thinking skills to:

1. Gain an understanding of the critical role class structure and one's social standing plays in the commission, enforcement, and punishment of crime in America.
2. Critically analyze how law behaves in relation to one's class standing, racial make-up and gender.
3. Distinguish the effects one's race has on how laws are created, enforced, and punished and to understand the racial inequality present in the criminal justice system.
4. Develop an understanding of how the urban poor are affected by our nation's de-industrialization and how that associated unemployment effects their involvement in the criminal justice system.
5. Describe how females have been affected by the gender equality movement in relation to their involvement in crime, victimization and punishment.

### **Course Outcomes**

Students will be able to describe how one's social standing affects how vigorously laws are enforced; how much crime is attributed to each class; who is most likely to be victimized; and how harshly punishment is delivered.

Assessment: Students will read selected readings from the main texts Class, Race, Gender and Crime; and The Behavior of Law; participate in classroom discussion; and excel in a written essay style examination.

Students will be able to describe what is meant by “the behavior of law” and will be able to describe the role stratification, culture, and social control play in the creation of law; the enforcement of law; and punishment of those who violate the law.

Assessment: Students will read selected readings from The Behavior of Law, participate in classroom discussion; and excel in a written essay style examination.

Students will be able to describe the degree to which racial inequality exists in the creation of law; the enforcement of law; and the punishment of those who break the law.

Assessment: Students will read selected readings from Class, Race, Gender and Crime; The Behavior of Law; participate in classroom discussion; and excel in a written essay style examination.

Students will be able to analyze how the women’s equality movement has affected their involvement in the criminal justice system both as offenders and as victims.

Assessment: Students will read selected reading from Class, Race, Gender and Crime; participate in classroom discussion; and excel in a written essay style examination.

### Texts and Readings

#### Main Text

Barak, Gregg, Leighton, Paul S., and Flavin, Jeanne M., (2007). *Class, Race, Gender and Crime; The Social Realities of Justice in America*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

#### Supplemental Required Text

Black, Donald (1976). *The Behavior of Law*. New York, New York: Academic Press.

#### Selected Readings for synopsis

Travis, J. (2002). Invisible punishment: An instrument of social exclusion. In M. Mauer & M. Chesney-Lind (Eds), *Invisible punishment: The collateral consequences of mass imprisonment*. (pp. 1-36). New York: New York Press.

Holzer, H., Raphael, S., & Stoll, M (2003). Employer demand for ex-offenders: Recent evidence from Los Angeles. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Hindelang, M. (1978). Race and involvement in common law personal crimes. *American Sociological Review*, 43(1), 93-109.

Blumstein, A. (1993). Racial disproportionality of U.S. prison populations revisited. *University of Colorado Law Review*, 64, 743-760.

Saltzburg, S., et al (2004). American bar association Justice Kennedy commission: Reports with recommendations. *Proceedings from the 2004 American bar Association meeting*, 47-63.

Kansal, T. & Mauer, M. (2005). Racial disparity in sentencing: A review of the literature. Washington DC: The Sentencing Project

Steffensmeier, D., & Allan, E. (1996). Gender and crime: Toward a gendered theory of female offending. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 459-87.

### Selected Readings

*A decade of welfare reform: Facts and figures* [fact sheet]. (2006). Washington, DC: Urban Institute

Kennedy, A.M. (2003, August 9). *Racial disproportionality in criminal justice*. Speech presented at the American Bar Association annual meeting.

Mauer, M., Potler, C., & Wolf, R. (1999). Gender and justice: Women, drugs, and sentencing policy. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.

## **Student Assignments**

Each student is expected to do high quality work in completing the following assignments:

1. To regularly attend all class periods and read all assigned readings.
2. Students will take three written essay style examinations that will cover all of the readings, lectures and other educational material presented in class.
3. Students will be responsible for submitting reading summaries of the articles listed under, “selected readings for synopsis”.

All written assignments are due on the dates announced in class. The syllabus provides an expected outline, however, student learning is difficult to predict so all exam dates are subject to change. If a written assignment is not submitted on the date required, one letter grade will be deducted for every day that it is late. Written assignments will not be accepted after the fifth day in which it is considered late. The student will receive a zero for that assignment. Additionally, late assignments will be graded without comment.

There is no “final exam” in this course. The last exam is due on the final day of the course. The exam must be handed in to the social sciences office (Curtis Hall 239: Jane Scott x3473) and must be signed for and acknowledged. Any exam not handed in on, or before 4:00 on the day assigned will not be accepted.

Written essays will be graded in three areas: content, academic writing, and APA formatting. In order to receive an A on the written assignment all three areas must be covered correctly. To receive a grade in the “B” range, two of the three (one being content) must be covered correctly; and to receive a grade in the “C” range only the content will have been covered correctly.

With respect to the submission of the written synopsis, the questions to each article will be posted in advance of the readings. The synopsis’ must be handed in at the end of the class period assigned. No submissions will be accepted after the class period has ended. All must be handed in person and will not be accepted in electronic format. Grading will be as follows:

7 submissions = A  
5/6 submissions = B  
4 submissions = C  
3 submissions = D  
0/1/2 submissions = F

A student must submit an assignment for each of the described category. If a student decides not to submit a course requirement, they will fail the course.

## Attendance Policy

Students may be absent without penalty to their grade on two occasions. Any student absent on 3 or 4 occasions will have their attendance grade reduced by 25 %; any student absent on 5 or 6 more occasions will receive a zero for class participation; and any student absent on 7 or more occasions will not pass the course. All absences must be discussed with the instructor in advance, with the exception of medical emergencies.

## Classroom Protocol

Appropriate classroom behavior is implicit in the Cedar Crest College Honor Code. Such behavior is defined and guided by complete protection for the rights of all students and faculty to a courteous, respectful classroom environment. That environment is free from distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, inappropriate conversations and any other behavior that might disrupt instruction and/or compromise students' access to their Cedar Crest College education. Anyone who will be arriving late because of another class must notify me in advance.

Sleeping, or the appearance thereof, is strictly prohibited. Any student who sleeps, or appears to sleep through a lecture will receive a 0 for class participation. If the student makes a habit of sleeping after being spoken to, she/he will fail the course.

The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited. All cell phones must be turned off or placed on "quiet" or vibrate mode. If a student is observed texting during a lecture, presentation or film, the phone will be taken from the student and she/he will receive a 0 for class participation.

Furthermore:

Students are expected to have prompt and regular classroom attendance in accordance with the policy stated on the syllabus.

Faculty is expected to make clear on the first day of class reasons for specific classroom decorum and repercussions for non-compliance. Faculty should be aware of setting boundaries and procedures for exceptions to expectations stated in the syllabus.

Students need to understand that open discussion is encouraged and expected in order to foster an advanced learning environment. However, all students should use caution when sharing personal information. There is a point to which personal experiences are detrimental to the learning environment.

## Honor Philosophy

The Cedar Crest College Honor Philosophy is based upon the principle that, as a self-governing body, students have the ability to create an atmosphere of trust and support. Within this environment, individuals are empowered to make their own decisions, develop personal regard for the system under which they live, and achieve a sense of integrity and judgment that will guide them through life.

## **Grading**

1 <sup>st</sup> Written Examination	25 %
2 <sup>nd</sup> Written Examination	25 %
3 <sup>rd</sup> Written Examination	25 %
Reading Synopsis	15 %
Class Participation	10%

## **Course Outline**

### **Week 1**

Explanation of class design  
Introduction to the role class, race, and gender play in crime

#### **Reading Assignment**

Class, Race, Gender, and Crime - Chapter 1  
Behavior of Law – Chapter 1

### **Week 2**

Class and Crime

- Definition of Social Class
- Theory of Class and Crime
  - LaFree “Losing Legitimacy”
  - Messner & Rosenfeld – “Crime and the American Dream”
- Victimization

#### **Reading Assignment**

The Behavior of Law - Chapters 1 and 2  
Robert Agnew – “Pressured into Crime” Pages 51-105

### **Week 3**

Class and Crime

- Theory of Class and Crime
  - Robert Agnew - General Strain Theory
- Theory of Law

#### **Reading Assignment**

The Behavior of Law - Chapter 4  
Example 1  
School strata example

## Week 4

Class and Crime Chapter 2 in Black's Law

- Stratification
- Vertical location and vertical distance

## Week 5

Class and Crime Chapter 4 in Blacks Law

- Propositions 1 through 8
- Proposition #9 of Culture
- Hazelton Video

### Reading Assignment

Travis, J. (2002). Invisible punishment: An instrument of social exclusion. In M. Mauer & M. Chesney-Lind (Eds), *Invisible punishment: The collateral consequences of mass imprisonment*. (pp. 1-36). New York: New York Press.

Holzer, H., Raphael, S., & Stoll, M (2003). Employer demand for ex-offenders: Recent evidence from Los Angeles. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

*A decade of welfare reform: Facts and figures* [fact sheet]. (2006). Washington, DC: Urban Institute

### Written Assignment:

Synopsis for all three articles due week 6

## Week 6

Class and Crime

- Disadvantaged groups

Examination 1

### Reading Assignment

The behavior of Law - Chapter 6

## Week 7

### Race and Crime

- Social Control
- Normative location and normative direction
- Behavior of social control

### Reading Assignment

Chapter 2 in Race, Crime, Gender and Crime

Hindelang, M. (1978). Race and involvement in common law personal crimes. *American Sociological Review*, 43(1), 93-109.

Blumstein, A. (1993). Racial disproportionality of U.S. prison populations revisited. *University of Colorado Law Review*, 64, 743-760.

### Written Assignment:

Synopsis due week 8

## Week 8

### Race and Crime

### Reading Assignment

Kennedy Commission Report  
Racial Disparity in Sentencing (The Sentencing Project)

### Written Assignment:

Synopsis due week 9

## Week 9

Kennedy Commission Report: Discrimination v Over-representation

## Week 10

### Crime Theory Relative to Race

- Social Disorganization
- Conflict Theory
- MS 13

Distributed Examination #2

## **Week 11**

Film MS13

Gender and Crime Chapter 3

- Victimization
- Punishment and Imprisonment

### Reading Assignment

Steffensmeier and Allan article: Gender and Crime  
Class, Race, Gender, and Crime Chapter 3

### Writing Assignment:

Synopsis due week 12

## **Week 12**

Female patterns and trends of offending

Impact of the War on Drugs

Gender and Justice: The War on Drugs and Sentencing Policy

Gender Crime and Theory

- Social Bonding Theory
- Gender Equity/Inequity

### Reading Assignment

Class, Race, Gender and Crime – Chapters 5 and 6

## **Week 13**

Movement toward a gendered approach (Steffensmeier and Allan)

Crime, Justice and Policy

- Implications for crime control and prevention

Distribute Examination 3

## **Week 14**

**Examination 3**