

SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCE

Sociology 250

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T/Th 11:30-12:45pm
Sturges 223
Office Hours:
M 11:30-12:30
T/Th 2:30-3:30pm

REQUIRED READINGS:

Kunen, James S. 1994. *Reckless Disregard: Corporate Greed, Government Indifference, and the Kentucky School Bus Crash*.

MacLeod, Jay. 2008. *Ain't No Makin' It*. Third edition.

Wright, Lawrence. 1994. *Remembering Satan*.

For helpful information on the Sociology Department, the sociology major and minor, careers and graduate school, writing in sociology, and links to other sociology sites, visit the Sociology Department website, at: <http://www.geneseo.edu/~soc/>

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

There are three major issues in the sociology of deviance: (1) why do people deviate?; (2) why do some behaviors become defined as deviant and focused on as social problems?; and (3) why are rules enforced in some cases and not in others, and with what consequences? This course is designed to familiarize you with each of these issues.

The orientation of this course is critical; we will view deviance as a product and location of struggle, where different groups and interests converge in an effort to define and control particular actions (and actors) in a manner that advances their specific interests. As this suggests, we will spend more time considering those who shape our understandings of deviance ("the definition of the situation") than we will the "nuts, sluts, and perverts" who generally occupy the attention of those studying deviance.

Your active participation in class is important to your enjoyment and learning. Toward this end, I have tried to choose subjects and reading materials that are relevant and interesting, and will do my best to present them in a manner that facilitates discussion. In turn, I ask two things of you: (1) that you read and think about the course materials prior to our discussion of them; (2) that you make a point of seeking me out, introducing yourself, and spending a short time chatting, whether in my office, on the sidewalk, or in the hall or dining hall, sometime early in the semester.

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to: (1) explain and evaluate the objectivist and social constructionist approaches to deviance; (2) identify and discuss the four major paradigms – classical, biological positivist, sociological positivist, and conflict – in the sociology of deviance; (3) define, discuss, and identify hegemonic and subversive narratives; (4) explain the concepts of moral panics and boundary maintenance, and apply them to historic and contemporary circumstances; (5) discuss the roles of race, class, and gender in shaping the definition of the situation; and (6) discuss the relationships between background and foreground considerations in the definition, detection, and occurrence of deviance.

EXAMS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING:

There will be no exams in this class. Your grade will be based entirely on your class participation and your written work. The writing assignments are designed to sharpen your critical thinking skills, your sociological imagination, and your writing ability. Due dates are on the reading schedule.

Writing Assignments: The entirety of your written work for this class will be in journal form; through this journal, you will be creating a log of your experience in the class. In the journal, I would like for you to elaborate your reactions to course readings, lectures, and discussions and apply course materials to current and past events. Please give special attention to the major questions and issues raised in class. NOTE: Journal entries should not merely summarize readings; these are NOT reading notes. For those of you new to this type of assignment, it might be useful to think of journals as a type of class participation. Class participation is generally of three types: (1) questions or comments designed to elicit clarification or elaboration of an issue; (2) questions or comments that challenge a point made in class by offering contrary evidence or analysis; or (3) questions or comments design to extend a point made in class by offering supportive evidence or analysis. These are three available approaches to your journals. They may – and should – be used alternatively depending on your understanding of the particular issue at hand.

You choose the topics for journal entries; just be sure that for each section of the semester you address the major cases, issues, concepts, and analyses from the course materials. In addition to regular journal entries of your choice, there are several required entries.

- During the first section of the semester, be sure to write an entry examining the Vioxx case, focusing on what happened and the different narratives and subnarratives available for understanding the case;
- Also during the first section of the semester, find a recent (2013) case in the news and analyze it through the same framework (e.g. narratives and subnarratives, definition of the situation, social forces shaping the definition of the situation) developed to analyze Reckless Disregard;
- During the second section of the semester, write an entry discussing the ways in which the “stranger danger” moral panic has affected your life;
- Also during the second section of the semester, identify and discuss a possible contemporary moral panic not discussed in class;
- During the final section of the semester, discuss how the reproduction of class relations can be seen in your life.

Regular journal entries should be made at least twice a week, at least three or four substantial paragraphs at a time. Please date each entry. Also, unless it seriously infringes on the manner in which you would like to keep your journal, please type your entries. Journals will be collected three times during the semester.

My evaluation of journals will focus on originality, application of your sociological imagination, evidence of your commitment to the effort, and the whole range of stylistic issues. It is critical that your entries be **sociological**; they must be informed by sociological concepts (social construction of deviance, framing, hegemonic and subversive narratives, definition of the situation, race, class, gender, etc.) and focused on sociological questions (who benefits?, does this particular arrangement reproduce social relations?). Go beyond mere observation or opinion; analyze. Remember: this is your primary means of demonstrating to me your sociological imagination and your understanding of the course materials.

I expect that your assignments will be original works, meaning that you wrote them for this class and this class only. Any non-original work constitutes plagiarism and will result in an E for the assignment and may result in an E for the class.

The grading scale is as follows: 92+ A, 90-91 A-, 88-89 B+, 82-87 B, 80-81 B-, 78-79 C+, 72-77 C, 70-71 C-, 60-69 D, below 60 E.

READING SCHEDULE

Section I. Examining Corporate Deviance: The Power of the Definition of the Situation

January 22	Introduction TED Talk, Sociology: A Radical Experiment in Empathy http://www.ted.com/talks/sam_richards_a_radical_experiment_in_empathy.html
January 24-29	Analyzing Definitions of Deviance <u>Reckless Disregard</u>
January 29-31	What Happened? The Complexity of Ascribing Deviance Kunen, Part I and Chapter 33 "Brake Woes Plague GM" "Driver Who Caused 27 Deaths Goes Free" AP, "Sleep Loss as Discoordinating as Booze" "US Withheld Data on Risks of Distracted Driving" Vance and Richtel, "Despite Risks, Internet Creeps on to Car Dashboards" Richtel, "Drivers and Legislators Dismiss Cellphone Risks" Richtel, "Promoting the Car Phone, Despite Risks" Richtel, "Now, to Find a Parking Spot, Drivers Look on Their Phones"
February 5-12	The Definition of the Situation: Narratives and Subnarratives Kunen, Part II; for more on the bus crash and the definitions of the situation associated with it, see http://www.theimpactmovie.com/ "A Dead End in Eradicating Drunk Driving" "Citing Tire Failures, Highway Agency Seeks More Power" "Reports Show Tire Rules Discarded After 1978 Recall" "Blame Congress, Not NHTSA" "A Widely Used Arthritis Drug is Withdrawn" "FDA Releases Memo on Vioxx" "Study Says Drug's Dangers Were Apparent Years Ago" "With or Without Vioxx, Drug Ads Proliferate" "At F.D.A., Strong Drug Ties and Less Monitoring" "Lawyers Organizing for Mass Suits Over Vioxx" Berenson, "At Vioxx Trial, A Discrepancy Appears to Undercut Merck's Defense" Berenson, "Plaintiffs Find Payday Elusive in Vioxx Cases" Wilson, "Merck to Pay \$950 Million Over Vioxx"

Stout, "Air-Bag Ruling in Fatal Crash Could Have National Impact"
"Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Airbag Case"

February 14

Case Study: The Imperial Food Products Fire

Wright, "The Social Construction of Corporate Violence: Media Coverage of the Imperial Food Products Fire"

Aulette and Michalowski, "The Fire in Hamlet"

For additional information, see www.ncsbs.org/facts3.htm

February 19

Social Forces Shaping the Definition of the Situation: MADD

"Kentucky Bus Crash: A Legacy of Hope"

Review MADD's website: <http://www.MADD.org> and identify its definition of the situation (through its Mission Statement and agenda) and the social forces shaping that definition of the situation.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qD1naQxY7c>

February 21-26

Plaintiffs as Deviants: Constructing the Litigation Crisis Narrative

Kunen, Part III

Video: HBO Documentary *Hot Coffee*

Galanter, "An Oil Strike in Hell: Contemporary Legends About the Civil Justice System"

Felstiner, Abel, and Sarat, "The Emergence and Transformation of Disputes: Naming, Blaming, Claiming..."

Baker, "The Medical Malpractice Myth"

Supersize Me, watch at <http://www.hulu.com/watch/63283>

Section II: Moral Panics and the Social Construction of Deviance

Drugs and Alcohol

February 28

Socially Constructing Alcohol and Drug Problems

Gusfield, "Symbolic Crusade"

Rumbarger, "Profits, Power, and Prohibition"

Journals collected

March 5

Video: *Reefer Madness* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Azf320JDdqU>

For background, see: <http://www.drugwarrant.com/articles/why-is-marijuana-illegal/>

Threats to Children

March 7-12

Socially Constructing Threats to Children

"Bus Leaves Girl, 7, at Wrong Stop"

Wright, "Robbing the Cradle"

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKfN7V_zs_s

Glassner, "Still Fearful After All these Years"

Best, Halloween Sadism, <http://www.udel.edu/soc/faculty/best/site/halloween.html>

Ritual Sexual Abuse

- March 14 **Ritual Sexual Abuse: Origins of the Panic**
Wright, Chapters 1-7
Fennell, "The Satan Factor"
Rose, "Surviving the Unbelievable"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSyRbtQgOyo&feature=related>
McMartin Preschool: <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/frtrial/mcmartin/mcmartin.html>
Best, "Threatened Children"
- March 26 **Historical and Contemporary Analogies: Witchhunts**
Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*, "The Witches of Salem Village"
Turner, "Conspiracy I"
Golden, "Tale of CIA and Drugs has Life of Own"
Boyz N the 'Hood, Speech <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2ECcFN8uqq>
- March 28 **A Modern Witchhunt**
Video: *When Children Accuse*
- April 2 **Deconstructing the Claims: Sociological, Legal, and Psychological Analyses**
Wright, Chapters 8-11
Bottoms, et al., "An Analysis of Ritualistic and Religion-Related Child Abuse Allegations"
Maran, "The Lie that Tore My Family Apart"
Zirpolo, "McMartin Pre-Schooler: 'I Lied'"
Goleman, "Proof Lacking for Ritual Abuse...."
Acocella, "The Politics of Hysteria"
Wright, "Child-Care Demons"
See also www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/innocence/etc/other.html
- April 2-4 **Constructing the Claims: Sociological, Legal, and Psychological Analyses**
Wright, Chapters 12-Epilogue
Rabinowitz, "From the Mouths of Babes...."
Oxenhandler, "The Eros of Parenthood"
- April 9 **The Clergy Sexual Abuse Scandal and the Penn State Scandal**
<http://www.usccb.org/nrb/johnjaystudy/>
New York Times, "The Vatican Comes Up Short"
http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2012/07/freehs_report_puts_penn_state.html#incart_hbx
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/sports/ncaafootball/paterno-may-have-influenced-decision-not-to-report-sandusky-e-mails-indicate.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all
http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57535352/boy-scout-files-show-sex-abuse-cover-ups/
<http://www.ajc.com/news/news/in-scouts-sex-abuse-scandal-dark-secrets-for-a-mod/nSwxL/>

Section III: Post-Fordism, the Racialization of Crime, and the Criminalization of Race

- April 11 **Post-Fordism and the Contemporary Ghetto**
MacLeod, Foreword-Chapter 6 (Pay special attention to Chapter 3)
Drum, "Plutocracy Now"
Journals collected

- April 16 **GREAT Day**
- April 18-23 **The Emergence of Mass Imprisonment: Racializing Crime, Criminalizing Race**
MacLeod, Chapters 7-8
New York Times, "For Old South Boston, Despair Replaces Hope"
Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration"
http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/inc_Trends_in_Corrections_Fact_sheet.pdf
King, "Disparity by Geography: The War on Drugs in America's Cities"
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/21_boston.html
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VS9XHbEaFY>
- April 25-30 **Collateral Consequences of the Urban Crisis**
MacLeod, Chapters 9-11
Bourgeois and Schonberg, "Intimate Apartheid"
- May 2-7 **Final Activity: Narratives of the Urban Crisis**
Olivo, "Consequences of a Tragedy"
"Dayton After DiPonzio"
Kozol: "Spare Us the Cheap Grace"
- May 9 8-11am. Final exam period. **Final journals due**

Grading Criteria:

The grade “A” represents an outstanding journal that:

- develops and presents creative, perceptive, thoughtful and well-organized ideas;
- develops and presents well-chosen and sociologically appropriate concepts, explanations, and supporting evidence for the ideas and theme(s) of the entries;
- creates essays that contain no mechanical errors, are written in clear, smooth language and are free of colloquial phrases, slang and incomplete sentences.

The grade “B” represents a very good journal that:

- develops and presents a perceptive, thoughtful, and well organized set of ideas;
- has clear, smooth writing mostly free of colloquial slang, incomplete sentences and mechanical/punctuation errors;
- is developed with better-than-average choice and development of sociologically relevant/applicable concepts, themes and supporting ideas.

The grade “C” represents an adequate journal that:

- responds to a topic in a routine way; does the minimum requirements;
- shows some evidence of thought and planning;
- is developed with adequate, supporting material, sociologically relevant concepts and organization of thought;
- has average writing with few colloquial phrases or slang;
- contains few distracting errors in usage, logic or mechanics (complete sentences, etc.).

The grade “D” represents a less than adequate journal that:

- responds to a topic in a routine, superficial way;
- shows some evidence of thought and planning;
- is developed with less than adequate supporting material, choice of concepts and application/organization of thought;
- has writing which is not vigorous, contains colloquial phrases or slang, and incomplete, poorly punctuated sentences;
- contains several distracting errors in usage or mechanics.

The grade of “E” represents an inferior and weak journal that:

- responds to a topic in a routine, superficial way;
- can only be followed and understood with some difficulty;
- may contain platitudes or mistakes in word choice, application of concepts and organization of thought;
- does not state a topic or main idea or show evidence of thought, organization or planning;
- has enough errors in mechanics and choice/application of concepts to seriously distract the reader;
- contains vague, ambiguous diction and phrasing;
- contains incomplete sentences that make it difficult to understand the content.