

Sociology 473/AJ 473: Juvenile Delinquency
Spring 2009
Michelle Hughes Miller

Class	Office Hrs	Contact Information
Parkinson 202 Mon: 3-5:30 p.m.	Faner 3436 M: 9 a.m. -12 p.m., W: 1-4 p.m.	453-7633 or 453-1366 mhmill@siu.edu

Course Description:

You can't study juvenile delinquency without thinking about the nature of youth crime and the uniqueness of youth. We'll do both this semester, as we tackle some of the tougher questions related to juvenile crime:

- < *Are juvenile delinquents bad kids?*
- < *What does delinquency mean to the delinquent? Relief from boredom? Act of rebellion?*
- < *Which delinquents are at risk for becoming adult criminals?*
- < *Should we be tough on juvenile delinquents or should we recognize all kids make mistakes?*
- < *Who is to blame for delinquent children: their parents? their peers? their schools? their community?*
- < *Can we prevent delinquency?*
- < *What is the difference between a criminal act committed by a child and the same act committed by an adult?*
- < *Who are our juvenile delinquents?*

As we answer these questions this semester we'll be using a variety of materials: theoretical propositions about why kids do delinquent acts; policy proposals about how to deal with so-called "bad kids"; popular culture's representations of "the violent youth of today"; historical writings on youth and youth crime; and empirical research on delinquency and on the youth who commit it. Some of this information will be complex; other information will make you mad. This is not an easy topic, and we won't agree on either the nature of the problem (who are the delinquents and what do they do) nor what should be done about the problem. We won't try to fix *everything* this semester, but we will strive to understand the choices our society has made on how to define and deal with juvenile delinquency.

By the end of the semester, you will be able to meet the following course objectives:

- 1) You will be able to recognize and describe the social context of juvenile delinquency;
- 2) You will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major theoretical approaches explaining juvenile delinquency;
- 3) You will be able to extrapolate the policy implications and limitations of each theoretical perspective; and
- 4) You will be able to critically develop and support a policy recommendation related to juvenile delinquency.

Course Materials:

We will use one textbook this semester to guide us in our quest to understand juvenile delinquency: Fuller's *Juvenile Delinquency: Mainstream and Crosscurrents* (2009). While a textbook with all the common features (summaries, boxed information, review questions), the book has the benefit of being rich in detail, thoughtful and respectful of its portrayal of juvenile delinquents, historically accurate and current in its data, and well-organized for our purposes.

You will also be assigned some online readings during the course of the semester to supplement the textbook.

Course Requirements:

To give you multiple ways to illustrate your understanding of the course material, you have several different types of assignments this semester. The points for this course for undergraduates will be divided as follows:

1. Reaction Papers (3 @ 35 pts)	=	105 points
2. Group Presentation	=	75 points
3. Policy Paper	=	100 points
4. Policy Paper presentation	=	20 points
5. Take Home Final Exam	=	200 points
6. Classroom Participation	=	50 points
TOTAL	=	550 points

Graduate students have enhanced expectations. Please see me for grading expectations for graduate students.

1. Four Reaction Papers

You will respond in writing to course materials four times during the semester. Each of these 2-3 page typed reaction papers should demonstrate your familiarity with the readings and in-class materials AND include your reaction to them. For instance, when we discuss how learning theory presumes that peers and peer pressure are very important for delinquency, you can use the readings and lectures to explain the argument made by learning theorists and then tell me what you think about their ideas. Reaction papers are due on the date listed on the syllabus during class time. Late papers lose 5 points each calendar day they are late.

The topics of your first and second reaction papers are NOT assigned. Any topic that is analytical, thoughtful, and utilizes course content will be considered acceptable.

Reaction Paper #3: Social Influences Essay

The topic of your third Reaction Paper is assigned. You will, in groups, develop interview guides to generate information from adults about their delinquent actions and social influences as a juvenile. Class time will be allotted for a group discussion on the important elements of an interview guide. After this initial meeting, you may choose to continue to work in the group outside of class or you may develop your OWN, independent interview guide. Each student will hand in their OWN interview guide (either group-generated or independently

developed) on the date noted in the syllabus. I will review all of the interview guides and provide detailed comments. Once I approve your interview guide, you will individually interview one adult (age 18 or older) using the revised interview guide and, from this interview, write Reaction Paper #3 on social influences on the subject's beliefs and behaviors as a juvenile, relating your findings to class materials. More information about this paper will be distributed later.

The topic of your last (#4) reaction paper is also assigned. In your last reaction paper you will respond to the question posed in the Full Class Debate: *Should the Juvenile Justice System be abolished?* To complete this reaction paper you need to read and incorporate the material assigned for this topic.

Of these four Reaction Papers, only # 1-3 will be graded. Each graded paper will be worth 35 points. The 4th Reaction Paper will be reviewed to assess your level of understanding of the debate topic, and will receive one of three grades: '+' for outstanding work, 'x' for satisfactory work, or '-' for unsatisfactory work. '+' grades will result in 10 extra credit points; '-' grades will result in a loss of 5 points from the overall course grade. Failure to turn in the 4th Reaction Paper will result in a loss of 10 points from the overall course grade.

2. Group Presentation:

Eight dates for group presentations are identified in the course schedule. I have tentatively selected eight group presentation topics. During the first week of the semester, we will review these topics and revise them according to the interests of the class, at which point you will each be assigned to a group and will be expected to coordinate (outside of class) a 30 minute presentation and discussion on the date scheduled.

These are the tentative group presentation topics:

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|---------------------------|---|
| Presentation #1 (Feb 9): | <i>At what age should juveniles be held responsible for their behaviors?</i> |
| Presentation #2 (Feb 16): | <i>To what extent do macro social factors explain involvement in delinquency?</i> |
| Presentation #3 (Feb 23): | <i>Does our educational system encourage or discourage delinquency?</i> |
| Presentation #4 (Mar 2): | <i>How important is peer pressure in understanding delinquency?</i> |
| Presentation #5 (Mar 16): | <i>Should we restrict youth access to the internet?</i> |
| Presentation #6 (Mar 23): | <i>Should parents be held liable for the behaviors of their children?</i> |
| Presentation #7 (Mar 30): | <i>Can, and should, potential delinquents be identified at an early age?</i> |
| Presentation #8 (Apr 6): | <i>What rights of privacy should juveniles have?</i> |

Group members have the following responsibilities:

1. Prepare a research-based presentation on the scheduled topic. *You must use materials beyond the textbook and lecture in your preparation for the presentation.*
2. Include in this presentation multiple perspectives or arguments related to the topic.

3. Clearly describe why the topic is important for the juvenile justice system or for juveniles in general. What policies have or could be created to respond to this issue?
4. Identify for the class the relevant theoretical perspectives related to this topic.
5. Conclude the presentation with a clear recommendation regarding the topic. Given the knowledge gained through the development of the presentation, what is your group's BEST answer to the topic question?
6. Involve the class in a discussion about the topic. This can be done in various ways, from a full-class discussion on questions developed by the presentation group, through a mock debate format, through role play, through small-group activities, etc. Group members are required to find strategies that will both inform and involve their fellow classmates in the discussion surrounding the topic. Creative strategies are encouraged!
- *7. Prepare a GROUP 1-2 page summary and bibliography (recommended readings only) of the presentation for distribution to the entire class on the day of the presentation.
- *8. Prepare for the instructor INDIVIDUAL summaries of the presentation, including a complete bibliography. These individual summaries should represent the work you individually contributed to the overall group presentation.

Presentations will be graded on how well the group members meet all of the above expectations. 40% of the grade for this project will be a group grade; 60% will be based on individual effort. Group members will be asked to evaluate the involvement in group planning and presentation development of fellow group members, and this evaluation will be considered in the final group presentation grade for each individual. If your group has difficulty coordinating activities with one or more group members, notify the instructor prior to the presentation.

3. Public Policy Paper:

Your task for the public policy paper is to combine theory and practice and make an informed, research-based recommendation about juvenile delinquency. To do this, you will need to decide upon an issue related to juvenile delinquency that you believe could be addressed. This could be anything from how to study juveniles to where to incarcerate them to how to make their home lives less strained. You will relate this issue to at least one relevant theoretical approach and then you will develop a theoretically-sound policy recommendation that addresses the issue. More detailed information about the policy papers will be distributed later in the semester.

You are required to meet individually with me during office hours prior to February 20, 2009, to discuss your paper topic. Failure to meet with me will result in a 10 point reduction on the final grade for your paper. Your papers should be at least 6-8 pages in length and should contain a minimum of 10 academic references. Late papers will lose 10% every day that they are late.

4. Policy Paper Presentation:

During the final weeks of the semester you will be given 3-4 minutes to present your policy paper to the entire class. These presentations are necessarily brief—hence you should carefully prepare your remarks to stay within the allotted time and still present your key points. A one-page abstract should be handed in on the date of your presentation. Grading criteria will be distributed prior to the presentations. A missed presentation can not be made up.

5. Take Home Final Exam:

The only exam in the course will be a comprehensive take home final that you will have one week to complete. This test will be a combination of short answer and long answer essay questions and will draw on material from both the book and in-class activities. You must complete the take home exam individually. Exams must be typed. I expect you to cite published work in your exam; hence you should attach a bibliography to your exam that uses the correct citation style. Those exams that are turned in without an accurate bibliography will lose up to 20 points from their exam grade. Those that are plagiarized will receive zero credit and may be given to Student Judicial Affairs for additional course sanctions.

Exams turned in after 5:50 p.m. on 5/4/2009 will not be accepted. If you e-mail me your final exam, it is your responsibility to check to see if I received your exam. If you don't receive a confirmation e-mail from me, your exam will not count!

6. Classroom Participation:

This course is designed to provide every student with many opportunities to discuss topics of their choosing. In addition, because the class is designed to build upon the work done in prior weeks, any absence potentially affects your grade. **Therefore, your grade for classroom participation (approximately 9% of the total grade for the course) will be based on both attendance and level and quality of participation.** This does not mean you should dominate every discussion to receive credit. Consistent and cogent participation is expected from all students.

Course Basics:

Final Grades for undergraduates: Final grades are determined by combining all points earned and referring to the following scale:

Standardized scores	Final Grade
492-550	A
437-491	B
382-436	C
327-381	D
Below 327	F

Cheating/Academic Dishonesty: COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS REGARDING PLAGIARISM AND OTHER FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL BE UPHELD IN THIS COURSE. If you are not familiar with the definitions and consequences of cheating or with your rights, refer to the Student Conduct Code. In this course, academic dishonesty includes both plagiarizing (representing someone else's words/ideas as your own) and cheating on assignments or exams. I may choose any of the following responses to incidents of academic dishonesty: 1) failure on the assignment; 2) failure in the course; 3) revision of the assignment; 4) referral to Student Judicial Board.

Make-ups: In-class activities, including presentations, can not be made up.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND CHAPTER READING ASSIGNMENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Assigned Reading</u>
Jan 12	Introduction and Defining Adolescence		Ch 1-2
Jan 26	Defining Delinquency; Who are the delinquents?	Reaction Paper #1 due	Ch 3-4
Feb 2	How do we explain delinquency? and Classical Theory		Ch 5
Feb 9	Biological and Psychological theories	Social Influences Interview Guides due	Ch 6; Ch 9
	Presentation #1: <i>At what age should juveniles be held responsible for their behaviors?</i>		
Feb 16	Social Disorganization	Reaction Paper #2 due	Ch 7
	Presentation #2: <i>To what extent do macro social factors explain involvement in delinquency?</i>		
Feb 23	Strain Theories	Policy paper topic due	Ch 11
	Presentation #3: <i>Does our educational system encourage or discourage delinquency?</i>		
Mar 2	Subcultural theories of delinquency		Ch 12
	Presentation #4: <i>How important is peer pressure in understanding delinquency?</i>		
Mar 16	Learning delinquency	Policy paper intro due	
	Presentation #5: <i>Should we restrict youth access to the internet?</i>		
Mar 23	Control theories of delinquency	Reaction Paper#3 due: Social Influences Essay	Ch 10
	Presentation #6: <i>Should parents be held liable for the behaviors of their children?</i>		
Mar 30	Integrative theories of delinquency		Ch 8
	Presentation #7: <i>Should, potential delinquents be identified at an early age?</i>		
Apr 6	Labeling theory and Critical Theory		
	Presentation #8: <i>What rights of privacy should juveniles have?</i>		
Apr 13	Juvenile Justice policy	POLICY PAPERS DUE	Ch 14-15
Apr 20	Policy Paper Presentations		
Apr 27	Course Synopsis and Review	Reaction Paper #4 (on Debate topic) due	Ch 16
	Full Class Debate: <i>Should the Juvenile Justice System be abolished?</i>		
Monday, May 4	FINAL EXAM due 5:50 p.m.		