

SOCL 4468: Sociology of Gangs

Spring 2020

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SOCL 4468: SOCIOLOGY OF GANGS (3)

Prereq.: SOCL 2301 or equivalent. The sociological study of gangs in modern society.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course presents an overview of the nature of street gangs. A general survey of theory, measurement, and reproach on gangs along with gang control programs and policies will be presented. Diverse research-based perspectives about gangs will be exposed to students, often times contrasting with depictions of gangs from law enforcement and the news/entertainment media. Various mediums will be used to illustrate the gap between the idea of what a street gang is and the reality of street gangs. The emphasis in this course is too critically evaluate what we know about street gangs, their relationship to crime, and what public policies can and should be used to deter crime and violence.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To **describe** basic definitions of gangs and why these groups are considered to be a problem in society;
- To **explore** different theoretical perspectives used to explain the emergence, development and persistence of gangs;
- To **understand** the extent, nature, and criminal involvement of gangs in both America and globally;
- To **critically evaluate** the effectiveness and the consequences of suppression, intervention, and prevention strategies used to combat gangs;
- To **become smart consumers** of news reports, political rhetoric, and public discussion about youth crime, gangs, and other criminal groups.

ASSIGNED TEXTS:

Howell, James C. & Elizabeth Griffiths. 2018. **Gangs In America's Communities (3rd Ed)**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Additional articles / chapters are posted on MOODLE.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Gang ethnography and gang films used for course papers (see assignments below).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Students are expected to come to class on time and remain for the entire class. Attendance and participation are vital components to being successful in this class. The reading assignments should be completed by the dates indicated on the schedule below. In class, you should be prepared to demonstrate your understanding of the reading material (or at least have a set of thoughtful questions) and prepared to offer a point of view about the issues being addressed. Participation by students produces a more thoughtful discussion making the course not only more interesting but more meaningful. Class attendance / participation is worth 20% of your grade.

Reading quizzes will be given out periodically throughout the quarter. If students are actively engaged in class discussion then quizzes will become infrequent. However, if class participation is lacking then quizzes will be relied upon to gauge student preparedness. **Participation will be given to students through a 1 page summary of an assigned supplemental reading. If no supplemental readings are assigned then students responding to questions or asking questions during class will receive up to 2 points maximum per student per class.**

Four class writing assignments will be given throughout the semester (**see examples below**). These will consist of watching a documentary and responding to a writing prompt(s). Papers will be between 3-4 pages in length.

A class paper will be given and due the final week of the semester. Each student will choose a gang ethnography to read and write a 8-10 page essay assessing how themes from class are depicted in the text. This assignment is worth 20% of your overall course grade.

Students will also be required to participate in a group project. Groups will be based upon a students selection of two gang-related films. Generally, students will discuss the myths and realities of how gangs are portrayed in each film and also compare and contrast how gangs are depicted in these films. Each group will be required to present their project on **April 23, 2020** during the second to last week of the semester.

Three in class exams (non-cumulative) will be given on **February 6, 2020; February 27, 2020; April 16, 2020**. The final examination (cumulative) will be given during the examination period on **May 9, 2020** from **1:30 pm to 3:30 pm**. The final is comprehensive. All exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. All students will be taking the class for a letter grade; there is no pass/fail option.

Grades will be distributed as follows:

		<u>Grading Scale:</u>	
Class Attendance / Participation	15%	97% - 100%	A+
Quizzes	5%	94% - 96.99%	A
Writing Assignments	10%	90% - 93.99%	A-
Gang Ethnography Paper	15%	87% - 89.99%	B+
Group Project - Gang Film	15%	84% - 86.99%	B
Exams	20%	80% - 83.99%	B-
Final	20%	77% - 79.99%	C+
		74% - 76.99%	C
		70% - 73.99%	C-
		67% - 69.99%	D+
		64% - 66.99%	D
		60% - 63.99%	D-
		0% - 59.99%	F

***Graduate students taking this course are required to read an additional gang ethnography book and write an additional 8-10 page essay connecting course themes with how gangs are discussed in the text. Lastly, an additional 8-10 page essay will be required comparing the gang ethnographies read for the class.**

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Misconduct and Classroom Etiquette: Students are expected to abide by the LSU student code of conduct. Students who are caught cheating on an exam you will be referred to LSU's Dean of Students. Students are also expected to abide by the basic rules of classroom etiquette including: getting to class on time and coming prepared to engage; turning off all electronic devices; not talking during lectures; and remaining respectful of diverse views when engaging in classroom debate. All views are allowed and welcome; however, expressing them in a respectful way is required. Reasonable people can disagree, but disagreement needs to be expressed in ways that are conducive to the free exchange of ideas, productive dialogue, and meaningful learning.

Use of Technology in the Classroom: Please turn off **all** cell phones & pagers or any other electronic communication and/or entertainment devices (e.g., MP3, or CD players) before coming to class. Students with phones that ring during class will be asked to leave. Computers and portable devices (e.g., Tablets) are to be used solely to take notes.

Missed Classes: If you miss a class, you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week of the day (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for examples of valid reasons for absences). Missing class more than once or twice is likely to compromise your grade.

Missed Exams: If you miss an exam, you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week of the exam day (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for examples of valid reasons for absences). All make-up exams will be administered at my discretion and at a time and place of my choosing. If you miss a scheduled make-up exam you will receive a zero for your exam grade, which will make it very difficult to pass this course.

Grade Disputes: As mistakes may occur and the instructor admits he is not perfect, students feeling that an error was made in grading an assignment may utilize the following procedure to challenge the score: Students should return a copy of their assignment along with a written statement arguing why the grade needs to be adjusted should be turned into the instructor within two weeks of the assignment's return. An assignment or exam grade is considered final after two weeks of its posting. The instructor will evaluate the student's argument and reevaluate the grade. The instructor will then discuss the argument with the student during office hours. Please be aware, the instructor may possibly downgrade the assignment if during the reassessment he notes additional errors **and any curve applied to the original grading will no longer apply**. Since a paper may be downgraded, group-work will not be reevaluated unless all group members consent to the process.

Disability: Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the professor privately to discuss specific needs. Also, contact the LSU Disability Services at (225) 578-5919 as soon as possible to better ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

OUT OF CLASS EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that the students have read the assigned chapters or pages prior to class for the background necessary to properly participate in the discussion and think critically about the concepts addressed. As a general policy, for each hour you are in class, you (the student) should plan to spend at least two hours preparing for the next class. Since this course is for three credit hours, you should expect to spend around six hours outside of class each week reading/writing assignments for class.

COURSE SUGGESTIONS:

Although it is not required, you are encouraged to:

1. Raise your hand in class, question the professor, and engage with the material via discussion!
2. Get acquainted with one another. Exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers. Form study groups. Engage in collaborative learning. Studies show that students who engage in collaborative learning tend to do better in college and beyond.
3. See the professor and/or the GA as often as is necessary to do well in this course. Do not wait until problems are irreparable or concerns are outdated to seek assistance. Try to make it to our office hours but if that is not possible make an appointment. If you extend the effort, we will be available and willing to help you do well in this class.

CONTENT & TRIGGER ADVISORY

Several of the materials, used in class and assigned, contain mature themes with coarse language and adult content - viewer discretion is advised. To a degree, this is the point of using these materials to better understand street gangs and the larger social world - learning can be an uncomfortable process. If you have specific triggers, please let me know and I will note the assignments accordingly. However, this will not release you from the assignment. The trigger warnings are to give you the tools you require to complete the assigned work.

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Copyright law protects this syllabus, my lectures, and all materials distributed and presented to me during this course. You are authorized to take notes in this class, but that authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your personal use and no other use. You are not authorized, and it is a violation of University policy, to sell, license, commercially publish, post, distribute, transmit, display, nor record notes from this class unless you have my written consent to do so. Students in this course have my permission to share notes with one another or with the Office of Disability Services, but may not transmit them to students not enrolled in this course this semester.

RIGHT TO MODIFY SYLLABUS

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

January 16th

THE WARRIORS

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Preface

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 1: Boys of Summer

Episode 2: Soft Eyes

Week 2: STREET GANG HISTORY

January 21st

Class Orientation

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 1

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 3: Home Rooms

Episode 4: Refugees

Episode 5: Alliances

January 23rd

History of Gangs in the United States

Institutionalization of Street Gangs

Watch: Rubble Kings

Week 3: REALITY / PROMISE OF GANGS

January 28th

Myths & Realities of Gangs

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 2 & 7

Coughlin & Venkatesh, 2003 (Moodle)

Felson, 2006 (Moodle)

Maxson, 1998 (Moodle)

January 30th

National Gang Problem Trends

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 6: Margin of Error

Episode 7: Unto Others

Week 4: DEFINING GANGS & MEMBERS

February 4th

Definitional Problems

Studying Youth Gangs

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 3

Curry, 2015 (Moodle)

Katz & Jackson-Jacobs, 2004 (Moodle)

Hughes, 2005 (Moodle)

February 6th

EXAM 1

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 8: Corner Boys

Episode 9: Know Your Place

Week 5: MACRO-LEVEL GANG THEORY

February 11th

Social Disorganization Theory
Reaction Formation Theory
Subcultural Theory
Strain Theory

February 13th

Underclass Theory
Routine Activities Theory
Social Conflict Theory

Week 6: MICRO-LEVEL GANG THEORY

February 18th

Life-course Theory
Social Learning Theory
Interactional Theory
Multiple Marginality
Risk & Protective Factors
Unified Theory
Evolutionary Theory

February 20th - No Class

Week 7:

February 25th - No Class

MARDI GRAS BREAK

February 27th

EXAM 2

Week 8: RACE / ETHNICITY & GANGS

March 3rd

Latino/Hispanic/Chicano
Black
White

March 5th

Asian
Indigenous
Immigrant

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 4

Papachristos & Hughes, 2015 (Moodle)

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 10: Misgivings

Episode 11: A New Day

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 5

Ayling, 2011 (Moodle)

Wood & Alleyne, 2010 (Moodle)

Watch: The Wire - Season 4

Episode 12: That's Got His Own

Episode 13: Final Grades

Read:

Brown et al., 2012 (Moodle)

Chambliss, 1973 (Moodle)

Krohn et al., 2011 (Moodle)

Moore, 2000 (Moodle)

Tapia, 2019 (Moodle)

Freng et al., 2012 (Moodle)

Tsunokai & Kposowa, 2002 (Moodle)

White, 2009 (Moodle)

Moeller, 2017 (Moodle)

**Week 9: GROUP PROCESSES & STRUCTURE;
GENDER & GANGS**

March 10th

Gang Structure

Group Processes

Social Network Analysis

Read:

Decker & Curry, 2002 (Moodle)

Klein & Maxson, 2006 (Moodle)

Sierra-Arevalo & Papachristos, 2015 (Moodle)

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 6

March 12th

Female Gang Members

Esbensen & Carson, 2012 (Moodle)

Hughes et al., 2019 (Moodle)

Miller, 1973 (Moodle)

Panfil & Peterson, 2015 (Moodle)

Week 10: URBAN GANGS & VIOLENCE

March 17th

Gang Violence

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 8

March 19th

Gangs & Local Communities

Barton et al., 2019 (Moodle)

Brantingham et al., 2012 (Moodle)

Huebner et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Valasik et al., 2017 (Moodle)

Valasik, 2018 (Moodle)

Vigil, 2002 (Moodle)

Week 11: SPRING BREAK

March 24th - No Class

SPRING BREAK

March 26th - No Class

SPRING BREAK

**Week 12: RURAL, SUBURBAN, INTER-/
TRANS-NATIONAL GANGS**

March 31st

Lives in Hazard

Read:

Glosser, 2016 (Moodle)

Johnstone, 1981 (Moodle)

Watkins & Taylor, 2016 (Moodle)

April 2nd

Rural & Suburban Gangs

Watch: [Crips & Bloods: Made in America](#)

Week 13: “NON-TRADITIONAL” GANGS

April 7th

Inter-/Trans-National Gangs

April 9th

Prison Gangs

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs)

Week 14: “NON-TRADITIONAL” GANGS

April 14th

Fraternities & Sororities

Alt-Right Gangs

Terrorist Groups

April 16th

EXAM 3

Week 15: GANG DESISTENCE

April 21st

Leaving Gangs

April 23rd

Group Project Presentations

Week 16: RESPONSES TO GANGS

April 28th

Prevention

Intervention

Suppression

April 30th

Issues with Responding to Gangs / Wrap Up

Read:

Cruz, 2010 (Moodle)

Gatti et al., 2011 (Moodle)

Higginson & Benier, 2015 (Moodle)

Klein, 1996 (Moodle)

Winton, 2014 (Moodle)

Gaston & Huebner, 2015 (Moodle)

Mitchell et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Skarbeck, 2011 (Moodle)

Roks & Densley, 2019 (Moodle)

Rostami & Modani, 2019 (Moodle)

Read:

Hughey, 2008 (Moodle)

DeCook, 2018 (Moodle)

Reid & Valasik, 2018 (Moodle)

Valasik & Reid, 2019 (Moodle)

Pyrooz & Densley, 2018 (Moodle)

Decker & Pyrooz, 2011 (Moodle)

Valasik & Phillips, 2017 (Moodle)

Watch: [Father G & The Homeboys](#)
[G-DOG](#)

Read:

Carson, 2019 (Moodle)

Carson & Vecchio, 2015 (Moodle)

Deane et al., 2007 (Moodle)

O’Neal et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Pyrooz & Decker, 2014 (Moodle)

Watch: [The Interrupters](#)

Read:

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 9 & 10

Bichler et al., 2019 (Moodle)

Bjerregaard, 2015 (Moodle)

Braga, 2015 (Moodle)

Gravel et al., 2013 (Moodle)

Valasik et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Densley & Pyrooz, 2019 (Moodle)

Van Damme, 2017 (Moodle)

Week 17: FINAL EXAM

Tuesday / Thursday 1:30 - 2:50

May 9th (Saturday)

1:30pm - 3:30pm

Gang Ethnography Paper

Read one of the ethnographies listed below and select two themes (weekly course topics) for comparison from the ethnographic depiction versus other research discussed in this class. Research the literature. Write a **8-10 page** essay that assesses the way these issues are portrayed in the book comparing and contrasting it with the scholarly research. Depth is favored over breadth, but you might introduce your paper with a more general discussion (e.g., definitions, distribution).

Your discussion should include your opinion on how the ethnography might inform/influence public opinion and policy/responses to gangs. The use of scholarly sources beyond the required reading assignments are encouraged, and ignoring additional literature will impact your grade. After you have conducted your initial research, contact me for assistance if you wish direction to other scholarly resources on particular themes or topics.

A electronic copy must be submitted by 5pm on **March 31st**.

If you fail to submit an electronic copy the assignment will be considered late and you will lose 10 points, and an additional **10 points each subsequent day!** Papers must be in 12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, and have 1 inch margins. Below is the grading rubric.

Connecting Course Material with Ethnography -----	65pts
Format (Grammar, punctuation, Spelling, etc.)-----	15pts
Structure of the overall paper-----	10pts
Following Directions -----	10pts

Ethnography List

- One of the Guys** - Jodi Miller
- People & Folks** - John Hagedorn
- A Rainbow of Gangs** - Diego Vigil
- Dead End Kids** - Mark S. Fleisher
- Chinatown Gangs** - Ko-lin Chin
- Gangsters without Borders** - T.W. Ward
- The Beast** - Oscar Martinez
- The Racist Mind** - Raphael S. Ezekiel
- Inside Organized Racism** - Katherine Blee
- Everything You Love Will Burn** - Vegas Tenold
- Wounded City** - Robert Vargas
- The Triangle** - Kevin Deutsch
- The Truce** - Karen Umemoto
- Real Gangstas** - Timothy Lager
- Punished** - Victor Rios
- Going Down To The Barrio** - Joan Moore
- Jumped In** - Jorga Leap
- Gang Life in Two Cities** - Robert Duran
- Life In The Gang** - Scott Decker & Barrik Van Winkle
- Mexican American Girls and Gang Violence** - Alverado Valdez
- The Gang's All Queer** - Vanessa R. Panfil

Gang Film Assignment - Group Project

Select two films listed below, from two separate categories. View the two selected films. Select several main themes from class (weekly course topics) for comparison. Focus on how the film depicts gangs compared to what is known in the gang literature. Pay close attention of the time period around when a film is created and the social context of gangs at that time. Additionally, what is the time period that the film is depicting. Is it portraying street gangs in an accurate manner or are modern day biases present? Special attention should be paid on how, in your opinion, the (mis)representation of gangs in the film might impact/influence public opinion and potentially policy/responses to gangs. Your group will prepare a 10 minute presentation highlighting your findings and argument.

The use of scholarly sources beyond the required reading assignments are encouraged, and ignoring additional literature will impact your grade. After you have conducted your initial research, contact me for assistance if you wish direction to other scholarly resources on particular themes or topics.

Group presentations will take place on Thursday, **April 23rd**.

Below is the grading rubric:

Connecting Course Material with the Films -----	45pts
Comparison of the Two Films-----	25pts
Creativity-----	25pts
Clarity of Presentation -----	5pts
Structure of the Overall Presentation-----	10pts
Following Directions/Time Management -----	15pts

Film List

African American Experience

Blue Hill Ave
Boyz N the Hood
Chi-Raq
Gang Tapes
Juice
Menace 2 Society
New Jack City
South Central

Latino/Hispanic

American Me
Blood In, Blood Out
Boulevard Nights
La Mission
Walk Proud

Asian

Bang Bang
China Girl
Revenge of the Green Dragons

Classic

Deuces Wild
Lords of Flatbush
The Outsiders
Rumble Fish
The Wanderers
West Side Story

Policing Gangs

Assault on Precinct 13
Colors
Dirty
Training Day

Suburban/Schools

The Breakfast Club
Class of 1984
SubUrbia
The Sandlot
Tuff Turf

Females & Gangs

Havoc
Mi Vida Loca
Set It Off

Urban/Schools

Dope
Fresh
The Land
One Eight Seven
Stand and Deliver

Skinheads/Alt-Right

American History X
The Believer
Green Room
Imperium
Romper Stomper

Non-Traditional

Animal House
Lords of Dogtown
Mean Streets
Point Break
Revenge of the Nerds
Shot Caller

European

Bullet Boy
A Clockwork Orange
Green Street Hooligans
Kidulthood

International

City of God
Sin Nombre
Tsosti