Girls Gone Bad: Women, Crime, and Criminal Justice

In the examination of arrest statistics, self-report data, and victimization survey responses, a strong and persistent pattern emerges: males commit more crime than females and the types of crime males commit are generally more serious. This relationship between gender and crime is so strong that criminologists Gottfredson and Hirschi once proclaimed: “Men are always and everywhere more likely than women to commit criminal acts.” In this course we examine the outlier: women who engage in criminal activity. Using a sociological perspective, we’ll answer questions such as: what is crime? What kinds of crime do women commit? Is the gender gap in crime now closing? Why do women commit crime? How does the criminal justice system react to female criminals? How do women experience imprisonment?

Course Learning Objectives

Girls Gone Bad is a QRE course within the SOAN Department. In addition to learning about female criminality and criminal justice reactions, you will learn how sociologists ask questions about crime, the data sources sociologists use to study crime, and how sociological findings are presented to readers. By the end of the course, you will be better equipped to question popular assumptions about female criminality and be more knowledgeable about how sociological perspectives inform criminal justice policies and practices.

As a SOAN course, we will concentrate on the following three departmental “student learning outcomes”:

• Connect information about historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena

• Formulate appropriate sociological research questions about socio-cultural phenomena

• Apply sociological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena

Course Material

The following books are required reading. Additional material is online or posted to the course Moodle.


Reading Requirements

Readings must be completed before class. You are expected to review the material closely, take thorough notes, and bring your thoughts to class along with your copy of the assigned material.

Two types of readings are assigned: essays and research studies. When reviewing a research study, you are expected to identify the author(s), the research question(s), the method(s) used, and the key findings. For all readings, be prepared to share what is clear to you, what still needs clarification, and how core ideas in the text connect to other works we have read.

* Be aware that course material occasionally depicts violence, profanity, and unwanted sexual activity. This material reveals the ways in which people experience and participate in crime, and introduces the environments that sociologists may choose to immerse themselves in when they study crime. Consider this admission a “trigger warning.”

Course Requirements

Wikipedia Assignment (30 points): In this assignment you will develop, along with two partners, an encyclopedia entry on a topic related to women and crime. You’ll work on this entry throughout the term, submitting three portions at different stages. Your entry will be written for and eventually submitted to Wikipedia. Your goal is to write about a sociological topic that is either absent from or not well developed in Wikipedia.

* Be advised that Wikipedia assignments are due on non-class days. In these instances, a hard copy is required in my SoAn mailbox by 5 pm on the due date.

Book Presentation (10 points): There will be one in-class, group presentation. The presentation books are: *Can’t Catch a Break: Gender, Jail, and Drugs* by Susan Starr Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk; *Disrupted Childhoods: Children of Women in Prison* by Jane A. Siegel; and *The Ex-Prisoner’s Dilemma: How Women Negotiate Competing Narratives of Reentry and Desistance* by Andrea M. Leverentz. Each book can be accessed electronically through the Carleton College library; paper copies are also available in the bookstore.
Mid-term test (25 points): A mid-term test will be held on May 11. Short-answer and essay questions will be used to assess your understanding of course material. The May 11 date is firm. Without formal documentation from a legitimate source (e.g. physician or dean of students), no last-minute special accommodations will be provided for students who want to reschedule the test.

Final exam (25 points): You will be required to complete a take-home final exam. This essay-style exam, which will be distributed on the last day of class, is due on June 6 at 5 p.m. Prior to receiving the exam, you will be required to complete a brief reflection paper in which you summarize the notes taken prior to and after visiting the Shakopee Women’s Prison.

Class participation (10 points): Participation will be evaluated according to punctuality, regular class attendance, and close reading of the material so that comments and questions have solid grounding and advance discussion. Participation also involves listening when others are speaking. Unless you are pulling up electronic copies of your readings for class discussion, you are not welcome to use computers, cell phones, and other devices in class because they are distracting and disruptive. Students who meet the standards of class participation at only the most basic level will receive the “default” participation grade of 5 points; those who miss more than three classes risk forfeiting their participation grade.

### Summary of Class Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Distribution Date</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Wikipedia entry       | 04/04             | Topic statement: 04/14  
First draft: 05/03  
Final entry: 05/31 | 30 points |
| Mid-term exam         | 05/11             | 05/11                | 25 points |
| Book presentation     | 04/01             | 05/06: *Can’t Catch a Break*  
05/18: *Disrupted Childhoods*  
05/30: *The Ex-Prisoner’s Dilemma* | 10 points |
| Final exam            | 06/01             | 06/06                | 25 points |
| Class participation   | 30/03             | As per requirements  | 10 points |
| **Total**             |                   |                      | 100 points |

* No extensions will be provided. Late submissions will have a ½ point deducted for each day late.

Grade range: “A” = 90-100%; “B” = 80-89%; “C” = 70-79%; “D” = 60-69%; “F” <= 59%
**Course Outline**

3/28

Introducing *Girls Gone Bad*


3/30

What is sociology and how do sociologists think about crime?


4/1

Exploring our patriarchal context


4/4

What does “bad” really mean? (class meets in CMC 110)


John Jay College of Criminal Justice. 2014. “All You Need to Know about Crime Trends, in 60 Seconds.” Watch the animated short “Stop Watching the Dog” from the Norwegian program, “Siffer.” Animation by Ole Christoffer
• Wikipedia assignment distributed

4/6

Wikipedia session: Exploring your Wikipedia topic, Wikipedia essentials, and editing basics (class meets in CMC 110)


4/8

Under what circumstances are girls “bad”?


4/11

Exploring our deindustrialized context


4/13  What is a gang? How do sociologists study gangs?

Miller, Jody. 2001. *One of the Guys*. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2


- 4/14 Wikipedia topic statement due

4/15  *Wikipedia session: Drafting starter articles in Sandbox* (class meets in CMC 110)


Wikipedia.org. No date. Wikipedia: Close Paraphrasing

Wikipedia.org. No date. Wikipedia: Manual of Style/Words to Watch

4/18,20  Girls in gangs

*4/18 Readings:*

Miller, Jody. 2001. *One of the Guys*. Chapter 3 and Chapter 6

*4/20 Readings:*

Miller, Jody. 2001. *One of the Guys*. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

4/22  The war on drugs

In-class film: “Breaking the taboo: Have we lost the war on drugs?”

4/25,29  Women in the drug trade

*4/25 Readings:*

4/27 Readings:


Maher, Lisa. 1997. Sexed Work. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

4/29 Readings:


5/2 MID-TERM BREAK

- 5/3 First draft of Wikipedia entry due

5/4 Intersectionality

Maher, Lisa. 1997. Sexed Work. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8


- Doug Foxgrover will attend the first 15 minutes of class to discuss creating a PowerPoint presentation

5/6 Presentation: Can’t Catch a Break: Gender, Drugs, and the Limits of Personal Responsibility by Susan Starr Sered and Maureen Norton-Hawk


5/9 What have we learned so far?

- Wikipedia session (30 minutes)

- Review for exam (30 minutes – bring your questions to class)
Mid-term test

Gender and Sentencing

5/13 Readings:


5/16 Readings:


5/18 Presentation: Disrupted Childhoods: Children of Women in Prison by Jane A. Siegel.


5/20 Female Prisoners


5/23 Exploring our neo-liberal context


5/25 Tour of Minnesota Correctional Facility: Shakopee


- Our tour is scheduled from 11:15 am - 1:15 pm. Please bring your personal identification (driver’s license or state issued ID card) and dress appropriately (you will be denied access to the facility if you do not follow the guidelines). Be ready to depart from Sayles Hill at 10:10 am; we will return to campus by 2:15 pm. Although the tour is scheduled falls somewhat outside of class time, you are expected to attend. I am happy to reach out to your professors and work study supervisors in order for you to join the tour.

5/27 The voices of female prisoners


5/30 Presentation: The Ex-Prisoner’s Dilemma: How Women Negotiate Competing Narratives of Reentry and Desistance by Andrea M. Leverentz


- 5/31 Wikipedia final entry due
Girl interrupted


- Guest Speaker: Robin Wonsley ’13, Development Director at 15 Now Minnesota
- Final exam distributed

- 6/6 Final exam due