

Criminology 534: Neighborhoods and Crime
Summer 2019
Web Course (CRN: 39404)

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OVERVIEW

The study of neighborhoods and crime is one of the important foundations of modern criminology that has been variously referred to as ecology and crime and/or communities and crime. Whatever the reference, the underlying idea is that there is an important spatial component of the study of crime. Indeed, most of us can quickly recognize when we are in a location where we perceive ourselves to be at greater risk of criminal victimization. Ecological criminology enjoys a rich history of important contributions to our understanding of crime in society and we will examine some of paramount pieces of research that have helped to establish that understanding. Most of our attention will focus on the historical, theoretical, anthropological, and methodological approaches to trying to identify the causal relationship between environment and offending and victimization. Students will be expected to develop an analytical framework from which policy implications and/or current practices may be discussed.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

Typical graduate seminars (courses) are designed to give students the opportunity to read, reflect upon, and critique primary source materials, to synthesize information, and discuss important ideas and concepts with each other and the instructor. Indeed, we will be learning and growing within criminology together. Over the next four weeks, we will read about and discuss issues related to eight substantive topics related to the social, cultural, and spatial analysis of neighborhoods and crime. I have tried to divide the topic relatively evenly so that the reading is somewhat balanced across all four weeks. Because schedules (yours and mine) can vary considerably day-to-day and week-to-week, I am going to recommend a deliberate rate at which to complete readings and assignments. As such, we will cover two topical areas each week. I will make all readings and assignments available from the beginning, so you will be able to work ahead if it suites you.

The primary objectives of this course are to increase your exposure to familiarity with the issues, concerns, and critiques of this important social and ecological perspective on crime. To measure the success of these objectives, I've listed the requirements below, but they basically boil down to reading, critiquing, writing, interacting, and summarizing what you've read and heard through the course.

Requirements:

- (1) Each week you will be expected to read the assigned material, which will either come from the book chapters assigned or from .pdf files of largely journal articles that are linked on Blackboard. In addition to completing the reading, you will be required to submit a summary (no more than 1 – 2 pages) of each week's readings. This will come in handy for the end of course project.

- (2) You will also be expected to participate in discussion board postings, involving creating a general policy question or critique of your assigned topic (see below) and then responding to one another's questions and critiques each week.
- (3) Finally, you will need to complete a final assignment in which you write a book chapter for an edited volume providing a general overview of the area of Neighborhoods and Crime.

As participants in an online course, you will be expected to complete your work independently, although discussion and interaction with others in the course is encouraged. Much of the value of graduate education is derived through the interaction of ideas and understandings expressed by the members of the class. While discussion and interaction are encouraged, performance measures will have a decidedly independent emphasis.

Required Text:

Three books can and should be purchased—either online or from a local bookstore. ONLY the first is required, while the other two are optional (although recommended).

- (1) Bursik, Jr., Robert J. and Harold Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. Lexington Books: Lanham, MD.

OPTIONAL BOOKS: Both are great and you SHOULD eventually read both, but may not need to do so in the time allotted for this class. Both books may provide important insights for your end-of-term writing

- (2) Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. W.W. Norton Publishers: New York. (< \$10 on Amazon)

OR

- (3) Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. (\$10 - \$15 on Amazon).

All additional readings will be posted as .pdf files on Blackboard. You will need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer to download, read, and/or print copies of the articles. You can download and install Adobe Acrobat Reader for free by going to <http://www.adobe.com>.

Grading:

Your grade in the course will be calculated based on the following components:

- (1) *Weekly readings summary* (100 points or 20% of final grade): Each week for the first three weeks you will submit a one –two page executive summary of that week's readings. In other words, you will relate what you think are the salient "take-away" points from the collection of readings for that week. Your summary should include an acknowledgment of which article(s) inspired your thoughts and what led you to those thoughts. The grading rubric for your weekly readings summaries are as follows: 29 – 33 points (exceptional effort), 24 – 28 points

(excellence), 19 – 23 points (average effort), 16 – 18 points (substandard effort), 15 points (minimal effort), and 0 points (no effort).

(2) *Critique Question and Response on Discussion Board* (100 points 20% of final grade): Each of you will be assigned one topic area for which you will *lead* a discussion board discussion about that topic by starting a discussion thread about that topic. In other words, you will use the *Discussion Board* feature on Blackboard to pose questions/critiques and discuss the implications of the material that we will read together in the course. You will each be assigned one, and only one, topical area of assigned readings from which to derive a question or critique of the assigned readings. (I will assign each student to a topical area at the beginning of the summer term). While you will only have to develop ONE critique/question, you will be expected to RESPOND to all of the others' threads. The 100 points for the discussion board assignment will be divided evenly between your question and your responses. Up to 50 points will be rewarded based on the quality of your policy question and the other 50 points will be assessed according to the quality of your responses to the other students' questions. A more detailed description of the assignment is provided below.

(a) *Critique/Question (50 points)*: Each of you will be expected to start one thread on the discussion board. On the first day of class (Monday), I will assign each of you to one of the topic-weeks, which will provide you with the readings from which you'll derive your policy question. **You should plan to post your question NO LATER than the Thursday of your assigned week**, thus allowing sufficient time for your fellow students to respond to your question. Your question can be related to any aspect of assigned readings. When you post your question, you should indicate which reading(s) inspired your question and include relevant page numbers, when applicable. After every student has had the opportunity to respond to your question, you will be expected to post a summary at the end of "your" thread, in which you briefly summarize and reflect on the comments made by your fellow classmates. Your summary and reaction should include an assessment how, if at all, the others' comments have affected your perspective on the question. **Important note:** Be aware that every student in the class will be expected to respond to your question and while they will be required to respond within 3 days (72 hours) of your posting. The grading rubric for the questions will be as follows: 49 - 50 points for exceptional effort, 45 - 48 points for excellence, 40 – 45 points for average effort, 35 – 39 points for substandard effort, 25 points for minimal effort, and 0 points for no effort.

(b) *Discussion Board Responses (50 points)*: Each of you will also be expected provide at least one response to each of the policy questions posted by the other students in the course. You will be expected to monitor the discussion board site so that when policy-question/critique threads are started, **you can (and should) respond within 72 hours (3 days) of the posting**. Your response to the question should be in a contributive manner, meaning that you make comments to further the question or to make efforts at answering it. You may not simply state that you agree or disagree with the question. Additionally, your response should reflect your familiarity with the assigned reading. Simply stating your opinion will be viewed (by me) as a substandard effort. Like the policy question, the grading rubric for your responses will be as follows: 49 - 50 points for exceptional effort, 45 - 48 points for excellence, 40 – 45 points for average effort, 35 – 39 points for substandard effort, 25 points for minimal effort, and 0 points for no effort.

- (3) *Book Chapter Project* (300 points or 60% of final grade). Criminologists are often asked to contribute chapters covering their areas of expertise to edited volumes. By the end of this term, you should be the experts, so you will be expected to write a chapter as though you were going to submit it to an edited book. Your chapter should be entitled: Neighborhoods and Crime, or some variant thereof. Your chapter should provide an overview and synthesis of the topical area of neighborhoods and crime. The chapter should include: an introduction to the topic, highlights of key issues and areas of study, a summary of central and important findings, and a concluding discussion of policy implications. Technical considerations for your chapter include the following: it should be 8 - 10 pages in length, typed in Microsoft Word (or some software that can be opened by Microsoft Word) using 12-point or smaller font with 1" margins on sides and top/bottom (except for the first page), and should be submitted through Blackboard. **The due date for the project is Friday, June 28 by 11:59pm.** Due to time constraints, I will not be able to accept any late projects.

This is the project wherein you get to communicate your grasp and value of the graduate seminar experience—your chance to show what you know. You may use any sources you would like for the completion of this project, with the one major exception being that this is to be YOUR work and summary. You must complete this chapter independently and you should NOT share your paper and ideas with other students. Source materials (e.g., books or articles from the course), if referenced, should be cited (using APA format) and compiled in a bibliography (bibliography pages do not count toward the 8 – 10 page total). Plagiarism, in any form, WILL NOT be tolerated with this project and if discovered, will result in a 0—which necessarily would result in failure of this course. You may choose to include a couple of SHORT quotes from readings (which should be appropriately cited), but the bulk of the text in your chapter should be your own words.

Your chapter should include a book review of the Anderson or Goffman book, describing how the neighborhood context of the study has played a role in the picture the author has presented.

I STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU START WRITING YOUR CHAPTER AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER, INCORPORATING PORTIONS OF INFORMATION AS THE TERM PROGRESSES, rather than wait until the end and try to pull the whole thing together in a hasty fashion.

The grading rubric for this book chapter is as follows: 300 points (Exceptional work), 280 points (Excellent work), 260 points (Average work), 240 points (Substandard work), 150 points (Minimal work), 0 points (no assignment submitted).

The sum of your questions/comments, discussion board assignments, and final project is 500 points. I will use the following ranges for assignment of final grades:

A = 450 – 500 points

B = 400 – 449 points

C = 350 – 399 points

D = 300 – 349 points

F = 299 or fewer points.

Additional Important Information

Communication: While most of the written work (assignments and project) are designed to be completed independently, the framework of graduate seminars is set up to encourage question and discussion among the participants. In that light, please feel free to discuss questions with your colleagues (including me) at any time. In some cases, we are learning this material together. Also, if you are unclear about any expectation associated with this course, don't hesitate to contact me. Email will be the best course of communication with me. I will monitor email frequently each day and will respond to your inquiries within 24 hours of receiving them. You can also try calling me at my office (during normal daytime office hours), however, since this is a web-based course, I may do some of the course monitoring from home.

Technological Issues and/or Problems: If you experience technological problems during this course, whether with your computer, or Blackboard, or whatever, please contact the WKU IT Help Desk @ 270-745-7000. I do not have the knowledge or skill set to help you with technological problems. The Help Desk employs qualified and talented individuals who can help you solve most issues or problems you may face.

Academic Dishonesty: Plain and simply, any form of cheating, plagiarism, copying others' work, etc., will not be tolerated. This is a graduate seminar and I will expect you all to complete your own work. Evidence of any form of academic dishonesty will result in a 0 for the assignment in question and a probably "F" for the course.

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC), DSU 1074. The SARC telephone number is (270) 745-5004 or TDD: (270) 745-3030. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from SARC.

OUTLINE OF REQUIRED READINGS AND TOPICS

Week 1: Monday June 3 – Sunday June 9

**You may want to begin reading Anderson's *Code of the Streets* OR Goffman's *On the Run*, if you have decided to read one of these this term.

Topic I: What is a neighborhood or community, and why is it important?

Bursik, Robert, and Harold Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime*. Chapter 1: "Basic Issues."

Hipp, John R. 2007. "Block, Tract, and Levels of Aggregation: Neighborhood Structure and Crime and Disorder as a Case in Point." *American Sociological Review* 72: 659 – 680.

Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. "Neighborhood Effects": Social Processes and new Directions in Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 443 – 478.

Topic II: Neighborhood Structure, Social Disorganization, and Crime

Bursik, Robert, and Harold Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime*. Chapter 2: "The Criminal Behavior of Neighborhood Residents."

Sampson, Robert J., and W. Byron Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory." *The American Journal of Sociology* 774 – 802.

Stark, Rodney. 1987. "Deviant Places: A Theory of the Ecology of Crime." *Criminology* 25: 893 – 909.

Sampson, Robert J., and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 2004. "Seeing Disorder: Neighborhood Stigma and the Social Construction of "Broken Windows."" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67: 319 – 342.

Week 2: Monday June 10 – Sunday June 16

Topic III: Neighborhoods, Collective Efficacy, and Crime

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277: 918 – 924.

Morenoff, Jeffrey D., Robert J. Sampson, and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 2001. "Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence." *Criminology* 39: 517 – 560.

Browning, Christopher R., Seth L. Feinberg, and Robert D. Dietz. 2004. "The Paradox of Social Organization: Networks, Collective Efficacy, and Violent Crime in Urban Neighborhoods." *Social Forces* 83:503 – 534.

Topic IV: Strain and Inequality in Neighborhoods and Communities

Blau, Judith R. and Peter M. Blau. 1982. "The Cost of Inequality: Metropolitan Structure and Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review* 47: 114 – 149.

Baumer, Eric, Julie Horney, Richard Felson, and Janet L. Lauritsen. 2003. "Neighborhood Disadvantage and the Nature of Violence." *Criminology* 41: 39 – 72.

Hipp, John R. 2007. "Income Inequality, Race and Place: Does the Distribution of Race and Class Within Neighborhoods Affect Crime Rates?" *Criminology*. 45: 665 – 697.

Week 3: Monday June 17 – Sunday June 23

Topic V: Residential Segregation

Massey, Douglas S. 1990. "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." *The American Journal of Sociology* 96: 329 – 357.

Peterson, Ruth D. and Lauren J. Krivo. 1999. "Racial Segregation, Concentrated Disadvantage, and Black and White Homicide Victimization." *Sociological Forum*. 14: 465 – 493.

Krueger, P.M., S.A Bond-Huie, R.G. Rogers, and R.A. Hummer. 2004. "Neighbourhoods and Homicide Mortality: An Analysis of Race/Ethnic Differences." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 58: 223 – 230.

Liska, Allen E., John R. Logan, and Paul E. Bellair. 1998 "Race and Violent Crime in the Suburbs." *American Sociological Review* 63: 27 – 38.

Topic VI: Opportunities for Criminal Behavior

Bursik and Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime*. Chapter 3. "Neighborhood Opportunities for Criminal Behavior."

Cohen, Lawrence E., and Marcus Felson. "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach." *American Sociological Review* 44: 588 – 608.

Lee, Matthew R. 2000. "Community Cohesion and Violent Predatory Victimization: A Theoretical Extension and Cross-National Test of Opportunity Theory." *Social Forces* 79: 683 – 706.

Week 4: Monday June 24 – Friday June 28

Topic VII: Social Capital and Crime

Messner, Steven R., Eric P. Baumer, and Richard Rosenfeld. 2004. "Dimensions of Social Capital and Rates of Criminal Homicide." *American Sociological Review* 69: 882 – 903.

Beyerlein, Kraig and John R. Hipp. "Social Capital, Too Much of a Good Thing? American Religious Traditions and Community Crime." *Social Forces* 84: 995 – 1013.

Pattillo, Mary E. 1998. "Sweet Mothers and Gangbangers: Managing Crime in a Black Middle-Class Neighborhood." *Social Forces* 76: 747 – 774.

Topic VIII: Policy Initiatives and Consequences of Neighborhood Crime and Disorder

Bursik and Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime*. Chapter 6. "Neighborhood-Based Responses to Crime: Policy Issues."

Keels, Micere, Greg Duncan, Stefanie DeLuca, Ruby Mendenhall, and James Rosenbaum. 2005. "Fifteen Years Later: Can Residential Mobility Programs Provide a Long-Term Escape from Neighborhood Segregation, Crime, and Poverty?" *Demography* 42: 51 – 73.

Ludwig, Jens, Greg J. Duncan, and Paul Hirschfield. 2001. "Urban Poverty and Juvenile Crime: Evidence from a Randomized Housing-Mobility Experiment." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 116: 655 – 679.

Rosin, Hanna. 2008. "American Murder Mystery." *The Atlantic*
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/american-murder-mystery/6872>)