**Social Inequality, Crime, and Justice: Fall 2017**

George Mason University

CRIM 307.002, Robinson Hall, Room B104

Fridays, 10:30 am to 1:10 pm

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Novak

**Objectives of the Course**

This course will explore the significance of social inequality (especially race and gender inequality) for several crime and criminal justice issues. We will also examine variations in criminal offending and victimization, and explores disparities in criminal justice processing. We will ask two questions: (1) to what extent does our criminal justice system preserve a certain racial hierarchy; and (2) to what extent does our criminal justice system police certain sexual stereotypes, roles, and behaviors? We will analyze both international and domestic case studies in exploring the link between criminal justice, race, and sex. Issues such as policing, mass incarceration, sex offender registries, immigration detention, privatization, and the death penalty will be explored in class in greater detail.

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to draw on social science theory to describe public perceptions of criminal justice, explain how social inequality leads to different rates of offending and victimization, discuss specific ways the justice system promotes inequality, and identify and critically consider specific ways that race and sex influence the administration of justice.

**About the Instructor**

I am a term assistant professor of criminology, law, and society at George Mason University. I have also taught African law at American University, Washington College of Law, and written several books on the death penalty, clemency, and international criminal justice. I have a Master of Science in African Politics from the London School of Oriental and African Studies, a Juris Doctor from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in law from Middlesex University in London. I am licensed to practice law in New York and Washington, DC.

Email: anovak2@gmu.edu

**Office Hours**

I am available after class each week, from 10:30 am to 11:30 am on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I am also on campus on Fridays during the Fall 2017 semester. I may also hold office hours at the Starbucks in the Johnson Center or elsewhere, as announced in class.

Office: Enterprise Hall, Room 334

**Required Materials**

Two books are required for this course:

* Devon Johnson, Patricia Y. Warren & Amy Farrell, *Deadly Injustice: Trayvon Martin, Race, and the Criminal Justice System* (New York University Press, 2015).
* David M. Halperin & Trevor Hoppe, *The War on Sex* (Duke University Press, 2017).

Other readings will be assigned throughout the semester. In general, I will post these on Blackboard and distribute them in class the week before.

Students are also strongly encouraged to download the **Poll Everywhere** app on their smartphones. This will allow us to conduct anonymous surveys of the class in real-time and display the results on the board.

**Grading Criteria**

Your grade is based on the following components:

**30% - 2 Response Papers** (due September 29 and October 27)

**40% - 4 Online Quizzes** (On Blackboard, due September 22, October 20, November 10, and December 15)

**30% - Pecha Kucha Presentation** (in class December 8 and 15 or by Blackboard if videorecorded)

Below is the grading scale used for the course. I will not use the grades “D+” or “D-.”

98-100 A+

93-97 A

90-92 A-

88-89 B+

83-87 B

80-82 B-

78-79 C+

73-77 C

70-72 C-

60-69 D

<60 F

In addition, in the event that I must calculate grade fractions, I will always round up to the next highest point if you have a 0.45 or higher.

**Minimum Attendance Policy**

This course has a minimum attendance policy. There are twelve classes in addition to the introductory class. You must attend **SIX** of them, not including the introductory class, or your grade will be reduced by a flat five points (e.g., a 90 is reduced to an 85).

If you attend **NINE** classes (in addition to the introductory class), I will drop your lowest quiz grade in calculating your final grade.

**A Note on Respect**

So long as a student’s answer is genuine, respectful, and relevant, it is worthy of respect by classmates and myself. We may have different perspectives and experiences, and I hope and expect that all students will express these disagreements openly and honestly. Listening is just as important as speaking. However, harassment of any kind or efforts to make other students uncomfortable is strictly prohibited. The topics we discuss in class are potentially controversial. We should be able to discuss opposing viewpoints within the context of social science evidence. At the same time, I will (and I hope everyone will) avoid deliberately provoking classmates.

In this class, we may also discuss a host of topics that relate explicitly to sex. Students who are uncomfortable talking about such topics do not have to participate in the discussion. I expect that students will avoid revealing information about themselves or other students that is personal, and we should also avoid inquiring into other peoples’ personal lives. We will talk about these issues in a hypothetical and abstract way in class to avoid distraction and potential embarrassment.

**Reading Assignments and Schedule of Classes**

**Friday, September 1**

*Topic*: Introduction to the course and the topic

**[September 5: Add-Drop (No Penalty) Deadline]**

**Friday, September 8**

*Topic*: The racial and sexual origins of our criminal justice system

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 229-241 (on anti-gay origins of sexual psychopathy laws);

**Additional reading** to be distributed in class

**Friday, September 15**

*Topic*: Unequal impact of race- and sex-neutral laws

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 323-337 (on California’s “anti-human trafficking” law);

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 115-137 (on racial bias in Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law).

**[September 19: Drop (33% Tuition Penalty) Deadline]**

**Friday, September 22**

*Topic*: Unequal perceptions of crime and criminals

*Readings*:

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 23-47 (on racial perceptions of crime)

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 297-314 (on feminism and stereotypes of sex workers)

***Quiz***: On Blackboard (September 22 to September 29)

**Friday, September 29**

*Topic*: Choosing what to criminalize

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 347-351 (on HIV criminalization)

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 126-164 (on sex offender laws)

**[September 29: Drop (67% Tuition Penalty) Deadline]**

**Friday, October 6**

*Topic*: Inequalities in policing

*Readings*:

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 59-78 (on policing youth in Oakland, California);

**Additional reading** to be distributed in class

***Assignment Due***: Response paper on overcriminalization (1-2 pages) – guidelines to be distributed in class

**Friday, October 13**

*Topic*: Unequal prosecution?

*Readings*:

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 215-233 (on race and perceptions of prosecution);

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 429-447 (on Louisiana’s “Crimes Against Nature” law)

**Friday, October 20**

*Topic*: Inequality in the courtroom

*Readings*:

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 165-181 (on race and jury verdicts)

**Additional readings** to be distributed in class

***Quiz*:** On Blackboard (October 20 to October 27)

**Friday, October 27**

*Topic*: Inequality in detention

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 191-206 (on prohibition of sexual conduct in prison)

**Additional readings** to be distributed in class (on causes of mass incarceration)

**Friday, November 3**

*Topic*: Inequality in media/social media

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 291-296 (on media impressions of sex work);

**Johnson/Warren/Farrell**, pages 81-105 (on racial inequality and media coverage)

***Assignment Due***: Response paper on policing/prosecution/incarceration (1-2 pages) – guidelines to be distributed in class

**Friday, November 10**

*Topic*: Going global

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 409-428 (on anti-LGBT sentiment in Jamaica)

**Additional readings** to be distributed in class

***Quiz***: On Blackboard (November 10 to November 24)

**Friday, November 17**

NO CLASS

**Friday, November 24**

NO CLASS

**Friday, December 1**

*Topic*: Collateral consequences of conviction

*Readings*:

**Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 65-93 (on legal disabilities for sex offenders)

**Additional readings** to be distributed in class (on felon disenfranchisement)

**Friday, December 8**

*Topic*: Death penalty/wrongful convictions

*Readings*:

**To be distributed in class**

*Begin Pecha Kucha Presentations in class (due on Blackboard if submitting electronically)*

***Quiz***: On Blackboard (December 8 to December 15)

**Friday, December 15**

PECHA KUCHA PRESENTATIONS DUE IN PERSON (if not performed on December 8 or submitted electronically)

**Reflection Paper Guidance**

This course will have two writing assignments over the course of the semester. The instructions for these assignments will be circulated shortly. In general, it is best to think of these assignments as *writing tests* rather than solely opinion papers. Your grade is based on **how you write**, so **it is essential** to focus on grammar, presentation, conciseness, and clarity of writing. The papers are not long, but I will read every word, so every word should be selected carefully.

These are opinion papers, but both papers should cite a minimum of two sources, of which one should be scholarly. A paper based solely on unsupported assertions may receive a reduced grade. I will provide instructions and conduct a series of in-class writing workshops.

For papers submitted by hard copy, I will make comments directly on the page. For papers submitted on Blackboard, I will track changes on Microsoft Word and upload the paper back to Blackboard. While I can make comments on Adobe Acrobat Reader, I prefer papers submitted in Microsoft Word format rather than papers submitted in PDF form.

**Introduction to Pecha Kucha Presentations**

This course will end with a Pecha Kucha Presentation, which is a style of presentation originally designed by young designers in Tokyo in 2003. The original parameters were to present with 20 slides that automatically advance every 20 seconds (for a total of 6 minutes and 40 seconds). This manner of presentation is intended to be concise and strictly require preparation.

In our version of the Pecha Kucha Presentation, students are required to present for 4 minutes using 8 slides that advance automatically every 30 seconds. Markdowns will be taken for presentations that substantially exceed 30 seconds on a slide or that extend longer than 4 minutes.

The topic of the presentation will be to present a published piece of empirical research on an issue relating to social inequality and criminal justice. The presentation should (briefly) address the methodology of the study, how it relates to other research, and the study’s findings. A think tank report or advocacy report would be perfectly acceptable, as would a government-issued report. Historical or archival research is welcome, as is survey-based research or interview-based research (on other words, both quantitative and qualitative research is welcome). Sample topics might include, for instance, race and the death penalty, sentencing disparities, policing, overcriminalization, and other topics.

Students have two options for submitting the presentation. **Option One**is to perform the presentation in class on either December 8 (our last class) or December 15 (final exam day). **Option Two** is to record the presentation on PowerPoint and export the presentation as a video file, so long as it follows the parameters above. The video file may be uploaded to Blackboard by the deadline of December 8.

**Honor Code Policy**

Available on the web at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. Mason shares in the tradition of an honor system that has existed in Virginia since 1842. The code is an integral part of university life. On the application for admission, students sign a statement agreeing to conform to and uphold the Honor Code. Students are responsible, therefore, for understanding the code’s provisions. In the spirit of the code, a student’s word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty members must report all alleged violations to the Honor Committee. Any student who has knowledge of, but does not report, a violation may be accused of lying under the Honor Code.

The complete Honor Code is as follows: To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

Cheating encompasses the following: 1. The willful giving or receiving of an unauthorized, unfair, dishonest, or unscrupulous advantage in academic work over other students. 2. The above may be accomplished by any means whatsoever, including but not limited to the following: fraud; duress; deception; theft; trick; talking; signs; gestures; copying from another student; and the unauthorized use of study aids, memoranda, books, data, or other information. 3. Attempted cheating.

Plagiarism encompasses the following: 1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgment. (This includes material appearing on the Internet). 2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment.

Lying encompasses the following: The willful and knowledgeable telling of an untruth, as well as any form of deceit, attempted deceit, or fraud in an oral or written statement relating to academic work. This includes but is not limited to: 1. Lying to administration and faculty members. 2. Falsifying any university document by mutilation, addition, or deletion. 3. Lying to Honor Committee members and counsels during investigation and hearing. This may constitute a second charge, with the committee members who acted as judges during that specific hearing acting as accusers.

Stealing encompasses the following: Taking or appropriating without the permission to do so, and with the intent to keep or to make use of wrongfully, property belonging to any member of the GMU community or any property located on the university campus. This includes misuse of university computer resources.

**ALL STUDENTS ARE ON NOTICE THAT I CONSIDER PAPER RECYCLING FROM ANOTHER COURSE TO BE A VIOLATION OF THE HONOR CODE.**

**Disability Accommodations**

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should (1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office for Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and (2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs. I want to be helpful.