

CRIM 795: GENDER & CRIME

COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting time: Tuesdays 10:30 a.m.-1:10 p.m.

Meeting location: Enterprise Hall 77

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Janani Umamaheswar

Office location: Enterprise Hall 303

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:10 p.m.-2:10 p.m. and by appointment

Email address: jumamahe@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Most broadly, the purpose of this course is to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the role of gender in offending patterns, victimization, and punishment. We will begin the course with a brief review of the sociology of gender and intersectionality. Framing gender as socially constructed, multidimensional, and situational, we will then turn to the role of gender in criminology and criminal justice. Here, we will seek to understand the major theoretical developments in the sub-field of gender and crime, including the development of feminist criminology. Next, we will study how cultural assumptions about gender underlie society's understanding of, and response to, law-breaking behavior and victimization. To accomplish this goal, we will be studying specific topics such as the criminalization of women's bodies (through discussions of reproductive autonomy, sex work, mothering, etc.), sexual and domestic abuse, and so on. Finally, we will study the gendered nature of punishment in the United States, focusing especially on gender differences in prison subcultures.

By the end of this course, you should:

1. Have a strong grasp on how theoretical approaches to understanding gender and crime have evolved over time.
2. Recognize the empirical and theoretical contributions of feminist criminology.
3. Have a *critical* perspective on how the criminal justice reflects and perpetuates gender inequality.
4. Understand how gender inequality is shaped by—and in turn shapes—other forms of inequality (based on race, class, immigration status, etc.) in the context of crime and victimization.

REQUIRED READINGS

All articles/book chapters will be available on Blackboard. In addition, you will be reading the following book, which is available digitally through Mason's library:

Jones, N. (2018). *The chosen ones: Black men and the politics of redemption*. University of California Press.

ASSESSMENT

Class participation: 20%

The purpose of this course is to encourage you not only to understand the gendered nature of crime and criminal justice, but also to *critique* it. To that end, the readings in this syllabus are oriented toward deepening your critical lens. Our classroom will be a space for pushing one another to consider how gender inequality is reflected and perpetuated by the criminal justice system, and what can be done about the problematic implications of such inequality. You should strive for *productive* participation. By this, I mean that you will be assessed based not on *how often* you speak, but on:

- How your contributions shape our collective understanding of the course material.
- Your constructive criticisms of the readings.
- Your respectful engagement with others' views.
- Your ability to listen actively (attentively and responsively) to your peers' comments.

For truly productive discussions, it is important that you *think* about the readings instead of just completing them. I want you to use this course to challenge yourself to think in new ways about social inequality, especially as it relates to gender and its intersecting axes of privilege and disadvantage. Above all, this graduate seminar is a *communal* space of knowledge creation—one that I aim to ensure is explicitly inclusive, welcoming, and affirming. My commitment to diversity and inclusion is reflected in this syllabus (which deliberately includes works about and by women, people of color, trans and non-binary people, and system-impacted people) and it will also be reflected in how we talk about gender and gender inequality. So please—come to class having thought deeply about the readings and having prepared to encourage yourself, your peers, and me to think about gender and crime in creative ways that challenge the status quo.

Please also keep in mind that this course covers many topics that are sensitive and that may be difficult for some students to discuss. Again, my priority is to make my classroom as welcoming as possible, so I encourage you to reach out to me if you are uncomfortable with the course content at any time. The sensitivity of the course content also means that we should *all* lead with compassion and empathy when discussing course material.

Weekly responses: 25%

Each week, you will submit a brief (1-2 page) written response to the readings. These readings are intended to enrich our classroom discussion, so they should go beyond simply summarizing the readings. I will provide tailored questions to guide your reading of each week's materials, but general questions to ask yourself as you write these response papers include:

1. What is the empirical contribution that the author seeks to make?

2. What is the theoretical contribution of the reading?
3. What is the primary argument of the reading, and what evidence does the author provide to support this argument? Is the evidence sufficient for supporting the author's argument?
4. What are the strengths and drawbacks of the methodology used in the reading?

Responses will be graded on a scale of 5 (very good), 4 (good), satisfactory (3), and inadequate (0-2). These responses are due at noon on the Monday preceding class so that I can incorporate your thoughts into class discussion.

Book review: 15%

You will read and review Nikki Jones' "The Chosen Ones: Black Men and the Politics of Redemption." You may read this book at your own pace, but keep in mind that the book review (800-1000 words) is due in week 13 of the course. We will discuss how to write a good book review in class.

Final paper: 30%

For your final (10-15 page) paper, you will identify a practice or policy related to gender and crime/punishment and write a position paper on it. You will be submitting portions of your paper throughout the semester (due dates included in the schedule below) with the option of submitting a bibliography and draft for feedback a few weeks before the final due date. Your paper should accomplish three primary goals:

1. It should summarize the existing literature on the policy or practice.
2. It should reflect a carefully considered, empirically sound, intellectual position on the policy or practice. Here, I wish to emphasize that the paper should not simply reflect an emotional response to a hot-button topic; instead, you should demonstrate an awareness of the empirical evidence *for and against* your position, and you should present a compelling case for your own position. The purpose of this paper is to encourage you to consider multiple perspectives on the policy or practice you choose, so responding to counter-arguments to your position is as important as presenting your own argument.
3. It should outline the policy implications of your position.

Final presentation: 10%

You will present your final paper in class in week 15.

GRADING SCALE

Students will be graded on the following scale:

A: 93-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89
B: 83-86
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79
C: 73-76
C-: 70-72
D: 60-69
F: <60

LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

We are living through a period of immense disruption, anxiety, and stress. Expecting normalcy in the classroom during a time of crisis is not reasonable, and as we learn together during the pandemic, please feel free to approach me with suggestions about how to support you if you are struggling with the unique difficulties that the pandemic has generated—whether these involve extra care burdens, financial issues, mental health challenges or anything else. While I may be unable to offer direct assistance with some of these issues, I am happy to support your learning in my class however I can, and to connect you with resources that may help with issues beyond the classroom.

COMMUNICATION

Email is the best way to reach me (jumamahe@gmu.edu). Please use your Mason email address for all communication related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from (or send messages to) a non-Mason email address.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

It is my intent that students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives will be well-served and well-respected in my classroom. I want students' diversity to be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit in this course. I encourage students to approach me with questions, comments, and suggestions related to respecting *every* form of diversity.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All submitted course work should be your own. When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations. When in doubt, cite! You are bound by the George Mason University Honor Code. Violations will be referred to the University Honor Committee.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-993-3686 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

* Readings are tentative and may change as the semester progresses.

Week 1 (August 24th): The social construction of gender; intersectionality

- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- Lorber, J. (2004). Night to his day: The social construction of gender. *Race, class, and gender in the United States: An integrated study*, 6, 54-65.
- Crenshaw, K. (1990). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stan. L. Rev.*, 43, 1241.

Week 2 (August 31st): Early theories of women’s offending

- Adler, Freda. (1975). *Sisters in Crime: The Rise of the New Criminal*. (Excerpt)
- Simon, Rita J. (1978). *Women and Crime*. (Excerpt)
- Greenberg, Joseph M. (1951). Review of Otto Pollak’s “Criminality of Women.” *American Sociological Review* 16(5), 265-266.

Week 3 (September 7th): Feminist criminology

- Gwynn, C. (1993). Women and crime: The failure of traditional theories and the rise of feminist criminology. *Monash UL Rev.*, 19, 92.
- Chesney-Lind, M., & Morash, M. (2013). Transformative feminist criminology: A critical re-thinking of a discipline. *Critical Criminology*, 21(3), 287-304.
- Potter, Hillary. (2006). An argument for Black feminist criminology: Understanding African-American women’s experiences with intimate partner abuse using an integrated approach. *Feminist Criminology* 1(2), 106-124.

Week 4 (September 14th): Masculinities

- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859.
- Rios, V. M. (2009). The consequences of the criminal justice pipeline on Black and Latino masculinity. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 623(1), 150-162.
- Contreras, R. (2009). “Damn, yo—who’s that girl?” An ethnographic analysis of masculinity in drug robberies. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38(4), 465-492.

Week 5 (September 21st): Women and violence

- Irwin, M. and Chesney-Lind, M. (2010). Girls’ violence: Beyond dangerous masculinity. *Sociology Compass* 2(3), 837-855.
- Flores, J. (2016). *Caught Up: Girls, Surveillance, and Wraparound Incarceration*. University of California Press. (Excerpt)
- Jones, N. (2004). “It’s not where you live, it’s how you live” How young women negotiate conflict and violence in the inner city. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595(1), 49-62.
- Otto, Natalia. (2020). “I did what I had to do”: Loyalty and sacrifice in girls’ narratives of homicide in southern Brazil. *British Journal of Criminology* 60(3), 703-721.

Paper topic due by Tuesday, September 21st at 11:59 p.m.

Week 6 (September 8th): Control of women’s bodies I: Sex work

- Murphy, A. K., & Venkatesh, S. A. (2006). Vice careers: The changing contours of sex work in New York City. *Qualitative Sociology*, 29(2), 129-154.
- Levy, J., & Jakobsson, P. (2014). Sweden’s abolitionist discourse and law: Effects on the dynamics of Swedish sex work and on the lives of Sweden’s sex workers. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 14(5), 593-607.
- Benoit, C., Jansson, S. M., Smith, M., & Flagg, J. (2018). Prostitution stigma and its effect on the working conditions, personal lives, and health of sex workers. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4-5), 457-471.

Week 7 (October 5th): Control of women’s bodies II: Reproductive autonomy

- Roberts, D. (1998). *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. (excerpt).
- Roth, R. & Ainsworth S, L. (2015). “If they hand you a paper, sign it.”: A call to end the sterilization of women in prison. *Hastings Women’s Law Journal* 26(1): 7-49.
- Tarzia, L., Srinivasan, S., Marino, J., & Hegarty, K. (2020). Exploring the gray areas between “stealth” and reproductive coercion and abuse. *Women & health*, 60(10), 1174-1184.

Week 8 (October 12th): NO CLASS

Paper outline due by Tuesday, October 12th at 11:59 p.m.

Week 9 (October 19th): Mothering; Victimization

- Elliott, S. & Reid, M. (2019). Low-income Black mothers parenting adolescents in the mass incarceration era: The long reach of criminalization. *American Sociological Review* 84(2), 197-219.
- Granja, R., da Cunha, M. I. P., & Machado, H. (2015). Mothering from prison and ideologies of intensive parenting: Enacting vulnerable resistance. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(9), 1212-1232.
- Slatton, B. C., & Richard, A. L. (2020). Black Women's experiences of sexual assault and disclosure: Insights from the margins. *Sociology Compass*, 14(6), e12792. (skim)
- Erez, E., Adelman, M., & Gregory, C. (2009). Intersections of immigration and domestic violence: Voices of battered immigrant women. *Feminist criminology*, 4(1), 32-56.
- Grossman et al (2009). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth talk about experiencing and coping with school violence: A qualitative study. *Journal of LGBT Youth* 6: 24-46.

Week 10 (October 26th): Gender and punishment I: Men's prisons

- Sykes, G. M. *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. (Excerpt).
- Jewkes, Y. (2005). Men Behind Bars: "Doing" Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment. *Men and masculinities*, 8(1), 44-63.
- Umamaheswar, J. (2020). "Changing the channel": Hybrid masculinity in a men's prison. *Incarceration*, 1(2), 2632666320957854.

(Optional) paper bibliography due by Tuesday, October 26th at 11:59 p.m.

Week 11 (November 2nd): Gender and punishment II: Women's prisons

- Crewe, B., Hulley, S., & Wright, S. (2017). The gendered pains of life imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology*, 57(6), 1359-1378.
- Ystanes, V., & Ugelvik, T. (2020). 'They tell me I'm dangerous': Incarcerated mothers, Scandinavian prisons and the ambidextrous penal-welfare state. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 60(4), 892-910.
- Willingham, B. C. (2011). Black women's prison narratives and the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in US Prisons. *Critical Survey*, 23(3), 55-66.

Week 12 (November 9th): Gender and punishment III: Transgender prisoners

- Rosenberg, R., & Oswin, N. (2015). Trans embodiment in carceral space: hypermasculinity and the US prison industrial complex. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(9), 1269-1286.
- Jenness, V., & Fenstermaker, S. (2014). Agnes goes to prison: gender authenticity, transgender inmates in prisons for men, and pursuit of "the real deal". *Gender & Society*, 28(1), 5-31.

- Sumner, J., & Sexton, L. (2015). Lost in translation: Looking for transgender identity in women's prisons and locating aggressors in prisoner culture. *Critical Criminology*, 23(1), 1-20.

(Optional) paper draft due by Tuesday, November 9th at 11:59 p.m.

Week 13 (November 16th): No class (ASC)

- **Submit book review online by Tuesday, November 16th at 11:59 p.m.**

Week 14 (November 23rd): Gender and Desistance

- Carlsson, C. (2013). Masculinities, persistence, and desistance. *Criminology*, 51(3), 661-693.
- Giordano, P.C., Cernkovich, S. & Rudolph J.L. (2002) Gender, crime, and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 107(4), 990-1064.
- Fader, J. J., & Traylor, L. L. (2015). Dealing with difference in desistance theory: The promise of intersectionality for new avenues of inquiry. *Sociology Compass*, 9(4), 247-260.

Week 15 (November 30th): Presentations and discussion of "The Chosen Ones."

Final paper due on Friday, December 3rd at 11:59 p.m.