

SOC 590: GRADUATE SEMINAR IN GENDER AND CRIMINAL OFFENDING

Professor Jennifer Schwartz

Spring 2007 Wednesday 3:10-6:00 in CUE 216

"Sex status is of greater statistical significance in differentiating criminals from noncriminals than any other trait." -- Sutherland and Cressey, 1974:126

A course on gender and crime means studying both women's and men's criminality, not solely girls' and women's crime. The motivating question guiding us through this seminar is: **How does gender structure the scope and nature of offending and official responses to it?** We will use a comparative perspective to examine both female and male offending, including: patterns and trends in crime; theories of offending; and pathways into and out of offending.

The primary objective is to learn about the major debates and topics within criminology relating to gender and crime. To that end, we will focus on the following issues: What are the major gender differences in crime? Are trends in crime similar for men and women or is the nature of female criminality changing? Why (not)? What can explain gender differences in the level and nature of offending? Are gender-neutral or gender-specific theories of offending more tenable?

Our secondary objective is to gain proficiency in the skill of journal article writing. We will accomplish this via reading published examples of scholarly work and writing the "Results" section of a paper. Students wanting to further sharpen their skills in this area should choose the journal article option for her/his final assignment. Students nearing comprehensive exams may want to choose the practice exam option for the final assignment.

Almost all readings will be provided to you as .pdf files. The only book to be purchased is Eleanor Miller's *Street Woman*. Purchase this book online (e.g., abebooks.com; amazon.com). The full citation is:

Miller, Eleanor. 1987. *Street Woman: Women in the Political Economy*. Temple University Press.

Responsibilities & Assignments:

Weekly Responsibilities

- Read all articles and come prepared to engage in a critical discussion*
- Formulate several thought-provoking discussion questions
- E-mail questions to the "discussion leader(s)" 24 hours prior to class

Occasional Responsibilities as Discussion Leader(s)

- Provide a brief, written summary, synthesizing the week's readings. Explain how the literature we read contributes to our knowledge about gender and crime. In no more than one page, describe how the articles help us better understand the central, guiding question in the seminar. **How does gender structure the scope and nature of offending and/or official responses to it?**

- Organize a discussion around themes you've identified in the readings. Incorporate your classmates' thought questions throughout, as appropriate. You will be responsible for "running" half to two-thirds of the class.
- Goals of the discussion leaders:
 - Guide seminar participants to better understand, synthesize, and critique the mandatory readings
 - Facilitate the discussion, especially when it is faltering, rather than make a presentation.
 - Focus on critical thinking* about the articles and assume everyone has read all the mandatory articles

Major Assignments

- UCR Report assessing national-level trends in female and male arrest
 - Outline a research question of interest that may be answered using UCR official arrest data (gender-by-age disaggregated) from 1980-2004. The trend analysis must be comparative. **Due: January 17th**
 - Run descriptive statistics to address your research question (e.g., rates, female percentages). No advanced statistical models required.
 - Write up the findings section of a manuscript. Include an introduction, setting up your research question (~1 pg). Concentrate mainly on describing and interpreting the findings and what they mean in terms of your research question (~6 pages). Include journal-ready tables and figures as appropriate. **Due: February 7th**
 - Give a short conference-style presentation of your findings to the class, using overheads or Power Point (10 minute maximum) **Due: February 7th**
- Practice CWE Question OR Journal Article (Front End Up to Results)
 - Practice CWE Option: You will be asked to answer 2 CWE-style questions on the topic of gender and crime. Unlike CWEs, however, this will be a "take home" test. Because you may use class readings and notes, answers should be well thought out and organized, with citations from class readings. It is expected you will work independently. Questions will be provided one week in advance. **Answers are due April 25th**.
 - Journal Article Option: Identify a research question relevant to an aspect of gender and crime discussed in this course that you'd like to explore further. Write the introduction, literature review, and a brief data/methods section outlining how you would tackle the research question. Be specific, but concise (~10-15 pages). You might also model your assignment after a grant proposal instead of a journal article. **Due: April 30th**
 A useful reference is:
 White, Lynn. 2005. Writes of passage: Writing an empirical journal article. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67(4):791-798.

Grading:

Uniform Crime Report Write-Up (20%) and Presentation (10%); Discussion Leader (20%); Seminar Participation (15%); CWE/Journal Article (35%)

Reading Schedule:

January 10

Week 1. Introduction to Gender and Crime

Assignment: Look through online or print version of the most recent *Crime in the United States*. Note how the data are broken down (age, sex, geography, etc.).

January 17

Week 2. Comparing Patterns of Female and Male Offending

Assignment Due: Submit Trends in Crime Research Question

Mosher, Clayton J., Terance D. Miethe, and Dretha M. Phillip. 2002. Official crime data.

Pgs. 59-98 in *The Mismeasure of Crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Canter, Rachelle J. (1982). Sex Differences in Self-Report Delinquency. *Criminology*.

20: 373-393.

Hindelang, Michael. 1979. Sex differences in criminal activity. *Social Problems* 27:143-

156.

Steffensmeier, Darrell and Jennifer Schwartz. (2004). "Trends in Female Crime: It's

Still a Man's World" In *The Criminal Justice System and Women: Offenders, Victims, and Workers*, edited by Barbara Raffel Price and Natalie J. Sokoloff. NY: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Optional:

Mosher, Clayton J., Terance D. Miethe, and Dretha M. Phillip. 2002. Crime patterns,

evaluating crime policies, and criminological theories. Pgs. 171-189 in *The Mismeasure of Crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Brien, Robert M. 1995. Crime and victimization data. Pp. 57-80 in *Criminology*, edited

by Joseph F. Sheley. New York: Wadsworth.

Smith, Douglas A. and Christy A. Visher. 1980. Sex and involvement in deviance/crime:

A quantitative review of the empirical literature. *American Sociological Review* 45(4):691-701.

January 24

Week 3. Contextual Differences in Offending: Violent & Property Crimes

Violence

Campbell, A. 1990. Female participation in gangs. In *Gangs in America*. Edited by C.

Huff. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Jurik, N. and R. Winn. 1990. Gender and homicide: A comparison of men and

women who kill. *Violence and Victims* 5:227-242.

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