Sociology 272: Race, Crime and Punishment
Syllabus

This course will examine the social production and organization of crime, the role of the state in managing crime, and the social consequences that result from crime control policies and practices. The role that racial inequality plays in the production of crime and the criminal justice process will be a central theme throughout the course.

Requirements
This course is a seminar, it functions with student participation and minimal lecturing by the instructor. The goal is to have lively and theoretically challenging discussions. To get there, students will be required to complete weekly writing assignments based on readings. These writing assignments will be posted on Gaucho Space--the UCSB web discussion forum the night prior to seminar. The writing assignment will summarize the reading and provide a statement on how it might be incorporated into a research project, influence research questions, or you may provide a critique. We will read these reflections but will not grade them. Think of the writing assignments as tools from which to develop discussion questions and build your final paper. The final paper will consist of 12-15 double-spaced pages. We will meet individually to discuss the topic of your paper. The paper will be due on Monday June 9.

Readings
Two books are required:

Other readings are available for download on GauchoSpace.

Week 1 (March 31): Getting organized

Week 2 (April 7): Race, crime and punishment: Conceptual and measurement issues
Defining and counting crimes are political acts. What counts as a crime? How do official and scholarly conceptions of crime differ? What is the relationship between crime and punishment in theory and practice? What do we know about racial patterns of crime and punishment?


**Weeks 3 & 4 (April 14-21): Crime and racial inequality**

How can we account for apparent differences in crime rates across racial and ethnic groups?


Recommended:


**Week 5 (April 28): Crime and the life course**
Rates of violent crime and victimization are highest among young men age 15-24. Some analysts argue that criminal misbehavior is a natural tendency of adolescence, and others that this tendency is the result of institutional forces, and

Sampson and Laub, *Crime in the Making*, chapters TBA


Recommended:

Week 6 (May 5): Policing and surveillance
Recent policy reforms—such as “broken windows” policing, gang injunctions, and the “war” on drugs—have changed the way police do their jobs, and police surveillance strategies have seeped into schools and workplaces. What are the implications of these changes for different racial-ethnic communities?

Beckett & Herbert, Banished. Chapters 1-4 required; 5-6 recommended.


Recommended:


Week 7 (May 12): Race and decision making in the criminal courts
Are official decisions concerning charging, bail, pretrial detention, and sentencing racially biased? If so, how does that bias operate? Is it more apparent at some points in the process than others?

Assignment: Go to the Project Implicit website (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/), take at least one version of the Implicit Association Test, and have thoughts for discussion in relation to the readings.


**Recommended:**

**Weeks 8-9 (May 19 & 26): Mass incarceration**
The imprisonment rate in the U.S. more than quintupled over the last four decades, and rates are highest for people of color. Were these trends the result of rising crime rates, changes in crime-control policies, or larger cultural and political-economic shifts?


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Recommended:


Week 10 (June 2): Consequences of mass incarceration
What have been the collateral consequences of rising incarceration rates for former inmates, their families and communities, and patterns of racial inequality?


Recommended:


