SOCIOLOGY 170: DEVIANT BEHAVIOR

In this course students will be exposed to the varied behaviors considered deviant in contemporary and historical Western societies, the ambiguous and socially-constructed nature of deviance, and the development of public policies for the control of deviant acts. Specific themes include the definition and measurement of deviance, theories of deviant behavior, the structure of deviant careers, and the development of social control strategies in contemporary society.

Course organization and requirements: Class will meet twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday 8 to 9:15). All readings listed below are required. Students will complete a take-home midterm (five pages, typed) and an in-class multiple choice final exam. No exemptions from the scheduled due-dates and final examination time will be permitted without a valid medical excuse. The midterm and final will each count for half of your course grade.

The following required books are available at the UCen bookstore, and are on reserve at RBR:


Other readings are contained in a reader available from The Alternative in Isla Vista.

Schedule and Readings

I. INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT

A. Sick, bad, stupid, and ugly: Defining deviance and social control (April 2)

Becker, ch. 1
Schur, ch. 1
Erikson, ch. 1

B. How much deviance is there? How do we know? (April 4)

Kitsuse and Cicourel, “A Note on the Uses of Official Statistics”
Black, “Production of Crime Rates”

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE PRODUCTION OF DEVIANCE

A. Deviance as a cultural process: boundary-maintenance and ritual (April 9-11)

Durkheim, “The Normal and the Pathological”
Alexander, “Culture and Political Crisis: ‘Watergate’ and Durkheimian Sociology”
Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned”
B. Deviance as a political process: the state, social movements, and professions (April 18-23)

Erikson, ch. 2-4 (required); ch. 5 (recommended)
Becker, ch. 7-8
Beisel, “Constructing a Shifting Moral Boundary: Literature and Obscenity in Nineteenth Century America”

C. Deviance as an interactional process: labeling and societal reaction (April 23-25)

Lemert, “The Concept of Secondary Deviation”
Lemert, “Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion”
Becker, ch. 2, 9, 10

** April 25: Hand out midterm **

III. DEVIANT SOCIALIZATION AND DEVIANT CAREERS

A. The acquisition and management of deviant identities (April 30-May 2)

Becker, ch. 3, 5-6
Schur, ch. 2
Lemert, “Role Enactment, Self, and Identity in the Systematic Check-Forger”
Murphy, Waldorf, and Reinarman, “Drifting Into Dealing: Becoming a Cocaine Seller”

** Midterm due May 2 **

B. Social control as classification (May 7-9)

Scheff and Culver, “The Societal Reaction to Deviance”

** Midterms returned to students May 9 **

IV. THREE CASE STUDIES IN DEVIANCE

A. Gender deviance (May 14-16)

Schur, ch. 3
Hong and Duff, “Becoming a Taxi Dancer”

B. Violence (May 21-23)

Schur, ch. 4
Scully and Marolla, “Convicted Rapists’ Vocabulary of Motive”
Ferraro and Johnson, “How Women Experience Battering”
C. Alcohol and drug abuse (May 28-30)

Becker, ch. 4
Reinarman, “The Social Construction of an Alcohol Problem”
Nadelmann, “Drug Prohibition in the United States: Costs, Consequences, and Alternatives”
Massing, “What Ever Happened to the ‘War on Drugs’?”

D. Mental illness (June 4-6)

Lemert, “Paranoia” (review)
Goffman, “The Moral Career of the Mental Patient”
Scull, “The Asylum as Community or the Community as Asylum: Paradoxes and Contradictions of Mental Health Care”

*** Revised midterms due June 4 ***