

# **Gangs and Gang Violence in America**

## **Sociology 3570-060**

Instructor: Bruce Rigby

Spring 2013

Class Meetings: Mondays, 6-8:45 PM, Murray 101

Office: BEHS 311 (Campus) Office Hours: Before class or by appointment

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Text: Understanding Contemporary Gangs in America: An Interdisciplinary Approach, 2004. Edited by Rebecca D. Petersen, ISBN: 0-13-039474-2

### **1. Course Description**

This course will examine the history and development of gang culture in America. From the beginnings of immigrant gangs in the 1800's to present day gang activity, classified as "organized crime" by many in law enforcement, we will examine the development of modern gang activity and violence in contemporary society.

The course will explore the effects of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and family structure on the growth of gang affiliation and activity. Sociological theory will be used to gain an understanding of gangs and gang activity historically and in contemporary society.

The increased attention on gang activity by law enforcement and the legal system will be examined and the effectiveness of their efforts will be discussed.

The primary goals of the course are:

1. To understand the historical development of gangs in America.
2. To define gangs and gang membership.
3. To develop a sense of how gangs have evolved into large networks of organized crime in our society.
4. To evaluate and discuss theories explaining the social factors leading to gang membership and activity.
5. To examine the role of law enforcement, the legal system, and the prison system regarding gang membership and activity.

### **2. Grading Procedures**

The final course grade will be determined by your performance on 2 equally weighted objective/short answer type examinations. The examinations will cover materials from the text, lectures, guest speakers, and class discussions. These examinations will contribute 2/3 of your final grade with the remaining 1/3 being determined by 5 brief reflection papers on topics assigned by your instructor.

The exams will consist of both multiple choice and short answer type questions.

### **3. Class Participation**

Participation in class discussions is an important part of the learning experience. Attendance is necessary to participate in class discussions as well as to see the guest speakers. You will not be graded on class participation, but the format of this class is designed to encourage the sharing of ideas. These class discussions will enhance the learning experience for each of us throughout the semester.

### **4. Tentative Schedule**

Week 1 (Jan 7-12) Introduction to the course and Part 1

Week 2 (Jan 14-19) Part 2: Gender Issues in Gangs

Week 3 (Jan 21-26) Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, No Class

Week 4 (Jan 28-Feb 23) Part 3: Race and Ethnicity in Gangs

Week 5 (Feb 4-9) Part 3 continued

Week 6 (Feb 11-16) Part 4: Gangs in Prisons and Schools

Week 7 (Feb 18-22) Presidents' Day, No Class

Week 8 (Feb 25-March 2) Part 4 continued and Review

Week 9 (March 4-9) Part 5: **Exam #1 is Monday, March 4th**

Week 10 **\*\*\*Spring Break, No classes March 11-17\*\*\***

Week 11 (March 18-23) Part 5: Violence, Drugs, and Gangs

Week 12 (March 25-30) Part 5 continued

Week 13 (April 1-6) Part 6: Gangs and Victimization

Week 14 (April 8-13) Part 6 continued and assigned reading

Week 15 (April 15-20) Part 7: Gang Prevention and Intervention

Week 16 (April 22-24) **Exam #2 is Monday, April 22nd**

### **5. Reflection Papers**

The required papers for this course will be on relevant topics discussed in the class, and will explore the students' reactions and feelings about that specific topic. Each paper should be 2-3 pages in length and be a thoughtful analysis of the topic. The papers will be submitted electronically via the Canvas course system.

**6. Notice:** University guidelines for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require the following to be included in all syllabi: "The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services."

### **7. Student Code:**

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the student code, spelled out in the student handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the code. The code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the code carefully and know they are responsible for the content.

According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the responsibility of the faculty to enforce responsible classroom behaviors. Violations of the student code may result in a written warning, dismissal from the class, a failing grade, or dismissal from the university. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavioral Committee.

**\*\*\*This is a preliminary syllabus and may be subject to change prior to the beginning of classes on January 7, 2013\*\*\***