

# Women and Crime

More women and mothers are behind bars now than any other time in U.S. history.



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*“What we look for most in the female is femininity, and when we find the opposite in her, we must conclude as a rule that there must be some anomaly...”*

-Cesare Lombroso, criminologist in the early 1900s

*“I never felt like I could be the kind of girl my friends were anyway, so I just decided to be myself. I realized that the best way to get out of the house was to act like a boy, which meant doing boy-like things...not listening, fighting, breaking rules in school...Oh, I liked pretty dresses and to have my hair done, but I knew that would never get me anywhere. I just had to follow my own lead, even though it landed me in some bad places...like Rikers Island.”*

-Letoya, 26 year old detained on a drug charge from Beth Richie's, *Compelled to Crime*

Historically, women have been excluded from the criminological discussion. Criminologists and practitioners argued that males were more likely to be offenders and victims of crime and thus, deserved more attention than females. The development of criminological theory has been devoted to explaining male criminality. Studies concentrated on male populations. However, it is clear that the issue of women and crime needs to be explored. Women are the fastest growing population to be incarcerated. Some have argued that there is convergence in female and male offending. Women are much more likely than men to be victims of certain types of crimes (i.e. sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, etc...). Finally, women are entering the criminal justice field in record numbers. Thus, it is of critical importance that the topic of women and crime be explored in-depth and understood. This course is an attempt to do this.

## Course Description

This course will examine women's experiences with crime and the criminal justice system. The course is divided into four sections: 1) an introduction to women and crime; 2) female offenders and their treatment by the criminal justice system; 3) female victims of crime; and 4) female employees of the agencies of the criminal justice system and their experiences. We will begin with an introduction to the study of women and crime. Next, we will look at women as offenders. This will include an examination of different aspects of women's criminality (ex. typologies, differences between women and men, etc...). This section will end with an examination of how female offenders are treated by the criminal justice system. The third section

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of the course will cover women as victims of crime. Particular attention will be given to violence of men against women. The following will be explored: sexual violence, battering and stalking, and other types of violence against women (i.e. sexual harassment, etc...). Victims' experiences with the criminal justice system will also be explored. Finally, the last section of the course will cover women working in the criminal justice system. Specifically, we will explore women breaking into and their experiences in this field. The goal of the course is to explore all aspects of women and crime and for the students to develop an understanding of these issues and why they are important.

## Required Readings

The following are the required readings for the course. **At least one copy of all the books will be placed on reserve at the library.** The articles will be available on electronic reserve.

Belknap, Joanne (2007). *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. United States: Thomson Wadsworth

Lefkowitz, Bernard (1997) *Our Guys: The Glen Ridge Rape and the Secret Life of the Perfect Suburb*. New York: Vintage Books

Kerman, Piper (2010) *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*

Articles on Reserve

## Course Requirements and Grading

Students will be required to complete the following: four exams, a term paper, and in-class reaction papers. Given that this is a large, lecture course attendance will not be taken. However, a considerable portion of each exam will be devoted to in class lectures and the in-class reaction papers can only be done in class on the day they are assigned.

### **THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP EXAMS OR ASSIGNMENTS.**

Exams: Each exam will cover readings, lectures, videos, and presentations from one of the four specific sections of the class. The exams will not be cumulative. Exams will consist of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Students will be tested on how well they comprehend and are able to apply the concepts covered in the course. Illegible handwriting on exams will result in zero points for that particular question. **Exams are worth 25 points each. The lowest of the four exam scores will be dropped.**

Term Paper: The term paper will be due in class on April 16th. Students will be expected to complete a well-written, well-researched 5 to 8 page research paper on a topic to be assigned. Students should use at least five recent academic journal articles or books to research the assigned topic. Papers should be double-spaced and typed in 12 point font or less with 1" margins on all sides. Students will be graded on how well they researched the topic, answered the given question(s), and technical aspects of the paper (grammar, punctuation, citations, writing, etc...). More information regarding the term paper will be discussed in class. **The paper is worth 15 points.**

In-Class Reaction Papers: Periodically, students will be asked to write in-class reaction papers to issues discussed in class on that particular day. The purpose of these assignments is to think critically and thoughtfully about issues in criminology. These assignments can only be completed in class on the day they are assigned. No make-up assignments will be accepted. **In-class reactions papers are worth a total of 10 points.**

**BE SURE TO KEEP ALL RETURNED EXAMS AND PAPERS IN CASE OF A GRADE DISPUTE.**

## Course Organization

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This course will utilize both a lecture and discussion format. Students must complete the readings by the class period they are assigned (some of the in-class assignments may cover the readings). Due to the nature of the material we are discussing, there is likely to be some lively discussion and some disagreement. In addition, some people may feel uncomfortable, upset, or even shocked by some of the course material. This is OK and is even to be expected. I hope that this course will be challenging both intellectually and personally. The following ground rules must be followed:

- 1) Acknowledge that people in our culture have different experiences based on race, class, sex, age and sexuality. Think sociologically about these issues and critically analyze our opinions and beliefs.
- 2) Agree that our classroom should be a place where no one is made to feel embarrassed or ashamed. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. This includes rude interruptions, yelling, insults, or personal attacks. We do not have to agree with one another, but we must be able to discuss our differences in a respectful manner.
- 3) Be aware that there are most likely students in the class who have experienced (or are close to someone who has experienced) sexual assault, domestic violence, or other forms of victimization. It is important that comments made in class are respectful of these experiences and the impact that these experiences may have had on people's lives.
- 4) Refrain from engaging in behavior that is rude to the instructor, other students, or guests of the class. This includes coming in late, sleeping, talking, texting, playing games, or reading in class.  
**PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES WHILE CLASS IS IN SESSION.**

## CANVAS

A modified version of the lecture notes will be available on CANVAS. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to either get the notes from CANVAS and fill them in on your own or get the notes from a fellow classmate.

## Topics

### **Part 1: Introduction to Women and Crime**

1/7—Introduction to the course and syllabus

1/9—The Emergence of Gender in Criminology  
Reading: Belknap, Ch. 1

1/14—Emergence Continued

1/16—Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Crime  
Video

1/21—Theories of Female Offending  
Reading: Belknap, Ch.2

1/23—Theory Continued

1/28—Theory Continued

**1/30—FIRST EXAM**

### **Part 2: Female Offending**

2/4—The Nature of Female Criminality  
Readings: Belknap, Ch 3

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2/6—Example: Girls in Gangs

2/11—Example: Female Prostitution

Reading: On RESERVE: Williams and Foloron (2003) “Understanding the Experiences of Street Level Prostitutes” *Qualitative Social Work*, 2(3): 271-287

2/13—Processing Female Offenders in the System

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 4

2/18—Punishing and Treating Female Offenders

Reading: Belknap Ch. 5

2/20—Punishing and Treating Female Offenders Continued

Reading: Kerman’s *Orange is the New Black*

**2/25—SECOND EXAM**

**2/27—Video/ Assignment and discussion of paper topics**

## **Part 3: Women as Victims of Crime**

3/4—The Image of the Female Victim

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 6

3/6— Women and Sexual Violence

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 7

3/10-3/16—SPRING BREAK

3/18—Women and Sexual Violence Continued

Lefkowitz, *Our Guys*

3/20—Sexual Harassment

3/25—Women and Intimate Partner Abuse (IPA) and Stalking

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 8

3/27—Women and IPA and Stalking Continued

4/1— Women and IPA and Stalking Continued

Reading: TBA

**4/3—THIRD EXAM**

## **Part 4: Women and the Criminal Justice System**

4/8—Women and the Criminal Justice System

Readings: Belknap, Ch. 9 and ON RESERVE Garcia, Venessa (2003) “‘Difference’ In the Police Department: Women, Policing, and ‘Doing Gender’” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 19(3): 330-344

4/10—Women and the CJS Continued

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 10

4/15—Women and the CJS Continued

Reading: Belknap, Ch. 11

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## FINAL PAPER DUE

4/17—Conclusions and Effecting Change  
Reading: Belknap, Ch. 12

## 4/22—FOURTH EXAM

**\*Note: The schedule is subject to change. Students will be notified.**

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

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 this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations.

All printed information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.