

**Gangs and Gang Violence in  
America  
Sociology 3570-010**

Instructor: Bruce Rigby

Spring 2014

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 6-8:45  
PM, BEHS 110



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

Phone: 581-5842 or 581-6153 (message)

E-mail: [bruce.rigby@soc.utah.edu](mailto:bruce.rigby@soc.utah.edu)

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 presenters from law enforcement scheduled for this course. 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 6-10) Introduction to the course and Part 1

Week 2 (Jan 13-17) Part 2: Gender Issues in Gangs

Week 3 (Jan 20-24) Gender continued

Week 4 (Jan 27-31) Part 3: Race and Ethnicity in Gangs

Week 5 (Feb 3-7) Part 3 continued

Week 6 (Feb 10-14) Part 4: Gangs in Prisons and Schools

Week 7 (Feb 17-21) Part 4 continued

Week 8 (Feb 24-28) Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs and Review for Exam 1

Week 9 (March 3-7) Part 5: **Exam #1 is Wednesday, March 5th**

Week 10 **\*\*\*Spring Break, No classes March 9-16\*\*\***

Week 11 (March 17-21) Part 5: Violence, Drugs, and Gangs

Week 12 (March 24-28) Part 5 continued

Week 13 (March 31-April 4) Part 6: Gangs and Victimization

Week 14 (April 7-11) Part 6 continued and assigned reading

Week 15 (April 14-18) Part 7: Gang Prevention and Intervention and Review for Exam #2

Week 16 (April 21-25) **Exam #2 is Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>**

## **5. Reflection Papers**

The 5 required reflection 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:** Per University of Utah regulations (Policy #6-400) "A student who engages in academic misconduct" as defined in Part I.B. and including but not limited to cheating, falsification, or plagiarism, "may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from the program or the University, or revocation of the student's degree or certificate. Sanctions may also include community service, a written reprimand, and/or a written statement of misconduct that can be put into an appropriate record maintained for purposes of the profession or discipline for which the student is preparing." Please refer to the Student Code for full elaboration of student academic and behavioral misconduct policies (<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>).

**7.** 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."

**\*\*\*This is a preliminary syllabus and may be subject to change prior to the beginning of classes on January 6, 2014\*\*\***