

Violence in the United States

Course Number 26:834:586

Course Credits (3)

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Rationale

Those planning careers in public; service, criminal justice, social work or health will increasingly be called on to design, implement and evaluate strategies/policies to respond to violence. To do so effectively, students must understand the causes and dynamics of various forms of violent behavior, the range of actors involved with violence, and the options available to prevent it. Although current interest in the violence field is divided according to whether violence involves adults or children, strangers or family members, individuals or gangs, or, whether, for example, the focus should be on cultural norms rather than specific. criminal behaviors, there is a growing sentiment that these problems should be addressed as part of community-wide prevention effort.

This term the course will emphasize racial violence, youth violence and family violence, particularly woman battering and child abuse. In each case, we will identify the basic empirical dimensions of the problem, review theories about dynamics and causality, consider the cultural meanings attached to violence by the mass media and social service barriers and opportunities in intervention posed to the public official or administrator. Emphasis will be placed on health and criminal justice dimensions of the problems as well as on how class and sexual inequalities shape violence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Describe the empirical and dynamic dimensions of racial violence, youth violence and family violence;
- Understand the importance of race, and class in the dynamics of violent behavior, the media portrayal of violence and in the construction of violence management strategies;
- Critically discuss the ways in which information on various forms of violence is collected, analyzed and presented.
- Appreciate the ideological, administrative and management issues involved in community-wide violence control and prevention;

COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES:

Attendance is required and will participation, in your grade. be considered, along with class

There are two assigned Projects:

1. Select a particular type of violence studied in the course. Prepare a 7-10 pp. paper emphasizing one of the following. A. How it has been approached by four different fields (e.g. psychology, sociology, psychology/psychiatry, biology, economics, criminology, feminist theory, etc.)?

B. How does mass media (film, TV, fiction, advertising) this portray type of violence?

C. How is it represented in a significant recent case (e.g. the case of baby Elisha in NYC, the O.J. trial, etc.)?

If you select to answer (B) or (C), please get the approval of the instructor for your specific: media production or event.

2. Select a town in New Jersey. Through interviews with key officials, a review of local news, an analysis of data and other sources of information, determine the prevalence, dynamics, consequences and responses to violence in the town. Prepare a report that (a) identifies the major problem or problem that should be addressed by a violence prevention strategy; and (b) recommends ways in which the town could reduce and/or prevent violence through a community-wide integrated effort (what groups would be involved? what would they target? who might provide leadership?) etc.

The second project should be a minimum of 15 pages and may be done as a group effort with other members of the class.

Assignment One Due Date: October 21st

Assignment Two Due December 9th.

Keep copies of all work submitted.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Class One. September 2nd. Defining Violence.

Film Clips: Tomorrow Never Dies

Slap Shot

Topics.

.State sponsored violence (e.g. James Bond), sports violence and criminal violence-- differences and connections

. Looking at violence

. The cultural contexts/presentations of violence

Class Two. Due September 9th. Racial Violence.

Text. Race in the Hood, 1-84.

Film: Zoot Suit

Topics:

- . The social parameters of hate crimes . The economic/structural sphere
- . The cultural sphere—ideology
- . The social psychological sphere--racial and gender identity

Class Three. Due September 16th.

Text. Race in the Hood, 85-154.

Topics:

- . Gangs in historical perspective
- . Riots as social events--the Civil War Riots . The world of the school
- . Ethnicity, race and violence

Class Four. Due September 23rd. The Domestic violence revolution. Text: Domestic Violence,

Part T and TT, 1-99

Topics:

- . The domestic violence revolution 3
- . The turn towards, criminal-justice
- . The revolution stalled
- . Unanswered questions

Class Five. Due September 30th. When women kill.

Text: Domestic Violence, Part III and IV, 99-170

“The special reasonableness of battered women:”

Text: Domestic violence, 225-268

“State of CT. vs. Bonnie Foreshaw” (Ch. 1_5, E. Stark, The Battering Crime)

Film: The Nature of the Beast

Topics:

- . Self-defense vs. 'The abuse excuse' Domestic violence vs. Coercive control
- . Woman Battering as a liberty crime

Class Six. Due October 7. Should arrest be mandatory?

Reading: E. Stark, "In Defense of Mandatory Arrest"

Topics:

- . Reforming police practice
- . Restraining and protection orders—do they work?

. Batterers' counseling—solution or rationalization?

Class Seven. Due October 14th. Sexual violence

Reading: Liz Kelly, "The continuum of violence in women's lives."

Selection from Gordon and Riger, The Rape Fear.

Topics:

Sharon Marcus, "Fighting bodies, Fighting words: A theory and politics of rape prevention." From J. Butler and J. Scott (eds.) Feminists theorize the political, 385-404.

Class Eight. Assignment I Due

Reading: E. Stark and A. F Witchcraft, "Women and children at risk: a feminist perspective on child abuse."

Judith Herman, "The rule of the father" from Father-Daughter Incest.

Case report: A Failure to Protect: The Case of Lavonne Lazarra (from, E. Stark, The Battering Crime)

Topics.

- . Domestic violence and child abuse
- . The invisible man in child abuse research
- . Incest and the myth of maternal responsibility

Class Nine. Due October 28th Violence and Gender

Reading: Selections from T. Newburn and E. Stanko(eds.) Just Boys Doing Business'? Routledge, 1994.

William Warner, "Spectacular action: Rambo and the popular pleasures of pain."

Topics:

- . Men in prison
- . Understanding violence by women
- . Links of gender, race and violence

Class Ten. Due November 4th: Black on black violence

Reading: E. Stark, "The myth of black violence."

J. T. Gibbs, "The New Morbidity: homicide, suicide accidents and life-threatening behavior."

Elijah Anderson, Selections from Streetwise: race class and change in an urban community.

Topics:

- . black violence: myth or reality'?
- . data sources: victims, crime reports and self-reports