

SOCIOLOGY 294



THE SOCIOLOGY OF GANGS

The Ohio State University

Section # 19926-3

Winter 2005

Monday & Wednesday: 9:30-11:18 a.m.

McPherson Chemical Lab (MP) – 1035

Instructor: James (Jim) Sutton

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Office: 001 Raney Commons (cubicle C)

Hours: Mondays 11:30-1:30 p.m.

& Fridays 1:30-3:30 p.m.

(& also by appointment)

Course Description: In this class we will examine a broad range of topics related to gang activity in the United States. This course will focus primarily on contemporary urban street gangs. With that said, however, please note that we will also devote some time to the study of other groups commonly associated with gang activity, such as outlaw bikers and prison gangs. Our main objective as sociologists will be to better understand the social conditions that lead to the emergence of gangs. Some additional topics that we will study include trends in gang activity and perceptions of the gang problem, racial and ethnic differences between gangs, common behaviors of gang members, and potential solutions to the challenges that gangs present. Upon completion of this class you will have a deeper understanding of “the gang problem” and, hopefully, some thoughts on what we should do about it.

Course Objectives: The primary objectives of this course are to provide you with:

- ✓ A critical understanding of the social forces that give rise to gang activity
- ✓ An appreciation for the issues involved when researching gangs
- ✓ Exposure to diverse viewpoints on the topics covered in this class
- ✓ A positive learning experience

Course Materials: The following books are *required* for the course and can be purchased in the University Bookstore or at the various bookstores on High Street:

- *Hell's Angels.* Hunter S. Thompson (1996). Ballantine Books.
- *Understanding Street Gangs.* Robert K. Jackson & Wesley D. McBride (2000). Wadsworth.
- *Always Running: La Vida Loca - Gang Days in L.A.* Luis Rodriguez (1994). Touchstone.
- *Do or Die.* Leon Bing (1992). Perennial.

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- *Additional Required Readings:* You will need to get *seven* additional reserve readings off Electronic Reserve. **RR** denotes these readings in our class/reading schedule (see pp. 6-8). – come see me if you have trouble using the Library's Electronic Reserve Website.

***Please note that I have put copies of the textbooks and the reserve readings on hard reserve in the Main Library for students who are unable to obtain their own copies.**

Evaluation - Course Requirements: Three in-class examinations and three assignments comprise the formal requirements for this course.

- I. *In-Class Exams:*** There are three in-class examinations in this course. You will be tested on the material covered during class, as well as on the material in the films and your readings. Each exam consists of multiple choice/true-false/matching/short-answer questions. I will provide you with a study guide and set aside time for a review session before each exam.
- II. *Ohio Gang Survey:*** You will notice that most of the gang research has been conducted in states other than Ohio. To help us attain a better understanding of Ohio's gang problem, each class member will determine whether or not gangs exist in a couple of Ohio cities/towns. We will then put our information together on a map and analyze the results. ***I will provide more instructions in class.***
- III. *Case Study Project:*** Although we will examine a variety of issues this quarter, it will be impossible to cover most of them in-depth. You will therefore use this project as an opportunity to learn more about a specific gang-related topic of your choice (upon my approval). Your completed project will be approximately 4-5 pages. Please note that you will need to submit a brief ***Statement of your Assignment Topic*** in class on February 9th. ***I will provide more instructions in class.***
- IV. *Poster Assignment:*** We will conclude the quarter with a poster session. You will therefore need to put together a poster that summarizes the content of your case study project. This will be a fun way to complete the class, and it will also allow us all to gain exposure to a broad range of topics related to gangs. Given that the explicit goal of the poster session is to share information with others in the class, you and your poster must be present in class on March 9th to receive credit for the **Poster Assignment**. ***I will provide more instructions in class.***

Grading: I do not use the plus/minus system for grading. This decision is based on my belief that plus/minus grading tends to hurt more students than it benefits. Final grades for the course will be determined using the following scale:

245 - 221 points = A
220 - 196 points = B
195 - 172 points = C
171 - 147 points = D
146 - 0 points = E

The points you earn on the exams and writing assignments will be added up to give you your total number of points for the course:

Exam #1 = 59	Statement of Assignment Topic = 4
Exam #2 = 59	Ohio Gang Survey = 12
Exam #3 = 59	Writing Assignment = 35
	Poster Assignment = 17

***Extra Credit (Perfect Attendance) = 8*

Attendance: If you have perfect attendance at the end of the quarter, you will receive 8 extra credit points for the course. Attendance is taken twice every class session (before and after we take our break). You can only receive the extra credit if you attend both parts of every class. Having one or more absences (**excused or un-excused**) eliminates the possibility of earning the 8 extra credit points. Finally, it is *your* responsibility to make sure that you have signed both attendance sheets each day.

Advice for doing well in this course: I strongly suggest that you do the following:

- I. Complete the reading before each class*
- II. Take good notes*
- III. Form study groups with others in the class*
- IV. Meet with me during office hours (especially if you have questions or problems)*

Important Dates:

January 3:	1st day of class
January 21:	Last day to drop a class without a 'W'
January 26:	Exam #1
January 31:	Ohio Gang Survey Due
February 9:	Statement of Case Study Project Topic Due
February 16:	Exam #2
February 18:	Last day to drop a class with a 'W'
March 7:	Case Study Project Due
March 9:	Poster Due
March 16:	Exam #3

Class Policies:

Classroom Etiquette: Many of us have passionate feelings about the topics covered in this course (which is a good thing). It is therefore crucial for our class sessions to be comfortable and conducive to learning for all participants. While discussion and open debate are fundamental components of this class, it is imperative that everyone gets treated with respect. Keep in mind that we can learn a lot about our own views by *listening* to the views of those with whom we disagree. So, with this said, ***disrespectful or threatening behavior towards others in our class will not be tolerated!!***



****Please be sure to turn your pagers and cell phone ringers off before class begins****

Exam Make-Ups: Exam dates are firm. If you miss an exam, you can make it up only if you contact me before the time of the exam *and* provide a legitimate excuse supported by written documentation.

Assignments: Due dates for the Assignments are firm. Written components of your assignments must be stapled, typed, and double-spaced. Emailed assignments and assignments turned in on computer disk will not be accepted under any circumstances. Assignments turned in late will be penalized significantly: **5 points** are subtracted for each day an assignment is late. **Please note that assignments that are not submitted in class on the due date are considered to be late and will be docked late points accordingly.** *Please be sure to save back-up files of all your work on a computer disk, just in case an assignment gets misplaced.*

Arriving Late: I will begin class promptly at 9:30 a.m. each morning. Please plan to arrive on time. You run the risk of missing out on important class announcements if you are late, and you are also likely to disrupt the class. If you are unable to make it on time, please enter through the rear door as quietly as possible and take special efforts to avoid distracting others (including me). Thank you.

Leaving Early: I ask that you please refrain from leaving class early. Leaving prior to the end of class is a distraction to me, and more importantly, to other students. If you must leave early, please inform me before class and sit near the door to limit the amount of disruption caused by your departure. We will take a break each class session, during which you will have the opportunity to leave early should you need to do so.

Academic misconduct: Students should take the necessary steps to avoid the appearance of academic misconduct during exams and within submitted written assignments. Faculty Rule # 3335-5-54 requires "Each Instructor...[to]...report to the committee on academic misconduct all instances of what he or she believes may be academic misconduct"

**Please refer to the Sociology 294 section on my webpage and the OSU Code of Student Conduct for more information on what constitutes academic misconduct.*

Sensitive Topics: You should be forewarned that, depending on your background, some of the topics covered in this class might make you feel uneasy or uncomfortable. For instance, you may read about gang members perpetrating acts of murder, drug use, racism, and sexual violence. Unfortunately, these realities sometimes extend from gang activity. It is therefore necessary for us to examine these types of topics in some detail if we are to ultimately gain a better understanding of the gang problems that we as a society face.

Special Needs Students: *This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request to students with disabilities. Please contact the Undergraduate Academic Counselor, Department of Sociology, 304 Bricker Hall, 292-2056. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor, and seeking available assistance, in a timely manner.*



Student Colleagues: Your classmates have the potential to provide you with help and support, and knowing them makes attending class pleasant and more enjoyable. In the spaces below, please write down the first and last names of three other students in the class (include phone numbers at your own discretion).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sociology 294: Class/Reading Schedule, Winter 2005

(Classes are structured based on the assumption that you have done the reading BEFORE each session)

[RR] = Reserve Reading
[UG] = Understanding Street Gangs
[HA] = Hell's Angels

[AR] = Always Running
[DD] = Do or Die

Week 1

JANUARY 3 - MONDAY: First Day of Class; Orientation to the course; [RR #1]
Introduction: A Brief History of Youth Gangs

JANUARY 5 - WEDNESDAY: Introduction to the Sociology of Gangs; [RR #1] Introduction: A Brief History of Youth Gangs (continued)

Week 2

JANUARY 10 - MONDAY: What is a gang? Street Gangs vs. Other Gangs
[UG] Introduction to Part I (pp. 1-3); [UG] Chapter 1: Theoretical Considerations (pp. 5-18);
[UG] Chapter 2: Gangs Defined and Perspectives of Gang Activity (pp. 19-29)

JANUARY 12 - WEDNESDAY: Biker Gangs; [HA] Chapters 1-11 (pp. 3-129)

Week 3

JANUARY 17 - MONDAY: Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No Class!

JANUARY 19 - WEDNESDAY: Biker Gangs (Continued); [HA] Chapters 12-22 & Postscript (pp. 130-273); [RR #2] Women in Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs

(JANUARY 21st is the last day to drop a course without getting a 'W' on your record)

Week 4

JANUARY 24 - MONDAY: Prison Gangs; [RR #3] The Brand: How the Aryan Brotherhood Became The Most Murderous Prison Gang in America; Optional Review for Exam #1

JANUARY 26 - WEDNESDAY: EXAM #1 (over **UG** ch. 1-2, **HA** ch. 1-22, **RR #'s** 1-3)

Week 5

JANUARY 31 - MONDAY: The Social Contexts of Street Gangs; [RR #4] Race in the Hood; **[RR #5]** Neighborhood Networks and Crime; *****Ohio Gang Survey Due Today*****

FEBRUARY 2 - WEDNESDAY: Structure & Activities of Gangs; [UG] Chapter 3: Gang Structure and Organization (pp. 31-58); **[UG]** Chapter 4: Gang Communication (pp. 59-83)

Week 6

FEBRUARY 7 - MONDAY: Gangs: Racial & Ethnic Differences; [AR] Preface & Chapters 1-3 (pp. 3-79)

FEBRUARY 9 - WEDNESDAY: Chicano Gangs; [AR] Chapters 4-6 (pp. 80-159); *****Statement of Case Study Topic Due Today*****



Week 7

FEBRUARY 14 - MONDAY: Chicano Gangs (continued); [IC] Chapters 7-10 & Epilogue (pp. 160-251); Optional Review for Exam #2

FEBRUARY 16 - WEDNESDAY: EXAM #2 (over **UG** ch. 3-4, **AR** ch. 1-10, **RR #'s** 4-5)

(FEBRUARY 18TH is the last day to withdraw from a course - with a 'W' on your record)

Week 8

FEBRUARY 21 - MONDAY: African American Gangs; [DD] Preface & Chapters 1-6 (pp. 3-139)

FEBRUARY 23 - WEDNESDAY: African American Gangs (Continued); [DD] Chapters 7-11 & Afterword (pp. 143-277)

Week 9

FEBRUARY 28 - MONDAY: Female Gang Members; [RR #6] Gender Strategies in Youth Gangs

MARCH 2 - WEDNESDAY: What can we do about Gangs? Law Enforcement; [UG] Introduction to Part II (pp. 87-88); [UG] Chapter 5: Measurement of Gang Violence (pp. 89-92); [UG] Chapter 6: The Gang Unit (pp. 93-106); [UG] Chapter 7: Police Patrol Procedure (pp. 107-113); [UG] Chapter 8: Techniques of Gang Investigations (pp. 115-136)

Week 10

MARCH 7 - MONDAY: Addressing the Gang Problem: Going Beyond Law Enforcement; [RR #7] Denial, Overreaction, and Misidentification: A Postscript on Public Policy; Optional Review for Exam #3; *Case Study Project Due Today*****

MARCH 9 - WEDNESDAY: Last Day of Class; Poster Session; *Poster Due Today*****

Finals Week

MARCH 16 - WEDNESDAY: EXAM #3 (over UG ch. 5-8, DD ch. 1-11, RR #'s 6-7)

EXAM #3 is at 9:30-11:18 a.m. - 3/16/05

Spring Break!

