

Race, Poverty and Community Justice

Fall 2010—Thursdays, 8:30-11:30am
MCI Norfolk/BU/Harvard
Syllabus Draft
Kaia Stern

This course meets inside prison and surveys some of the key topics in urban sociology, focusing on major problems in American cities. With particular attention to factors associated with crime and punishment, such as race, education, and employment, the course draws from different academic, media and narrative sources. Our focus on urban communities of concentrated disadvantage is intended to challenge students to think about policy solutions to complex social problems. The last three weeks of the semester will be reserved for students to present model programs designed to address challenges like underperforming schools, gang violence, joblessness, drug addiction, poverty and mass incarceration. Questions for consideration: How do various political, religious and economic ideologies shape our understandings of race? What kinds of practices lead us out of poverty? Where is community justice?

Goals

While this course aims to survey innovative research and practices, our unique setting – at MCI Norfolk with BU and Harvard students – affords a special opportunity to explore the topics of race, poverty and community justice. Though social science research will guide our work, I am also hopeful that the great variety of social experiences among the students can help contribute to new discussions, ideas, and discoveries. To this end, teams of students will work on joint projects with the aim of making new proposals for improving community justice, guided by both our seminar discussion and course reading.

Reading Materials

Reading materials will be available either electronically or in hardcopy in a course reader. For Harvard students, the electronic materials will be available online on the course web site. Students should print these materials and bring them to class. For BU students, course readers will be supplied. In addition to required texts, we will occasionally provide handouts for additional reading or class discussion.

Procedure

Each course session will meet on Thursday mornings. We will begin with silence followed by a brief check-in. Our time each week will be divided into several parts. There will usually be a presentation/lecture to help set the seminar's agenda that will be followed by open discussion. We will often have in-class writing, student presentations, guest lecturers, and group work to help prepare the program proposals. Questions may be asked at any time. There will be an opportunity for a one-on-one mid-term evaluation for students to present enduring questions, challenges and ideas to influence the progress of the course. The guidelines for engagement are simple: we voice all relevant questions, respect all opinions, allow others to speak, and agree to disagree.

Grading/ Requirements:

The final grade will be based on class participation; in-class writing; 4 response papers (4); a thesis draft; group work; presentations; and a final project. Class participation includes reading preparation/comprehension/integration and in-class writing. Students are expected to complete all reading assignments with serious reflective attention before class, take careful notes, participate in class discussion and complete all assignments on time. Students will prepare four 1 page reading responses. These are to be submitted on time, and the page limit followed. Part of the exercise involves explaining your ideas as sharply and succinctly as possible. Remember, these are *reading responses*; you are expected to rely closely on the assigned readings in developing your answers. Students will be evaluated on their use of the readings and their ability to move our conversations forward in class discussion. Class participation is essential for the success of the course; *absences reflect in final grade*.

The individual thesis draft (five pages in length) will be based on a topic of your own choosing that connects to the final group project. (We will discuss specific requirements as the course progresses.) At least three of the course required texts and one additional written source must be utilized to support your argument, which takes into account the goals of the course. You will present the subject of your thesis to the class (week...).

Each group presentation will be approximately thirty minutes and integrate at least one creative source, such as music, images or stories. Students will prepare group presentations on model programs in the following policy areas: (1) education, (2) poverty, (3) violence and crime, (4) civic reintegration for people with criminal records, and (5) employment. The proposals should detail the program (its scale, its intended recipients), describe its cost, how it will be funded, and its likely benefits. The program might operate at any of the three levels of government. Students will break into teams of three to five to prepare their program proposals. The written proposals will be no more than 20 double-spaced pages, plus a bibliography, due on the last day of class.

If any aspect of the above information remains unclear to you, I request that you communicate with me before committing to the course. I will interpret your continued enrollment as your understanding of and agreement with these goals and requirements.

Please, to the best of your ability, be on time.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1, Introduction, September 9

In-Class Writing Exercise

How do you understand race, poverty and community justice?

Week 2, Setting the Stage, September 16

Readings

Lawrence M. Friedman. 1993. *Crime and Punishment in American History*. New York: BasicBooks. Chapter. 2, “The Law of God and Man”.

Nicholas Lehmann. 2006. *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*. New York: Farrar. Chapter 5, “The Mississippi Plan”.

Douglas A. Blackmon. 2008. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to WWII*. Doubleday. Chapter 11, “Slavery Affirmed”.

Michelle Alexander. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press. Chapter 1, “The Rebirth of Caste”.

Response Paper: According to the readings, how do race and punishment intersect?

Week 3, “The Truly Disadvantaged”, September 23

Readings

William Julius Wilson. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago. Chapters 1 and 2.

Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk. 1995. *America Unequal*. New York: Harvard University Press, Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 7 and 8.

David K. Shipler. 2004. *The Working Poor Invisible in America*. New York: Knopf. Chapter 5.

Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 6.

Response Paper: Describe the main causes of the economic disadvantage of low-skill urban workers.

Week 4, Poverty, September 30

Readings

Oscar Lewis. 1963. “The Culture of Poverty.” Reprinted in *Society* 35:7-9 (1998).

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: Norton. Pages 106-141.

Fordham, Signithia; Ogbu, John U. 1986. "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the 'Burden of Acting White.'" *Urban Review* 18: 176-206.

Additional Reading: Forthcoming

Response Paper: What is the culture of poverty thesis?

Week 5, Families, October 7

Readings

Daniel Patrick Moynihan. 1965. *The Negro family: The Case for National Action*. Washington DC: Office of Policy Planning and Research.

Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. "Conclusion," pp. 187-220.

Adrian Nicole Le Blanc. 2003. *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble and Coming of Age in the Bronx*. New York: Scribner. Chapter 9, pp. 83-91 (hardcover).

Eula Biss. 2009. *Notes From No Man's Land*. "Relations", pp. 13-35 and "Land Mines", pps. 45-55.

Suniya S. Luthar and Adam Goldstein. 2004. "Children's Exposure to Community Violence: Implications for Understanding Risk and Resilience." *Journal of Clinical and Adolescent Psychology*. 33: 499-505.

Response Paper: How have changes in family structure contributed to urban social problems?

Week 6, Education and Opportunity Gaps, October 14

Readings

Susan Eaton. 2007. *The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books. Part One, pp. 1-30 and Part Six, pp. 247-279.

Jonathan Kozol. 1991. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Harper Perennial. Chapter 3.

David Simon and Edward Burns. 1997. *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*. Broadway Booth. Pages 266-285.

"Building Equalizing Schools Within Inclusive Communities: Strategies in the Classroom and Beyond that Redirect the School to Prison Pipeline", The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, California Endowment (<http://www.calendow.org/Article.aspx?id=4494>).

Response Paper: What education policies increase opportunity in inner-city schools?

Week 7, Mass Incarceration, October 21 (Guest speaker, TBA – Prof Glenn Loury?)

Readings

Glenn Loury. 2008. *Race, Incarceration and American Values*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Loic Wacquant. 2000. “The New ‘Peculiar Institution’: On the Prison as Surrogate Ghetto.” *Theoretical Criminology* 4:377-89.

Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. “Conclusion.”

Western, Bruce. 2008. “Reentry: Reversing Massing Incarceration.” *Boston Review* July/August 7-12.

Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Mary Lyndon Shanley. 2008. “No Further Harm: What We Owe to Incarcerated Fathers.” *Boston Review* 13:17.

Response Paper: What policies can reverse mass incarceration?

Week 8, Faith, Policy and Other Social Capital, October 28

Readings

mark lewis taylor. 2001. *The Executed God*. MN: Augsburg Fortress. “The Way of the Cross in Adversarial Politics”, Pages 70-98 (paperback).

John D’Iulio. *The Godly Republic: A Centrist Blueprint for America’s Faith-Based Future*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapter 6.

Jenny Berrien and Christopher Winship. 1999. “Should we Have Faith in Churches? Ten-Point coalition’s Effect on Boston’s Youth Violence.” Unpublished manuscript. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Wald, Johanna and Lisa Thureau. 2010. “First, Do No Harm: How Educators and Police Can Work Together More Effectively to Preserve School Safety and Protect Vulnerable Students.” A CHHIRJ Policy Brief, Harvard Law School.

Response Paper: What have been the main forces shaping urban social policy?

Week 9, Community Courts and Restorative Justice, November 4 (AW?)

Readings

David Karp. 2002. “The Offender/Community Encounter: Stakeholder Involvement in the Vermont Reparative Boards.” In *What is Community Justice? Case Studies of Restorative Justice and Community Supervision*, edited by David Karp and Todd Clear. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Chapter 3 – “Does Restorative Justice Work?” In John Braithwaite. 2002. *Restorative Justice and Responsive Regulation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dennis Sullivan and Larry Tift. 2001. Chapter 2 – “The Core Components of Restorative Justice.” *Restorative Justice: Healing the Foundations of our Everyday Lives*. Monsey, NY: Willow Tree Press.

Response Paper: How do we make our legal systems more efficient and just?

Week 10, Student Groups, M. Klinger, November 11th (KS in DC)

Week 11, Student Presentations, Nov. 18th

Week 12, Community Policing/Corrections and Problem Solving,? (Guest TBA – Deputy Superintendent Nora Baston, Boston Police Department?)

Readings

Malcolm Gladwell. 2000. *The Tipping Point How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. New York: Little, Brown. Chapter 4.

James Q. Wilson and George Kelling. 1982. “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety.” *Atlantic Monthly* (March): 29 – 38.

www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/_atlantic_monthly-broken_windows.pdf

Mark H. Moore. 1992. “Problem-Solving and Community Policing.” In *Modern Policing*, edited by Michael Tonry and Norval Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Joan Petersilia. 2005. “From Cell to Society: Who is Returning Home?” In *Prisoner Reentry and Crime in America*, edited by Jeremy Travis and Christy Visser. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Response Paper : How can law enforcement address crime in a way that is legitimate to the community?

Week 13, December 2, Final Papers Due

December 9th?

Grading Rubric for Written Work:

Response Papers, Individual Thesis Draft and Final Project

All papers should be double-spaced, 12 point font. You can use endnotes or footnotes according to whatever style suits you: Chicago Manual of Style, MLA, etc. Plagiarism is serious and can result in failure of the course. Papers will be graded according to the following:

A—The concept responds incisively to a particular question with adequate analysis and is relevant. Work is guided by a controlling thesis that clearly delineates the argument and research method; it will have a sense of ‘inevitability’ and will be supported by substantial well-chosen evidence, with an appropriate sequence of paragraphs and clear transitions between sentences and paragraphs. Paper is sophisticated, original, and well argued, accompanied by counter-argument & refutation. It contains appropriate syntax/diction, and is free from grammatical/spelling errors.

B—The concept responds well to the question and its analysis goes beyond the obvious. The central thesis is clear and determines the paper's structure. Work is supported by adequate and appropriate evidence with distinct units of thought in paragraphs coherently arranged, using some transitions between sentences and paragraphs. Such a paper usually contains some mechanical difficulties, occasional problematic word choices or awkward syntax errors, grammar errors, and wordiness.

C—The concept responds adequately to the question but may have some factual, interpretive, or conceptual errors. It has an overly general thesis and gives no indication of organization to follow; it provides some evidence but is not always relevant, sufficient, or integrated into the paper. Paper has uneven paragraphs and some brief, weakly unified, or undeveloped areas. It has awkward or missing transitions, occasional major grammar errors, (e.g., agreement, verb tense) frequent minor grammar errors (e.g., prepositions, articles), occasional imprecise diction, awkward syntax, and is wordy.

D—The paper confuses some significant concepts, including those in the problem itself. It has a vague or irrelevant thesis and the evidence is usually narrative, anecdotal, awkward, or incorrectly incorporated. The work’s organization is repetitive and wanders with frequent major and minor grammar problems.

F—The paper misunderstands the problem and/or course concepts. It has no discernible thesis and little evidence that is simply listed or not cited at all. The organization is arbitrary with weak paragraph structure and illogical or no transitions. Work contains numerous grammatical errors and stylistic problems and is overwhelmingly non-standard with errors in practically the entire paper.