Sociology 370: SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCY (4 Credits)

Spring 2014 Web Course

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In his classic book entitled *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Free Press 1963), Howard Becker wrote that deviance “is not a quality that lies in behavior itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it.” This course will build on this statement and will address how society handles those who act in unconventional ways – outside the socially constructed norms, values, and beliefs of society. We will begin by discussing definitions of deviance and how issues of power and both formal and informal social control affect these definitions. Then we will explore the ways sociologists explain deviance. Next we will examine how sociologists study deviance. Finally, the remainder of the quarter will be devoted to exploring more fully the ways deviance is constructed in everyday life, paying attention to how certain social groups are subject to labels more so than others and how images of these groups are presented in society. This course will encourage rigorous thought about the various forms of deviance and the various theoretical approaches to understanding these forms.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To critically analyze the way social structures and social interaction create, maintain, and change the experience and expression of deviance.
- To acquaint the student with sociological and social-psychological theories and research on deviant behavior.
- To apply the conceptual tools of these theories to selected case studies.
- To acquaint the student with relevant historical perspectives of deviance as it relates to social change.
- To acquaint the student with issues of deviance within various institutions such as family, religion, media, sport, health care, work, and politics.
- To enable the student to critically analyze the construction of deviance and the future of deviant labeling.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH THIS ONLINE COURSE!

1) READ the entire syllabus - ESPECIALLY the near the end where it talks about grading rubric - I follow it!!!

2) NOTE the dates when things are due and abide by them - Main Discussion Questions on Wednesdays, other weekly items on Sundays!

3) USE the 'MODULES' in the 'Course Content' section of D2L to link to the assignments and extra materials.

4) CITE where you got your information from. I'm easy on this - simple citations like (Lilly pg. 50), or ("Crips and Bloods...") OR a web link which you used for your answer. **IF your citation is something not part of the course I expect a more comprehensive format which will allow me to look up your reference.**

5) SHOW me in your discussions (A/V and Main) that you can apply the information you learned to the questions asked.
6) **DO the extra credit questions!!!** Quite simply - They're easy, should be fun, and if you're getting anything other than an 'A' in the class doing all the extra credit will raise your grade!

7) **BE AWARE** that you will be responsible for finding at least 2 of the video's on your own (Online, Amazon, Library, etc...). These videos are "Crips and Bloods: Made in America" and "Fight Club."

**COURSE FORMAT**

I’d like you all to think of this course as a game. The objective of the game is to learn to think about and discuss topics related to deviance in an educated and articulate way while **not just regurgitating that which you’ve been assigned to read/watch/listen to.** Everyone in the class can finish the game (Passing grade) by basic adherence to the assignments, but ‘winning’ the game (great grade) will probably require spending some time in real thought on the matters presented and a willingness to engage in lively discussion with your peers (and sometimes me) about opinions. This being said – I look forward to exploring these topics with you in a challenging yet entertaining fashion.

**THE BASIC FORMAT OF THE COURSE (see ‘Grading Rubric’ for specific instructions):**

**NOTE:** Assignments are due ON-TIME, submit early so if you have internet problems you can try later or somewhere else!

- **30% of Final Grade - Weekly ‘forum’ discussion assignments** (except Midterm and Final week):
  - Each week on Sunday morning several questions relating to the required material for that week will become available for comment in the discussion forum.
  - You will be expected to pick a question from those presented for that week in the 'discussion questions' forum and answer it (see rubric at end for details) by no later than Midnight on Wednesday of the assigned week.
  - You will then respond to someone else in the other forum by no later than Sunday, Midnight on the week of the assignment.

- **20% of Final Grade – Weekly Quizzes** (including Midterm and Finals week)
  - Each week on Sunday morning I will post a quiz consisting of about 20 questions (multiple choice/true false). You will have until the following Sunday at Midnight to complete the quiz.
  - Once you begin the quiz you’ll have 40 min. to complete it. If you are unhappy with your grade you may re-take the quiz ONE TIME and the AVERAGE of the two scores will be taken for the final grade.
  - **NOTE:** I DO NOT release correct quiz answers for several reasons: 1) It makes it much harder to just call a classmate and ask for the answers, 2) It encourages you to go back and re-think the questions you may have gotten wrong.

- **20% of Final Grade – Midterm!**
  - On the first Sunday of WEEK 6 at Midnight, the Midterm exam will be released online. It will consist of 2 parts:
    - A selection of 25 quiz questions from previous quizzes which you will have ONE HOUR to complete and only ONE chance to take it.
    - Several short (1-2 paragraph) answer questions which you will need to take at one sitting in the ‘quiz’ section – it will be timed at 1 hour and must be taken no later than Midnight on the due date! You will have only ONE hour to complete this portion and only ONE chance to take it.

- **20% of Final Grade – Final!**
  - During the week before finals the Final exam will be released online. It will consist of 2 parts:
    - A selection of 25 quiz questions from previous quizzes which you will have ONE HOUR to complete and only ONE chance to take it.
    - One longer 1-2 page essay question which will completed in the “Quizzes” section as a long-essay quiz to be completed by Midnight, on the Due date announced in the Course Content section. This essay will not be timed.

- **10% of Final Grade – Audio/Video Forum Responses**
  - Each week there will be Audio and or Video materials which you are expected to listen to/view.
  - In the Discussions section on D2L will be forums for discussing each piece – this will be a more ‘free form’ discussion than the ‘official’ discussion items but will be graded. (See ‘Rubric’)

- **DUE SUNDAYS BY**
MIDNIGHT ALL WEEKS INCLUDING MIDTERMS AND LAST WEEK OF CLASSES!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY OF Course Requirements AND GRADES</th>
<th>Associated Points</th>
<th>Associated Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Midterm exam:</strong> on all material covered in the first ½ of the course. Includes material from readings, lectures, films, audio, and discussions</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>• <strong>Final exam:</strong> The final essay exam is cumulative, but focuses on material covered after the first essay exam. This exam includes material from readings, lectures, films, audio, and discussions</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Quizzes:</strong> Online quizzes based on assigned readings, videos, audio, and presentations.</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>• <strong>Weekly Discussion Forums:</strong> Discussion of required readings.</td>
<td>300</td>
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<td>• <strong>Audio/Video Forum:</strong> Responses to A/V materials presented in course.</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL POSSIBLE</strong></td>
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*** Extra Credit #1: *** Every week I will post 1-3 questions in the 'Extra-Credit Questions' forum (easily accessed through the links provided every week in the Course Modules but also located at the bottom of the forum list). You can choose to answer any of the questions you would like to and will receive 5 points for each one you answer (up to a maximum per student of 50 points) if you meet the following requirement: **Your answer must be thoughtful and address the question asked.** There is no strict minimum or maximum length (a paragraph is probably reasonable, however), grammar and citation are irrelevant, and in all cases I'm just wanting you to show me you thought about the material a bit. There are no 'in-between' grades - you either get the credit or don't, but this should be the easiest extra-credit you've ever earned because, in many cases, I'm not looking for things you've learned, but instead things you think!!!

*** Extra Credit #2: *** The week 6 extra credit assignment can be done IN ADDITION to the 50pts. of extra credit which can be earned in Extra Credit #1.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Point Ranges for Associated Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>92% and above</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>921+</td>
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<td>90-91%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<td>88-89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>82-87%</td>
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<td>80-81%</td>
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<td>78-79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>780-799</td>
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<td>72-77%</td>
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<td>70-71%</td>
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**Required Texts** (available at PSU bookstore; used [less expensive] copies should also be available at Amazon.com and similar websites) – NOTE: I’ve tried to go with older additions of one book to save money so depending on the addition you buy, the material may be located at a different place than in the syllabus. If you have problems locating the required readings in different additions, please contact me for assistance.


**REQUIRED VS. RECOMMENDED READINGS/LISTENINGS/VIEWINGS** – On D2L I will have sections labeled for both the “Required” (can be tested on) and “Recommended” (will add to your comfort with the material and provide good references for arguments) materials.

For the “Required” materials, these materials may include (but are not limited to): videos, mp3s, news articles, wikis, journal articles, power points, and/or web pages of interest and will generally total an additional 45 min – 3 hours worth of material which you will be responsible for each week. Please be sure to take notes on the materials (unless you have an eidetic memory) as they will provide useful references for all assignments.

*** NOTE: Much of this course deals with ‘taboo’ subject matter and, thus, the course material may often broach the limits of ‘decency’ quite substantially. The expectation is that students will be comfortable with viewing/listening to presented additional material in places where an ‘R’ rating would be acceptable (i.e. language, nudity, violence, and/or mature subject matter may apply). However, the instructor commits to NOT require materials which are explicitly ‘pornographic’ (‘X-rated’) in content and will NOT accept turned in assignments which direct the reader unwittingly to such material (*e.g. if material in a link is ‘beyond’ a standard ‘R’ rating the submitter needs to explicitly state this and the reason for posting prior to the link or the assignment will automatically receive a ‘0’*).

**Course Policies and Reminders**

- **Late Assignments/Missed Exams.** Assignments, quizzes, and readings should be completed by the due date listed. Late online postings and quizzes will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor (not given the day of or after the deadline). Late exams or the paper may be accepted with a legitimate excuse, but will be penalized 10% per day late. Please document any family or medical emergency and notify the instructor as soon as possible (text or e-mail preferred).

- **Course announcements.** Please check D2L frequently (a minimum of 2-3 times per week) for any announcement related to the course.

- **Contact for technical support: Helpdesk.** Computing and D2L questions should be directed to the Helpdesk. They may be contacted in the following ways.

  - Phone: 503-725-4357 (5-HELP)
  - Email requesting assistance to: help@pdx.edu
  - Visit the helpdesk in the basement of Smith Memorial Student Union, room 18. Users experiencing wireless connectivity issues are especially encouraged to visit in person for hands-on troubleshooting.
  - Send an inter-campus mail to mail code COMP.

- **Class questions and contacting the instructor.** The best way to contact me is via text or email. Please allow approximately 24 hours for a response during the week and up to 48 hours over the weekend. *Questions that do not involve confidential/private information should be posted for all to see on the “Class Questions” discussion. Any questions regarding course requirements, deadlines, assignments, the syllabus, or other class material should be posted here. If a question has not been answered yet, anyone who knows the answer to the question is encouraged to answer.*

- **Quizzes.** Each online quiz will include multiple choice questions and true/false questions. The quizzes will
cover material from the assigned readings and possibly A/V material. Once you begin a quiz, you will be allowed only a short window of time (approximately 40 minutes) to complete the exam. Therefore, you must complete all required readings prior to beginning the quiz since the short window of time will not allow for you to read and digest new material. However, each quiz may be retaken one time and the average score between the two will be taken as the final grade for the quiz.

Offensive Material. You may find some of the descriptions of deviance presented in this class to be shocking or disgusting. By definition, the subject matter of this course includes things that many people find objectionable on moral or aesthetic grounds. This course will require you to have a certain amount of tolerance for the unusual and disreputable side of life. This does not mean that you have to approve of them, but you will have to keep your personal feelings in check in order to study these topics. I will be available to discuss any concerns you have with course materials.

Documented Disability. If you are a student with a documented disability and registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), please contact me immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations. DRC contact information includes: Web: www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc.html; phone: 503-725-4150; Fax: 503-725-4103; TTY or Relay: 503-725-6504; email: drc@pdx.edu.

Online discussions and netiquette. This class will take place entirely in the online environment. I expect students to be thoughtful contributors to the online discussions. I expect these discussions to primarily be student-focused, but I will read, grade, and occasionally comment on these discussions. Some basic rules for ‘Internet etiquette’ can help to facilitate constructive online discussions. (Adapted from http://www.brighthub.com/education/online-learning/articles/26946.aspx):

- Be friendly, positive, and self-reflective. It is important to be careful how you express yourself to people who don’t know you and can’t see you. It is easy to offend others or to take comments the wrong way when they are not accompanied by friendly nonverbal tones and gestures. So think carefully before you write. Reread what you have written before you post it. Say critiques in a positive, constructive tone. And avoid posting when you are angry.
- Use proper language and titles. Avoid using slang or profane words online, even if they are words you consider “not so bad.” They can be offensive to others. Avoid using all caps, which suggests you are yelling. Avoid using nicknames you’re not sure about.
- Use effective communication. Speak and write clearly at all times. Reread what you have written before you post it. Be mindful about the words you chose and be cautious when making jokes. Avoid sarcasm because it tends not to read well in an online forum.
- Professionalism. Leave characters like smiley faces and instant message abbreviations out. Be polite and write with complete thoughts. If you don’t understand someone else’s comment or expressions, ask for clarification politely by saying “I did not understand,” rather than “Your comment did not make sense.”

Academic Misconduct. According to the PSU Student Code of Conduct, a student is subject to disciplinary action for academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is the act of knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer’s ideas; (d) The buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (e) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (f) Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information.

GRADING RUBRIC

Weekly discussion questions:

1) Open ended discussion questions will be posted every Sunday at approximately 12:01 AM.
• Answers to one of the discussion questions are due by Wednesday midnight of the same week and your response to someone else’s response to a DIFFERENT question is due by the following Sunday midnight.

2) **Grading** (33.3 points per week – *no discussion questions during week of midterm or finals*):

- Initial Answer to question = 20 points
  - Answering question in a thoughtful and informed fashion which makes it clear to the instructor that you have read and thought about the material and doing so in 300-400 words (2-3 paragraphs) = 12 pts.
  - Citation of at least 2 **SEPARATE** sources = 5 pts. (Can be as simple as (Thio 211) or (Adler 15))
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 3 pts.
- Responses to others = 13.3 points total.
  - Adding thoughtfully to the discussion (e.g. not simple ‘I agree/I disagree’ but providing additional material to support or refute the original answer) in 100-250 words (2 paragraphs or less) = 9.33 points
  - Being respectful = 2 points
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 2 points

**Audio/Video Forum Responses:**

1) **Grading** (10 points per week – *all weeks except finals*)

- Making an original statement about the material and/or asking a thoughtful question about the material based upon the course readings and weekly discussions = 8 points.
- Clearly tying your response to other assigned materials from any week (loose citations [e.g. “This reminds me of when Thio talks about…]) = 2 points.

**Quizzes:**

- Quizzes will be posted every Sunday at approximately 12:01 AM and are worth 20 points each.
- Quizzes are due by the following Sunday at midnight.
- Quizzes will be a collection of multiple choice and true/false based solely on the weeks assigned reading, listening, and viewing assignments.
- Quizzes will be 20 questions each with a time limit of 40 minutes to complete the quiz.

**Tests:**

1) Tests will be posted 1 week prior to their due date and are worth 200 points.

2) **TESTS CAN ONLY BE TAKEN ONE TIME!!!**

3) Tests will generally **have 2 parts 1 weighed at 50 points 1 weighed at 150 points**.

- Part I – a collection of 25 multiple choice/short answer questions from previous quizzes – 2 pts each. – done ONLINE – 50 Points
- Part II – **For the Midterm**: 3 short (1-2 paragraph) essay questions – 50 pts. each – done ONLINE – 1 HOUR to complete.
- Answering questions in a thoughtful and informed fashion which makes it clear to the instructor that you have read and thought about the material. (1-2 paragraphs) = 40 pts.
- Grammar/punctuation/style = 10 pts.
- Part II - **For the Final**: 1 longer (1-2 page essay) question – 150 pts. Still done in the ‘Quizzes’ Section but with
no time limit.
  - Answering question in a thoughtful and informed fashion which makes it clear to the instructor that you have read and thought about the material. (1-2 pages) = 125 pts.
  - Proper citation of at least 3 sources = 15 pts.
  - Grammar/punctuation/style = 10 pts.

EXAMPLES

Weekly Discussion Question asked: Discuss the notion of 'stigma' in relation to sexual minorities, people with disabilities, and the obese. Is it ever justified with any of these groups? Does 'power' play a role in the development of stigmas? What might be some strategies for these groups to reduce or eliminate the stigmas?

EXCELLENT DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (18.5-20 Points)

First, I think Thio (2006) oversimplifies when he refers to a stigma as “something a person has or does that others see as bad in some way” (249). That’s not the whole story, not by a long shot. There’s an element of disgrace involved, of the Puritan ethical element of “shunning,” of exclusion, and of a social turning away. When I think stigma, I think about Hester Prynne’s scarlet letter, not about one of my kids acting up.

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action. The concept of stereotyping is also associated with stigmatization, and I think that stereotyping on an individual basis is a harmful (albeit natural) act. It eliminates a full understanding of the individual and that individual’s circumstances.

I’m absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance of stigmas, though I’m not entirely sure about the role of power in the development of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different. Goode emphasized the role of the media in fanning moral panic; I think that stigma (which relays a similarly disproportionate concern on the part of society) can likewise be distributed through powerful social systems and figures.

Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society. It is obviously extremely uncomfortable for gays and lesbians to “come out” (Thio (2006) explains the social consequences of “shock, rejection, or worse (255)), but it’s also extremely important for uninformed people to know that their stigmatization is based on false information.

GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (16.5-18.4 Points)

First, I think Thio (2006) oversimplifies when he refers to a stigma as “something a person has or does that others see as bad in some way” (249).

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action. The concept of stereotyping is also associated with stigmatization, and I think that stereotyping on an individual basis is a harmful (albeit natural) act. It eliminates a full understanding of the individual and that individual’s circumstances.

I’m absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different. Goode emphasized the role of the media in fanning moral panic; I think that stigma can likewise be distributed through powerful social systems and figures.
Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society.

**FAIR DISCUSSION QUESTION RESPONSE (14-16.4 Points)**

I don’t think that stigmatization is justified, especially in the case of those who don’t harm others through the stigmatized action.

I’m also absolutely certain that power plays a role in the maintenance and distribution of stigmas. I’m reminded of our article from earlier in the term on moral panics, in which Goode (2008) found that the difference between the actual threat to society and the fervor with which this threat was reported was occasionally significantly different.

Because I think that stigma is an assigned role, I think that the best thing that stigmatized people can do is be prominent in society. Because I think that stereotyping plays a huge role in stigmatization, I think that interpersonal and intergroup relationships are essential in lowering the rate of stigmatization in society.

**EXCELLENT RESPONSE TO PEER (12.3-13.3 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges.

The way that we tend to begin to study social behavior (through the isolation of single trends in their influence on one another) also influences how we think about it. We start to identify one influence, and then add another, and then add another; all too often, we get caught up in R-values and other statistical indications of cumulative influence and forget that life doesn't happen in a statistically controlled environment.

Anyway, I liked very much the way you're thinking about this. There's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than adding up this strain and that strain; we have to remember the entirety of the organic environment in which social relationships take place.

**GOOD RESPONSE TO PEER (11-12.2 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges.

Instead, we start to identify one influence, and then keep adding them until we get statistical results, which can be dehumanizing, but seems to be the way things are done.

Anyway, I liked very much the way you're thinking about this. Yet I still think there's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than just adding up this strain and that strain.

**FAIR RESPONSE TO PEER (9.5-11 pts):**

I think your answer is very insightful. Agnew emphasized the fact that strains don't usually come all by themselves, and that it's not usually in reaction to just one strain that deviance--especially something as deviant as criminal behavior--emerges. Yet I still think there's a lot more in determining the likelihood of criminal behavior than just adding up this strain and that strain.