

Soc. 2070 Social Deviance

Fall 2018

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays : 5:30 – 6:50 PM:
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Teaching Assistants: TBA

Location: THRN 1200
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Course Description:

In Sociology 2070 Social Deviance we explore how people are condemned labeled as "bad" and somehow immoral (deviant) for their actions, beliefs, and characteristics that are considered reprehensible by the broader society. We study both the social phenomena that is considered deviant (such as illegal drug use, crime, and unusual sexual practices) and the processes and effects of labeling people for engaging in this deviance.

It may be helpful to reiterate what the study of deviance is NOT: It is not saying that some people are bad, it is not the justification of why we condemn some people as bad, and it is not limited to looking at the titillating details of those who lead unconventional lives. Rather, the study of deviance examines how notions of both what is acceptable and unacceptable are socially constructed and how people are affected by that construction. People who are labeled as deviant are those people who *rightly or wrongly* are seen as having "spoiled identities" or being "bad people" because of something that is so unacceptable in its context that it affects how the public would see those people. We are looking at what people are condemned for **and** at the effects of this condemnation without throwing away our own personal judgments. The social processes that make something socially acceptable are the same that will make something else unacceptable. Ultimately, the same processes of social control that create conformity and normality also create deviance.

Course Learning Objectives

- To feel a greater sympathy for other people's points of view.
- To differentiate what we think is right and wrong from what is socially acceptable.
- To develop an appreciation of the ongoing processes of social control.
- To analyze how society creates deviance and how deviance is socially constructed.
- To analyze the consequences of labeling people and the attribution of stigma.
- To see ourselves as part of the process through which people are identified as deviant.

Additional Learning Outcomes

Our department has various overall and longterm learning objectives, some which apply directly to our course. I paraphrase some and put my own simplifications within brackets:

- Learn to evaluate and apply theories to data and circumstances. (What is a theory's strengths and weaknesses and can you use it?)
- To reflect on culture, social relations and structures to develop a deeper understanding of social problems. (To see how different stuff ties together, integrating knowledge from academic sources with your own experiences.)

- Evaluate one's own social identity within an increasingly broader context. (How we ourselves fit into a bigger picture.)
 - Develop an appreciation for the uncertainty and ambiguity within interpretation and analysis. (In coming up with our own answers we also have to acknowledge what might change, as the pursuit of truth is unlikely to have easy and permanent answers, and what we cannot know for sure.)
 - Communicate effectively, in both written and oral forms. (Expressing your thoughts is not only vital for applying them, but in developing them as well.)
 - Develop intellectual curiosity. (Let's find out stuff, it's fun!)
 - Use theories and data to evaluate social policy. (Now that we have given you different theories and some recent data, what do you think government should do about a specific problem?)
- These objectives will help you learn to take a stand on the issues of social control and deviance, and, as you go through life, you will no doubt be taking many stands, as you learn more with the skills you have developed at university, as circumstances change, you change, and new data comes in.

Evaluative Procedures:

Online participation	25%
Two Midterms	50%
Final Exam	25%

Readings & Resources: The textbook is *Deviant Behavior* by Erich Goode, 11th edition. New and used copies are available at the campus bookstore. There are also required readings that will either be available as courseware package or as an e-reserve. We may see a few guest speakers and riveting documentaries.

Personal Expectations:

I enjoy teaching this course, but I warn you that some of this material is a little groaty. I seek to expose the students to many different points of view and unusual topics. I may need to warn you that the goal herein is not to force any ideological position upon you, but for you to develop the skills you will need to examine controversial topics. You don't need to *believe* all the different theories and points of view (which would be impossible as they may contradict each other), but to *understand* them. The position I do openly support is that of free inquiry, with all that it means of academic freedom, free speech, logic, and objectivity. If you want to take a course that will tell you what to believe and that get you to look down on and judge others, this course is not for you. But if you like to learn new things and surprise yourself with new ideas, come right in!

As for my teaching style, I like to lecture and then find a video or guest speaker to complement the material. However, I am not that tech savvy, and I don't show amusing clips in the middle of the lecture, but I do make sure that all my lecture materials are readily available, which helps those who might be visually impaired and who need to blow up the material into large print or to have their computer read it out loud.

Online Participation

The online posts will be graded by the Teaching Assistants. The emphasis in grading is A) clarity, B) development of your ideas, C) and your willingness to either engage with others or to incorporate your own observations and experiences. On average, your postings should be for a week over one page and under three pages double-spaced 12 CPI. Given past experience, a good week's post was usually between 400 and 800 words. We expect you to edit your posts and to write in proper English and not to just use

“internet shorthand.” The grading is not broken down by component but is the TA’s overall impression. The weeks of questions will be grouped into three four-week sections so that the TAs will grade them and thus give you some feedback. I am somewhat flexible with deadlines—you don’t have to post every week but you have to post *for* every week. After each of the three deadlines, the section is locked so the TAs can grade them. No doubt TAs will be more favorable to those who do not just post all at the last moment. Your opinions cannot be seen as wrong, but should be both expressed and explained.

There is a choice of more than one choice per week so as to let you concentrate on the option you understand the best. Please remember to proofread your posts. In case discussion questions are posted, please do not just hit **REPLY**. Use the **COMPOSE** command and give your posting its own title. For any long post, I would recommend that you compose it first in your word processor and then paste it in. Hint: If you get stuck, comment on one of the posts of the members of your group

The first midterm will cover weeks 1 to 4, the second midterm weeks 5 to 8, and the final exam weeks 9 to 12. There will be no direct cumulative questions on the final, though the student is expected to keep up with the general vocabulary.

Disclaimer: This material is not for the squeamish. There are no restrictions on freedom of speech in the class, the topics are controversial, and the content of our documentaries and guest speakers may be at the adult level. One can voice any opinion as long as one respects the rights of others to do the same. By taking this class, one gives acceptance for the topics, arguments, and language voiced in class, however unanticipated. There will be no politically-correct “trigger warnings” whenever controversial material is floated because there is no guarantee that anything could not bother somebody, and such warnings are not given in the “real life” outside the classroom and have been shown to do more harm than good. I choose the courseware readings to provide some classic statements and also some contemporary challenges to prevailing opinions. Due to length considerations, the readings cannot cover all opinions on each topic, and it would be redundant to include readings that merely give the ideas promoted by today’s media. Similarly, my choice of guest speakers reflects whom is available whom I think can best stimulate the class. Selecting readings and speakers is a little like playing Sudoku.

Organizational Provision and Rider: This syllabus and course description as posted online is to be considered provisional.