

## Studies in Crime and Social Justice

Spring 2006, Boston College  
Jessica Hedges, Instructor  
Office Hours: By Appointment

### Course Objectives:

The goal of this course is to enable students to develop sociologically informed, articulate, and politically meaningful definitions of "crime" and "social justice." We will consider what crime and social justice (or injustice) might mean when treated not as distinct, but as indivisible constructs produced through specific *institutional* and *personal practices*. Toward this end we will: (1) identify both historical and present personal notions about crime, and reflect on how these notions have evolved; (2) discuss various perspectives on the process through which laws and criminal justice institutions have been/continue to be constructed; (3) situate the contemporary study of crime within a "power-reflexive" analytic framework, attentive to the simultaneous operation of race, class, and gender as constitutive features of social power; and (4) discuss contemporary intellectual and practical efforts which challenge existing conceptual and political structures as they relate to crime and justice; (5) imagine/envision institutions which might parallel the personal notion of social justice we each develop throughout the course; (6) apply our questions and conclusions to a local, current, real-world case study.

### Course Agenda: Assigned Readings:

1. **1/23 - Introduction – Imagining Crime, Imagining Justice**
  - \* **Course Objectives/Expectations**
  - \* **Introduction to case study**
  - a) Bruce Arrigo, *Social Justice/Criminal Justice* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing 1999) pp. 1-11 (Introduction); pp. 13-28 (Marxist Criminology and Social Justice)
  - b) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Boston: Beacon Press 2002), Chapters 1-3.
  - c) Jeffrey Reiman, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, (New York: Macmillan 1990), Chapter 1.
  
2. **1/30 Creating Carnival Mirrors and Crafting Criminologies**
  - a) Jeffrey Reiman, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, (New York: Macmillan, 1990), Chapter 2.

- b) Bruce Arrigo, *Social Justice/Criminal Justice* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing 1999) Chapter 7 (Semiotics and Social Justice) Chapter 9 (Critical Race Theory and Social Justice).
- c) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Beacon Press 2002) Chapter 4-7.

**3. 2/6– Collective ghosts, Criminals, and Freedom Dreams**

- a) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Beacon Press 2002) Chapters 8-10.
- b) Jeffrey Reiman, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison, 3rd Ed.* (New York: Macmillan 1990) pp. Chapter 3.
- c) Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, (Boston, Beacon Press 2002) pp. 1-12 (When History Sleeps, A Beginning), pp. 13-35 (Dreams of a New Land).

**4. 2/13 – Mens Rea and Matters of Narrative**

- a) Handout: “Criminal Responsibility Social Responsibility and Angry Young Men“...By Abbe Smith
- b) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002) Chapters 11-12.
- c) Jeffrey Reiman, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison, 3rd Ed.* (New York: Macmillan 1990) pp. Chapter 4.

**5. 2/20 – Gated Lives**

- a) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002) Chapter 13.
- b) Alan Elsner, *The Gates of Injustice* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall 2004) Chapters 1-5.
- c) Handout: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment.

**6. 2/27 – Midterm**

**7. 3/6 – Spring Break – no class**

**8. 3/13 – (More) Gated Lives**

- a) Handout: Lynch, Mona (2001) “From the Punitive City to the Gated Community: Security and Segregation Across the Social and Penal Landscape” University of Miami Law Journal.
- b) Alan Elsner, *The Gates of Injustice* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall 2004) Chapters 6-end.
- c) Elaine Brown, *The Condemnation of Little B* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002) Chapters 14-15.

**9. 3/20 – Power and its Perversions/Civil Rights, Civic Responsibilities**

- a) Handout: Complaint in Police Misconduct Case
- b) Handout: “Police Brutality” Derrick Bell [From Jill Nelson: *Police Brutality* (New York: Norton 2000)]
- c) Handout: The Bill of Rights
- d) Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, (Boston, Beacon Press 2002) pp. 60-109 (Roaring From the East: Third World Dreaming).

**10. 3/27 – Restorations, Reparations and Re-imaginings**

- a) Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams* (Boston, Beacon Press 2002) pp. 110-134 (A Day of Reckoning: Dreams of Reparations).
- b) Bruce Arrigo, *Social Justice/Criminal Justice* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing 1999) pp. 51-69 (Peacemaking Criminology and Social Justice).
- c) Ellis Close, *Bone to Pick: Of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reparation and Revenge* (New York, New York: Washington Square Press 2004) Chapter 1.
- d) Handout: The Little Book of Restorative Justice

**11. 4/3 - Restorations, Reparations and Re-imaginings**

- a) Ellis Close, *Bone to Pick: Of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reparation and Revenge* (New York, New York: Washington Square Press 2004) Chapters 2-3.
- b) Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams* (Boston, Beacon Press 2002) pp. 157- 194 (Keepin’ it (sur)real: Dreams of the Marvelous) 195-end (When History Wakes..).

- c) Handout: From The Little Book of Restorative Justice (I)

**12. 4/10 - Restorations, Reparations and Re-imaginings**

- a) Handout: The Little Book of Restorative Justice (II)
- b) Ellis Close, *Bone to Pick: Of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reparation and Revenge* (New York, New York: Washington Square Press 2004) Chapters 4-end.

**13. 4/17 – Patriots Day – no class**

**14. 4/24 - Imagining Crime/Imagining Justice Revisited - Final Presentations**

**15. 5/1 - Imagining Crime/Imagining Justice Revisited - Final Presentations (Final Papers Due)**

**16. 5/8 – Study Day**

**Course Requirements:**

1. Active participation and short writing exercises: (25% of overall grade)

This is an intensive reading seminar. All participants are expected to actively contribute to seminar discussion and dialogue and to spend at least 6 hours per week reading and preparing course materials. All participants are also expected to periodically assume responsibility (in two-person teams) for a short presentation of assigned readings. For the week that participants assume responsibility for readings, they are expected to hand in short (2-3 pages) responses to the readings. Attendance is of course expected. There will also be two short-in-class writing exercises and two short out-of-class writing exercises. These will count as part of your participation grade.

2. Midterm Writing Exercise (25% of overall grade) Participants will be given several short essays to complete during class. This exercise will assess mastery over the readings, and progress in accomplishing the course objectives.

3. Final Paper/Project/Presentation (50% of overall grade)

Each participant will be responsible for contributing to a final project. As a class we will all become experts in a locally situated real-world scenario dealing with issues of crime and justice. Our scenario this semester will focus on the dramatic increase in the homicide rate over the past year in Boston. Working groups will be formed during the second class. These working groups will focus on particular aspects of the issue and attempt to collectively raise questions and arrive at conclusions regarding the issue.

You should do whatever you can to become experts on the increase in crime in Boston. For instance you can attend community related events, and/or speak with members of the community who are involved in aspects of your projects, attend a trial, interview a law enforcement official or advocate, keep a log of media coverage, visit correctional institutions, or attend related forums.

You will then apply theoretical concepts discussed in class and readings to the scenario. You will present your findings/conclusions with your working group. However, members of the group can either choose to do separate papers or to create the final product as a group. If students elect to hand in a group project, each student should work on a discreet part of the final project, and identify the aspect of the project on which they worked.

The papers/projects should make explicit use of concepts discussed in class and in the readings, and should apply these concepts (as well as additional research, if desired) to an aspect of the case study. We will set aside time during class to discuss the progress on our projects. **During class on 2/13 you will be asked to share your ideas for your final projects, and to share what role each student will take in the final process.** Thus, be sure to set up a time to meet with your group before this date. Presentations will be given during the last two weeks of class