

**Deviance and Social Control Syllabus**  
**SC 030--Fall 2006**

Tuesday, Thursday 10:30  
Cushing 212

**Instructor: Aimee Van Wagenen**

McGuinn Hall 409

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 1:30-2:30 and by apt.

Phone/Voicemail: 617-552-4134

\*\*Email: vanwagea@bc.edu

**Teaching Assistant: Gretchen Sisson**

McGuinn Hall 410

gretchen.sisson.1@bc.edu

**Course Overview:**

*CORE theme: Perennial Questions of deviance, control & order*

In this course, we seek to uncover how societies construct the boundaries between those social forms that are normal, acceptable, good, healthy, moral, and/or natural and those that are deviant, crazy, bad, sick, evil and/or abominations. As we think about how society is made possible by the drawing of boundaries around the normal, we will also consider the historical and cultural shifting of these boundaries. You are going to be asked to make a leap and imagine that even if it is natural to draw boundaries, there isn't anything natural about where or how those boundaries are drawn. This leap may be uncomfortable. It may feel like vertigo. It may take you where you don't ordinarily go—to places, people, behaviors, feelings and impressions that you don't like. This is not a leap of faith, but a leap to the sociology of deviance and control.

*CORE theme: Historical Perspective*

The course is organized around critical examination of seven major historical perspectives on deviance. We will place each perspective in the historical, political and cultural context of its period of prominence. And while each perspective has had a kind of theoretical heyday, none has disappeared entirely from our contemporary understandings of deviance. Writing by contemporary authors that are assigned in the course, periodic discussion of current events, and the reflections and analyses of class members will show how each perspective continues to shape the ongoing sociological story of deviance and control.

*CORE theme: Crafting a Personal Philosophy*

Our readings, particularly from Pfohl, Reiman, and hooks, take a critical stance on perspectives and issues of deviance and control. Students in the course are encouraged to engage with the critical stance of the authors and, further, develop their own critical philosophy of deviance and control. Students are encouraged to articulate elements of their personal philosophy during discussion days and in the writing component of the course (see below).

*CORE theme: Cultural Diversity*

The perspectives we examine are predominately European and (Euro)American perspectives on deviance and social control. This Euro/American domination of thought on deviance and control has had significant material and symbolic effects on those persons, forms and relations that are outside of and excluded from the European tradition. Our readings in the course examine such effects and, by engaging a critical stance, resist a Euro/American domination. Cultural diversity is brought into our study of deviance and control through the use of a systematic critical stance, through the incorporation of readings by authors of culturally diverse backgrounds, and through attention to issues of deviance and control that effect (differentially) the diversity of the population.

*CORE theme: Methodology*

Our critical examination of the perspectives will spotlight the particular methods employed by each to understand, observe and measure deviance. Each perspective offers, along with an understanding of deviance, a methodology and strategy for controlling it. In the course, we will consider the material and symbolic effects on those who are deviantized and/or controlled by such methods.

## Required Readings and Schedule:

### Texts:

- Pfohl, Stephen. 1994. *Images of Deviance & Social Control*. McGraw-Hill.  
Pontell, Henry. 2005. *Social Deviance: Readings in Theory and Research, 5th Ed.* Harcourt.  
Reiman, Jeffrey. 2007. *The Rich Get Richer & The Poor Get Prison, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, Pearson.  
hooks, bell. 1992. *Black Looks: Race & Representation*. South End Press.

You can find used and earlier editions of these books on-line at a significantly lower cost. Contact me if you want to find lower cost versions of the books and I can help you find them. All of the books will be on reserve in the library, but I strongly recommend buying the Pfohl text at the least, as it will be an essential reference in studying and writing papers.

You are expected to complete all the readings according to the schedule outlined below. Many classes will include a discussion of the readings and I will expect that you have done them. I may employ several strategies to encourage class discussion including having students prepare discussion questions, having students lead discussions, calling upon students or using pop quizzes on the readings. At the end of the syllabus you will find a guide for writing notes on the readings.

### Topic One Introducing Social Control and its Other: Deviance

#### 1.1 Deviance & Social Control: What's in a Name?

September 5-12; *Discussion Day Assignment 1* is due September 19.

1. (9/7) Reiman, *Rich Get Richer*, Ch. 2, "A Crime By Any Other Name..."
2. (9/12) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 1., "Images of Deviance & Social Control: An Introduction"
3. (9/12) Pontell, *Readings*, Alexander Lazios, "The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance"

#### 1.2 Deconstructing Deviance & Control: Critical Perspectives

September 14-26; *Discussion Day Assignment 2* is due September 28.

1. (9/14) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 10 & 11, "Critical Perspectives: Towards a Power-Reflexive Deconstruction of Deviance and Difference" and "Critical Perspectives: Social Theory and Social Change"
2. (9/21) hooks, *Black Looks*, Ch. 3, "Revolutionary Black Women: Making Ourselves Subject"
3. (9/26) Pontell, *Readings*, Steven Spitzer, "Towards A Marxian Theory of Deviance"

### Topic Two A Supernatural Understanding of Deviance & Control

#### 2 Cosmic Interconnection to the Law of the Father: The Demonic Perspective

October 3-10.

1. (10/3) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 2, "The Demonic Perspective: Otherworldly Interpretations of Deviance"
2. (10/5) In class Presentation of the video documentary: *The Burning Times*
3. (10/10) In class presentation of the audio documentary *This American Life*, Episode #77, "Pray." Excerpt: Act One, Alix Spiegel's "Exodus"

### Topic Three An Enlightened Understanding of Deviance & Control

#### 3.1 Cool Man Calculating: The Classical/Legal Perspective

October 12-19; *Discussion Day Assignment 3* is due October 24

1. (10/12) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 3, "The Classical Perspective: Deviance as Rational Hedonism"
2. (10/17) Reiman, *Rich Get Richer*, Ch. 3, "...And the Poor Get Prison"
3. (10/19) Reiman, *Rich Get Richer*, Ch. 4, "To The Vanquished Belong the Spoils"

#### 3.2 Sickness and Health: The Pathological/Medical Perspective

October 26-November 2; Take-home midterm due November 7

1. (10/26) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 4, "The Pathological Perspective: Deviance as Sickness"
2. (10/31) Pontell, *Readings*, David Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places"
3. (10/31) In class presentation of audio documentary *This American Life*, Episode #37, "Jobs That Take Over Your Life". Excerpt: Act One, Scott Carrier's "The Test"
4. (11/2) Pontell, *Readings*, Ronny Turner and Charles Edgley, "From Witchcraft to Drugcraft"

## **Topic Four A Social Scientific Understanding of Deviance & Control**

### **4 Feedback, Means, and Opportunity: The Functionalist & Anomie Perspectives**

November 7-November 14

1. (11/7) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 6 “The Functionalist Perspective: Cybernetics, Negative Feedback, and the Benefits of Deviance”
2. (11/7) Pontell, *Readings*, Emile Durkheim, “The Normal and the Pathological”
3. (11/9) Reiman, *Rich Get Richer*, Ch. 1, “Crime Control in America”
4. (11/14) hooks, *Black Looks*, Ch. 2, “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance”
5. (11/14) Pontell, *Readings*, Robert Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie”

## **Topic Five An Understanding of Normalized Deviance & Control**

### **5.1 Hanging out with the Wrong Crowd: The Learning Perspective**

November 16-November 21, *Discussion Day Assignment 4* is due November 28

1. (11/16) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 8 “The Learning Perspective: Acquiring Deviance in Association with Others”
2. (11/16) Pontell, *Readings*, Howard Becker, “Becoming a Marijuana User”
3. (11/21) Pontell, *Readings*, Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla, “Convicted Rapists’ Vocabulary of Motive”
4. (11/21) hooks, *Black Looks*, Ch. 11 “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination”

### **5.2 The Eye of the Beholder: The Societal Reaction Perspective**

December 1-7

1. (12/1) Pfohl, *Images*, Ch. 9 “The Societal Reaction Perspective: Labeling and the Social Construction of Deviance”
2. (12/5) Pontell, *Readings*, James D. Orcutt, “Deviance as a Situated Phenomenon: Variations in the Social Interpretation of Marijuana and Alcohol Use”
3. (12/5) Pontell, *Readings*, Stephen Pfohl, “‘Discovery’ of Child Abuse”

## **Course Requirements**

**60% 4 Discussion Day Assignments:** 3-5 pages

September 19: Discussion Day Paper 1—Breaching Experiments

September 28: Discussion Day Paper 2—Critical Perspectives on Personal Experiences/Current Events

October 24: Discussion Day Paper 3—Analysis & Critique of Reiman’s argument

November 28: Discussion Day Paper 4—Focus on Functionalism or Learning

In these papers, you will reflect upon and make use the readings for the section to apply the perspective in an analysis. Each paper will have a slightly different focus of analysis. You will receive more in -depth guidelines for each paper as the semester progresses.

Each paper is due on a discussion day. Your attendance is mandatory on discussion days and *you will lose some credit on your paper if you do not attend class on the discussion day that the paper is due*. On discussion days, you and your classmates will present some of your analytical work from your papers for an informed and, hopefully, lively class discussion.

These papers make up the writing requirement for the course-there is no term paper. As these make up the majority of the writing requirement, you are to treat these as serious papers, paying attention to writing style and argumentation. In the papers you will develop your own personal philosophy of deviance and social control. You must also make use of the required reading in crafting your argument.

You must clearly cite the readings as you make use of ideas from them. (Failure to credit an author’s words, phrases or *ideas* constitutes plagiarism. See university academic integrity policy at <http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#regulations>.) In writing these papers, do not search through Google or any other engine to find reading summaries, papers or discussions on the topic. These are not valid sources. If you turn in a paper and cite such an invalid source, I will not accept it and will return it to you to revise. If you turn in a paper and use such an invalid source but do not cite it, you will have committed plagiarism and I will forward your case to your dean. A committee will review your case and determine an appropriate sanction. Be aware that sanctions can and do include failing the course entirely.

Absolutely no extensions. If your paper is late, I will assign a late penalty of 2/3 of a letter grade *per class period* late. For example, if the paper is due on a Tuesday and you turn it in Wednesday or Thursday, you are one class period late and your best possible grade will be a B+. It is your responsibility to ensure I receive your paper. Unacceptable excuses: I emailed it to you, my email must be messed up. My roommate was supposed to turn it in for me. I left it in your mailbox/under your door/with the secretary, I don't know what happened to it.

### **20% Midterm Exam**

November 17—Take-home midterm is due covering the first three topics (through the Pathological Perspective).

### **20% Final Exam**

December 14—In class exam at 12:30 in your regular classroom. Exam is cumulative, but focuses on material from the second half of the course.

### **Attendance & Participation**

Aside from your participation and attendance on Discussion Days, attendance and participation are not formally a part of your grade. However, I strongly recommend attending class regularly and participating in discussion. This will help you earn a good grade in the course by preparing you for your papers and your exams. It will also help make this a more fun and interesting class. Finally, your parents and/or you are (or will be) paying a great deal for this experience! Maximize it! If you love this material, share your experiences and insights from reading and learning. If you hate the material, come challenge us with your perspective. If the material just bores you, try to find something that engages you and bring that to class with you or better yet, try to figure out what is missing that would make it more interesting and bring that informed critique to class (and your papers!)

### **Final Note**

In general, expect that the course will follow this outline. Circumstances may arise that require some changes in due dates, readings, and/or specifics of assignments.

### **Guidelines For Taking Notes on Readings**

I suggest that you write down answers for the following questions when doing the readings. These guidelines can be adopted to the Pfohl textbook reading as well, but I suggest that you take more detailed notes on the Pfohl chapters. (You may also find that these guiding questions are less applicable to the Pfohl readings.)

1. What is the research/theoretical question? Pose a question that the author is (explicitly or implicitly) asking in the article or chapter? This is the question that the author answers by making an argument, relying on a theoretical perspective and referring to sources of information or data.
2. What is the argument? This is a) the answer to the research question the author poses and b) the justification for the answer—the logic the author follows or the line of reasoning that author takes in coming to the answer to the question.
3. What data does the author use/ what is the methodology for analysis of the data? In these articles, this is sometimes not social scientific data but anecdotes, experiences, popular culture, etc. The data is what “real world stuff” the author refers to in making her/his argument about the answer to the research question. Some of the articles are solely theoretical and don't refer to “actual real world stuff”. If this is the case, say so.
4. What are the weaknesses of the article? You can define the weaknesses in whatever manner you chose. If you disagree with the logic, make this case. If you disagree with the data source, make this case. If the author is leaving out some larger question that you think should be addressed, make this case. Etc...
5. What is useful in this article? What did you learn from it? What can the study of deviance and social control benefit from this author's view?
6. What is left for further discussion? What are the implications if we are to agree with the author's analysis? What does it mean for the making of a just social world? What does it mean for your personal philosophy of deviance and control? What is confusing about this article? What do you want to see discussed in class from this article? What bugs you about it? What fascinates you?