

Sc. 030 DEVIANCE and SOCIAL CONTROL
(Spring 2007, 300 Higgins, Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:50 AM)

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Office Hours: 416 McGuinn, Tues. 2:30-4:00 PM, and by appointment.
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"With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion."—Jacques Attali

Course Overview:

This course asks you to imagine social deviance as noise—a cacophony of subversions disrupting the harmony of a given social order. Social control is the opposite. It works to silence the resistive sounds of deviance and to transform the noisy challenge of difference into the music of conformity. Social control is what gives a social order its power. When effective, social control ritually reduces, expels, or constrains what is "other" to the dominant organization of power within a specific historical period.

In framing the study of deviance and social control as a contest between those with sufficient power to construct and enforce some versions of social reality to the exclusion of "others," this course invites you to engage analytically in a story at the core of sociology itself. How do various societies construct boundaries between what is normatively acceptable and what is condemned as deviant? In what ways are such boundaries both resisted and changed? What are the material and imaginary effects of constructing boundaries in certain ways but not others? In what ways is the production of normative boundaries related to the reproduction and/or deconstruction of various forms of social hierarchy, particularly to the sex/gender, race/ethnic, and economic hierarchies so prevalent in the society in which we live and study? To explore such questions is to attend to the complex and often contradictory social processes by which some ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling are made to appear as good, or even "natural," while others are made to seem evil, sleazy, dirty, dangerous, sick, immoral, crazy, or just plain "deviant." An analytic engagement with such questions is a core feature of this core course.

A central objective of this course is to critically examine a particularly important aspect of the relationship between deviance and social control: the historical construction of different theoretical perspectives on deviance. Such perspectives guide the ways we both think about and act toward deviance. Throughout history a wide array of religious authorities, legal experts, philosophers, politicians, police, therapists, activists, and social scientists have produced a variety of perspectives on these matters. To examine such perspectives from a sociological viewpoint involves the production of analytic stories about the telling of other stories—historical and sociological stories about the invention and practical implications of various ways of making sense deviance. Throughout this course we shall examine the dominant *theoretical imagery, methodological strategies,*

and *social control policies* associated with nine perspectives which have captured the theoretical imagination of western society at various points in history. These perspectives have also often been used as justifications by the west for defending against and/or subordinating its nonwestern "others."

All theoretical stories of deviance are told from historically specific standpoints. They embody the perspectives of particular authors within politically charged social contexts. The theoretical narratives you will be asked to read and those you will be asked to write are no exception. In studying the social contexts in which theories about deviance are produced and consumed, you will also be asked to imaginatively reflect upon the ways in which your own biographical and historical position influences how you understand deviance and social control. This is to introduce you to a "power-reflexive" method of analysis. As a sociological strategy, a "power-reflexive" demands that we as researchers attempt to rigorously situate the always "partial" perspectives by which our own quests for knowledge are both facilitated and limited by our relations to power. In approaching the study of deviance from a "power-reflexive" viewpoint, this course seeks to clarify the socio-historical conditions in which influential ideas about nonconformity arise. It is also aimed at providing a critical grasp of the ways in which theoretical constructions of deviance and social control influence the economic, sex/gendered, and race/ethnic character of continuing struggles for justice in history.

Course Outline/Assigned Readings

Topic One: *Control and Resistance: the theory and practice of deviance.*

This section introduces students to key aspects of sociological theory and methods, providing the conceptual foundations for analytic approaches used throughout the course. Deviance and social control are here conceived as ritual social practices, material and imaginary "dramatizations" of ever-changing historical relationships between knowledge and power.

Readings:

1. Stephen Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control: a sociological history*, 2nd Ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994, pp. 1-16, 401-417.
2. Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: diary of a law professor*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 3-14.

Topic Two: *Supernatural Controls and Sacred Transgressions.*

This section examines the rise of Judaic-Christian perspectives on deviance as "sin" and the implications of this distinctive religious viewpoint for a sociological understanding of culture, sexuality, gender, and spirituality.

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 19-58.
2. Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: culture's revenge against nature*, New York: Harper and Row, 1981, pp. 1-81.
3. Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: rediscovering the religion of the earth*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, pp. 2-48, 116-130, 165-218, 230-263, 276-314.
4. Williams, "Mirrors and Windows" and "Arm's Length Intimacies," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 166-178; 203-215.
5. **Video:** *The Burning Years*.

Topic Three: *Social Control in the Age of Reason: "the (white) Rights of Man"*.

This section examines the sociological development of eighteenth century legal theories of deviance as "rational hedonism" and nineteenth century notions of nonconformity as sickness. In critically examining these perspectives, each is compared with modern pornographic worldviews that arise at essentially the same time. In what ways does pornography represent something like a relatively unacknowledged shadow of classical rationality and the positivist methods associated with medicalized perspectives on deviance? What are the implications of such shadows for the modern organization of sex/gender, racial and economic institutions?

A. *Cool Man Calculating: the classical perspective.*

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 61-99.
2. Williams, "Gilded Lilies and Liberal Guilt," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 14-43.
3. Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, pp. 82-154.

B. *Deviance as Sickness: medicalized positivism and pornography.*

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 101-168.
2. Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, pp. 155-199.
3. Williams, "The Death of the Profane," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 44-51.
4. **Video:** *Criminological Displacements.*

Topic Four: *Sociological Surveillance: pleasure of the scientific gaze.*

This section provides a critical introduction to the concepts, methods, and the historical context of perspectives dominating the sociological imagination of deviance from the years following World War I until the 1950s. Particular attention will be paid to economic, gendered, and multicultural dimensions of both deviance and social control.

A. *The Disorganization Perspective: social realism and sociological surrealism*

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 171-218.
2. Williams, "Teleology on the Rocks," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 55-79.

B. *Functionalism and Cybernetics: Deviance as Adjustive Feedback.*

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 221-249.
2. Williams, "Crimes Without Passion," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 80-97.

C. *Lost in Desire: the Anomie Perspective*

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 251-294.
2. Williams, "The Obliging Shell," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 98-130.

Topic Five: *Constructing the Normalized Subject of Deviance*

This section provides an overview of two perspectives focusing on the role of mundane social interaction in shaping both the development of deviant behaviors and the labeling of deviance. Both perspectives were particularly influential in the 1960s and 1970s. (*The readings from *Images of Deviance and Social Control* for this section are relevant to the "historical autobiographies" assignment and should be read during the first month of this course.)

A. *Normalizing Relations: the learning perspective*

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 297-343.
2. Williams, "Fire and Ice," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 133-145.
3. **Video:** *Dreamworlds 2.*

B. Questioning Normalizing Strategies: the problem of societal reaction

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 345-398 .
2. Williams, "The Pain of Word Bondage," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 146-178.

Topic Six: Power-Reflexive Reconfigurations of Deviance and Social Control

This section concludes the course with a discussion of a variety of convergence critical viewpoints. Of particular concern are the contributions of feminism, Marxism, anarchism, anti-racist, and poststructuralist critiques of hierarchical orderings of power and knowledge.

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 417-467; 469-513.
2. Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 216-236.
3. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, New York, Penguin, 1994 (1970)

OR

Jeffrey Reiman, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison 8th Edition*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2007.

Course Requirements:

This is a core course in sociology. It is also cross-listed as a course in Women's Studies. Its aim is to introduce students to the sociological study of the theories, methods, and policy implications of various approaches to the social control of deviance in history. Toward this end, the course has three major individual writing projects—two essay exams and a "historical autobiography." A fourth assignment—the group ethnographic project—also includes a writing component. A detailed explanation of each of the following assignments will be provided to each student during the course of the semester.

1. "Historical Autobiography" of involvement in deviance and/or social control: 5-6 page essay (20% course grade), due in class, Tuesday, February 20th.
2. Midterm Essay Examination, date to be announced, approximately 2/3rd through semester, (30% course grade).
3. Final Essay Examination (30% course grade), due by Thursday, May 10th, 5 PM.
4. Group Ethnographic Project: team field research, description, and theoretical analysis of a particular historical scene of deviance and/or social control. Final group projects involve both a written component and public mixed-media presentation. Research groups will be organized by students' topical interests and will meet three times over the course of the semester with Teaching Assistants prior to final project presentation (20% course grade).

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is of utmost importance to this and all Boston College courses and research. The university's academic integrity procedures will be rigorously enforced. For a full description of Boston College's academic integrity policy, see WWW.bc.edu/offices/stsrv/academic/resources/politcy/#integrity.