

## Sc. 030, **DEVIANCE and SOCIAL CONTROL**

(Fall 2011, 203 Carney, Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30-11:45 AM)

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Office Hours: 416 McGuinn Hall, Tues. 3:15-5:00 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 with a story at the core of sociology itself. How do societies construct boundaries between what is normatively acceptable and that which is condemned as deviant? When and how are social boundaries resisted and changed? What are the material and imaginary effects of enacting boundaries in certain ways but not others? How is the division between what is perceived as normative and what is viewed as deviant related to the repeated production and/or deconstruction of various forms of social hierarchy? How, in other words, is the battle between deviance and social control shaped by power-charged practices of gender, sexuality, race, and global economic position? To explore such questions is to pay attention to how some forms of behaving, thinking, and feeling are made to appear *as if* naturally good, while others are labeled evil, sleazy, dirty, dangerous, sick, immoral, crazy, or just plain "deviant." This is a core analytic concern of this course.

In analyzing the relationship between deviance and social control, this course is particularly concerned with the rise and fall of different ways of thinking about and acting to control threatening forms of nonconformity. Theoretical perspectives of this sort guide how we imagine and react toward deviance. Indeed, throughout history a wide array of religious authorities, legal experts, philosophers, politicians, police, therapists, activists, and social scientists have constructed competing theoretical stories about what causes deviance and how nonconformity might best be controlled. In order to understand the meaning and social impact of such perspectives, students enrolled in this course are expected to critically explore

the *conceptual imagery, methodological strategies, and social control practices* of nine theoretical perspectives which have captured the social imagination of northwestern societies at various points in history. These perspectives have often been used by those at the helm of northwestern forms of power as ritual defenses against and/or tools for the global subordination of those they label as "others." Sometimes these perspectives have sparked social change.

All theoretical stories or perspectives on deviance are told from power-charged social standpoints. These standpoints frame the ways that social actors view deviance at different places and times in history. The theoretical perspectives examined in this course are no exception. As such, in studying how perspectives on deviance are historically constructed and put to use, students will be asked to consider how their own biographical situations on history influence how they make sense of and respond to deviance. This is a key aspect of a "power-reflexive" approach to social boundaries. As a method of social research, a "power-reflexive" approach demands that students of deviance and social control attempt to discern how their interpretive pathways on nonconformity are both facilitated and limited by the relations of power in which they themselves are situated. In approaching deviance from a "power-reflexive" viewpoint, this course explores how influential ideas about nonconformity and what to do about it arise and fall. It is also intended to provide a scholarly foundation for an ethically informed analytic viewpoint on how battles between deviance and social control are ensnarled in 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 natural 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, 401-467.
2. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Literacy," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 1-53.

Background reading (recommended not required)

Stephen Pfohl, "The Reality of Social Construction," in James Holstein and Jay Gubrium, *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, 2008, pp. 645-668.\*

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 Sjöö 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. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Literacy," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 1-53.

**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. Patricia Williams, "Gilded Lilies and Liberal Guilt," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 14-43.
3. Paul Butler, "Safety First: Why Mass Incarceration Matters," in *Let's Get Free: A Hip Hop Theory of Justice*, New York: The New Press, 2009, pp. 23-40.\*
4. Jeffrey Reiman and Paul Leighton, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class, and Criminal Justice, Ninth Edition*. Boston: Pearson, 2010, "Introduction: Criminal Justice through the Looking Glass, or Winning by Losing" and "Crime Control in America: Nothing Succeeds Like Failure," pp. 1-57.

**Video:** *The Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti.*

**B. *Deviance as Sickness: medicalized positivism and control of the flesh.***

*Readings:*

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 101-168.
2. Jackie Orr, "Panic Diary: (re)constructing a partial poetics of disease," in James A. Holstein and Gale Miller (eds.), *Reconsidering Social Constructionism*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993, pp. 441-482.\*
3. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Love," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 55-87.
4. Ethan Watters, "The Americanization of Mental Illness," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 10, 2010, pp. 41-45.\*
5. Robert D. Romanyshyn, "The Abandoned Body and its Shadows," in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*, New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1989, pp. 133-175.\*

**Video:** Stephen Pfohl and Avery Gordon, *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. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Wisdom," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 89-114.
3. Reiman and Leighton, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, Chapter Two, "A Crime by Any Other Name," pp. 58-109.

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

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 221-249.
2. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Happiness," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 115-141.
3. Reiman and Leighton, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, Chapter Three, "And the Poor Get Prison," pp. 110-171.

**Video:** *The Girlfriend Experience.*

**C. *Lost in Desire: the Anomie Perspective***

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 251-294.
2. Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of America," in *Empire of Illusion: the End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*, New York: Nation Books, 2009, pp. 141-193.
3. Reiman and Leighton, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, Chapter Four, "To the Vanquished Belong the Spoils," pp. 172-201.

**Video:** *The Inside Job*.

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. Reiman and Leighton, *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, Conclusion, "Criminal Justice or *Criminal Justice*," pp. 202-218.

**B. *Questioning Normalizing Strategies: the problem of societal reaction***

Readings:

1. Pfohl, *Images of Deviance and Social Control*, pp. 345-398.
2. Paul Butler, "Justice on Drugs," in *Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice*, New York: The New Press, 2009, pp. 41-55.\*

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. 469-513.
2. Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, pp. 216-236.
3. Stephen Pfohl, "New Global technologies of Power: Cybernetic Capitalism and Social Inequality," Chapter 23 in Mary Romero and Eric Margolis, eds.,

*The Blackwell Companion for Social Inequalities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2006, pp. 546-592.\*

4. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, New York, Penguin, 1994 (1970).

### **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, Thursday, October 13th.
2. First Essay Examination, due in class Thursday, October 27th, (30% course grade). Examination will be distributed in class on Thursday, October 27th.
3. Final Essay Examination (30% course grade), due no later than Thursday, December 15th, 12:00 PM. Examination will be distributed in class on final day of course, Thursday, December 8th.
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).
5. The class will periodically break into small groups to discuss assigned readings and course themes. All students are expected to actively prepare for and participate in these discussions.

### **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](http://WWW.bc.edu/offices/stsrv/academic/resources/politcy/#integrity)