This graduate-level seminar involves a critical sociological exploration of social control and the “deviance” that powerful forms of control exclude, marginalize, stigmatize, or silence. How do gendered, class-based, and racialized formations of power influence what society historically views as “normal” and what it labels as deviant? What prompts people to resist dominant rituals of social control? In reckoning with these and related questions, the seminar examines how religion, law, medicine, economics, politics, and social science knowledge each shapes societal reactions to nonconformity. Of particular concern are new global technologies of control and resistance; racialized policing; mass incarceration; the management of “madness”; omnipresent surveillance; elite and governmental wrongdoing; and the global trafficking of people, sex, drugs, body parts, weapons, terrorism, and mesmerizing media images that fascinate and create fear.

Week 1 (January 23)
Introduction

Week 2 (January 30)
Control and Resistance: the theory and practice of deviance.

This section introduces seminar participants to key aspects of sociological theory and methods that provide 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:

Week 3 (February 6)
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:

**Video:** *The Burning Times.*

Week 4 (February 13)

**Social Control in the Age of Reason: Classical Criminology and the (white) “Rights of Man”**.

This section examines the sociological development of eighteenth century legal theories of deviance as "rational hedonism."

Readings:

Week 5 (February 20)

**Deviance as Sickness, Part I: Medical Positivism and Control of the Flesh.**

This section is divided into two weeks. Each explores viewpoints on nonconformity as sickness. In critically examining the medicalization of deviance explores connections between positivist analytic methods and the ritual reproduction of sex/gender, racial and economic institutions.

Readings:


**Video:** *Madness and Medicine.*

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**Week 6 (February 27)**

**Deviance as Sickness, Part II: The Pleasures of the Positivist Gaze.**

**Readings:**


**Video:** Stephen Pfohl and Avery Gordon, *Criminological Displacements.*

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**Week 7 (March 13)**

**The Disorganization Perspective: Rapid Social Change and Normative Breakdown**

This section provides a critical introduction to the concepts, methods, and the historical context of “social disorganization theory” in the years following World War I.

**Readings:**


**Video:** *The Hunting Ground.*

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**Week 8 (March 20)**

**Functionalism and Cybernetics: Deviance as Adjusive Feedback.**

This section examines communicative feedback loops between forces of social control and the deviance they attempt to manage.


Readings:


Week 9 (March 27)
Lost in Desire: the Anomie Perspective

The theory of anomie addresses structural strains resulting from both normlessness and structural inequality as forces leading to deviance and contested social control.

Readings:


Week 10 (April 3)
Learning Deviance. Learning Social Control

This section examines images of learning and imitation as pathways into both deviance and power-charged forms of social control.

Readings:


Week 11 (April 10)
Using Literature to Examine the Fictions and Facts of Deviance and Social Control
This section makes use of critical approaches to literature to investigate the violence and exclusionary rituals of social control.

Readings:

Week 12 (April 24)

**Questioning Social Control: the Problem of Societal Reaction**

This section addresses the contested historical construction and application of deviant labels.

Readings:

Week 13 (May 1)

**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 pluralistic conflict, feminism, Marxism, anarchism, anti-racist, and poststructuralist critiques of hierarchical orderings of power and knowledge.

Readings:

Course Requirements:
1. This a graduate-level seminar. All participants are expected to engage rigorously with assigned readings and contribute to course discussion. Participants are also required to take
turns in serving as seminar discussion leaders on three separate occasions (if possible, with two leaders per week). Discussion leaders are expected to prepare brief “discussion-opening” remarks and questions. (10%)

2. Seminar members are expected to complete 2 short (5-6 double-spaced page) analytic papers addressing an aspect of deviance and/or social control through the lens of theoretical theoretical perspectives examined the seminar. These short essays may reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of a given theoretical perspective and/or apply the perspective to interpret a particular social phenomenon. The first essay is due no later than March 20th; the second is due no later than May 1st. (50%) Seminar participants may use the two short essays as steps toward the final term paper (described below).

3. Participants are to write one 15-20 page double-spaced final term paper. This paper must make use of at least two of the theoretical perspectives addressed over the course of the semester to examine a particular instance of deviance and/or social control. Short in-class presentations on seminar papers-in-progress will be made during the month of April. Final papers are due by Wednesday, May 10th, 12:30 PM. (40%)