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**Sociology 3260: Juvenile Delinquency
 Weber State University, Fall 2014**

**Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 9:30 – 10:20 pm
 SS 44**

Course overview and objectives

This course considers the juvenile delinquency as a broad phenomenon that encompasses far more than just crime. We will consider three main questions:

- *What is the category of youth, and how do we construct it in our culture?*
- *How do various social institutions, both locally and internationally, manage youth delinquency?*
- *How are youth both powerless and powerful?*

To answer these questions, we will especially consider the everyday lived experience of youth as described in their own voices. We will explore youth in several settings: on social media, on “the streets” both in the U.S. and internationally, in educational settings, and in the world of youth activism. We will also analyze how categories of youth intersect with race, class, and gender. By the end of this course, you should understand how youth is a social construction that varies historically, how youth negotiate their worlds, as well as the various social institutions and social forces that shape and control those worlds. You should also gain improved skills in public speaking, writing, and critical thinking and analysis.

Required readings

Foley, Douglas E. 2010. *Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Tejas*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN: 0812213149

Gordon, Hava Rachel. 2009. *We Fight To Win: Inequality and the Politics of Youth Activism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. ISBN: 0813546702

Hecht, Tobias. 1998. *At Home in the Street: Street Children of Northeast Brazil*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521598699

Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York, NY: NYU Press. ISBN: 814769322

Additional readings and other materials posted online on the Canvas website.

Course requirements and grade percentages
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Reaction papers	40%
Final paper	35%
Mini-assignments	20%
Group presentations	5%

Reaction papers – To help you keep up with and process the class material, as well as develop your skills of analysis and critical thinking, I am asking you to complete two reaction papers. These are **typed, double-spaced, five page essays** where you will be asked a series of questions, and you will need to explain as well as compare and contrast the course materials of the preceding weeks. The week before they are due, I will distribute a prompt with complete instructions. The papers are due in class on the Fridays of Week Five (September 26th) and Week Ten (October 31st). Late papers will be marked down 4 points per day (from 25 to 21, etc.). (2 papers X 20% each = 40%)

Final paper – To help you master the material, I am asking you to analyze the course readings using data that you collect – namely an interview of a juvenile delinquent. See full instructions on [page 7](#). (35%)

Mini-assignments – In order to connect these readings to “real world” examples, I am asking you to complete four “Mini-assignments.” These will be due in class on Wednesdays. No late assignments will be accepted. See instructions on [page 9](#). (4 mini-assignments x 5% each = 20%)

Group presentations – In order to further discuss and digest the material, you will be asked to present a week’s readings to the class. Your task for these presentations will be to **facilitate a discussion**, asking the class questions regarding the main points of the readings, confusing and/or controversial sections, and integrating “mini-assignment” examples that students bring to class (see above). In order to maintain the quality of presentations, I am asking groups to **submit five discussion questions to me by 6 pm on the Sunday before your presentation**. Presentations will be graded on the quality of your questions, your preparation, and your performance. (5%)

Participation – As this course is based on collective discussion, I expect you to contribute in class. I will also be observing your participation by taking roll at the beginning of each class period and monitoring your preparation and involvement while there. A good record of participation – few absences and active contributions – will result in a “bump” in grade if you are close to a higher grade (for example, an 89/100 will receive a grade of A-). A poor participation record = no bump.

Disclaimers

- We will be discussing issues of a sensitive nature. Be forewarned that the course content may be challenging, disturbing, and/or offensive.
- My preferred method of contact is in person, then by email. I do NOT respond to messages sent through the Canvas system.
- If you miss an assignment, be in touch with me as soon as possible. I am much more sympathetic to those who contact me before missing the assignment.
- Cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism – the use of others’ words and/or ideas without clearly acknowledging their source – is also a form of cheating. I will take appropriate disciplinary action against offenders.
- If you are a student with a disability and require classroom accommodations, please meet with me to discuss arrangements (If you have not yet contacted Services for Students with Disabilities, please do so – Student Services Center, Room 181 or call (801) 626-6413).
- This syllabus, including all readings and assignments, is subject to change given the flow of the course and unforeseen circumstances. I may deliver such updates by email (including instructions on what to do if the university is closed for an extended period of time), so please regularly check your Weber email address or be sure that it forwards to your regular address.

Reading and lecture schedule

Part One: What is youth?

WEEK ONE: Introduction

(August 25-29)

- “Denaturalizing Adolescence: The Politics of Contemporary Representations” Nancy Lesko (ONLINE)

WEEK TWO: The construction of youth

(September 3, 5)

No class – Monday, September 1st

- “Adolescence in Historical Perspective.” John Demos and Virginia Demos (ONLINE)
- “A Tangle of Discourses: Girls Negotiating Adolescence.” Rebecca C. Raby (ONLINE)

Part Two: How do institutions manage youth delinquency?

WEEK THREE: The media and teen sexuality

(September 8-12)

- “For whose eyes only? The gatekeeping of sexual images in the field of teen sexuality.”
Tara Chittenden (ONLINE)
- “Teens and Sexting.” Amanda Lenhart (ONLINE)

Mini-assignment #1 due Wednesday, September 10th

WEEK FOUR: Homeless youth

(September 15-19)

- “‘Home Children’: Nurtured Childhood and Nurturing Childhood” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 70-92)
- “Betraying Motherdom: Maloqueiros and ‘That Life’ in the Street” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 93-117)
- [“Brazil police accused of ‘cleansing’ favelas before World Cup football carnival rolls into town” \(ONLINE\)](#)

Reaction paper #1 prompt distributed

WEEK FIVE: Survival strategies and violence on the streets

(September 22-26)

- “Being in the Street” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 41-69)
- “When Life Is Nasty, Brutish, and Short: Violence and Street Children” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 118-148)

Reaction paper #1 due in class Friday, September 26th

WEEK SIX: Social service institutions

(October 1-3)

No class – Monday, September 29th

- “Street Children and Their ‘Clients’” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 174-187)
- “Conclusion: The Ephemeral Lives of Street Children” *At Home in the Street* (pp. 188-214)

WEEK SEVEN: Social control and punishment*(October 6-10)*

- “Preface” *Punished* (pp. vii-xvi)
- “Dreams Deferred: The Patterns of Punishment in Oakland” *Punished* (pp. 3-23)
- “The Flatlands of Oakland and the Youth Control Complex” *Punished* (pp. 24-42)
- *Film: “Fruitvale Station” (optional)*

Mini-assignment #2 due Wednesday, October 8th**WEEK EIGHT: The youth control complex***(October 13, 15)***No class – Friday, October 17th**

- “The Labeling Hype: Coming of Age in the Era of Mass Incarceration” *Punished* (pp. 43-73)
- “The Coupling of Criminal Justice and Community Institutions” *Punished* (pp. 74-94)

WEEK NINE: Youth control in Ogden*(October 20-24)*

- "Legitimated oppression: Inner-city Mexican American experiences with police gang enforcement" (Robert J. Durán ONLINE)

Reaction paper #2 prompt distributed**WEEK TEN: Education***(October 27-31)*

- “The Civil Rights Movement Comes to Town” *Learning Capitalist Culture* (section “The Modern Civil Rights Movement Comes to North Town” pp. 3-6)
- “The Great American Football Ritual” *Learning Capitalist Culture* (pp. 28-62)
- For those of you taking sociological theory courses, I highly recommend Chapter 6 of *Learning Capitalist Culture*, which contains crystal clear explanations of Marx, Weber, Bourdieu, Gramsci, Habermas, and Goffman by connecting them to education.

Reaction paper #2 due in class Friday, October 31st

WEEK ELEVEN: Education, continued*(November 3-7)*

- “Finding an Identity in the Social Status Scene” *Learning Capitalist Culture* (pp. 63-100)
- [“Cool at 13: Adrift at 23” \(Jan Hoffman\)](#)

Mini-assignment #3 due Wednesday, November 5th**Part Three: How are youth both powerful and powerless?****WEEK TWELVE: Resistance***(November 10-14)*

- “Working and Playing Around in the Classroom” *Learning Capitalist Culture* (pp. 101-134)
- “‘Dummy Smart’: Misrecognition, Acting Out, and ‘Going Dumb’” *Punished* (pp. 97-123)

WEEK THIRTEEN: Activism*(November 17-21)*

- “Introduction” *We Fight to Win* (pp. 1-17)
- “Reading, Writing, and Radicalism: The Politics of Youth Activism on School Grounds” *We Fight to Win* (pp. 60-97)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Activism, continued*(November 24, 26)***No class – Friday, November 28th**

- “Allies Within and Without: Navigating the Terrain of Adult-Dominated Community Politics” *We Fight to Win* (pp. 98-132)
- “Conclusion” *We Fight to Win* (pp. 199-211)

Mini-assignment #4 due Wednesday, November 26th**WEEK FIFTEEN: Summing it up***(December 1-5)***Final paper due Monday, December 8th by noon**

Final assignment

Conduct an interview with a “juvenile delinquent,” or former juvenile delinquent, about being a delinquent, and then analyze the interview using concepts, theories, and other findings from the course. This is an opportunity to do real sociology – original data collection and analysis!

Part One: Recruit and interview a juvenile (or former juvenile) delinquent

Find and interview a current or former juvenile delinquent. Chances are you already know several people who fit this description, but if you don't, ask around to your friends and family – you should be able to find them quickly. This person **must** be over 18 years old.

Directly asking the questions in Part Two will probably not give you very good data. Instead, get them to “tell their story” in as much detail as possible, asking “probe” questions (such as “*Tell me more about that,*” “*Then what happened,*” or “*How did that make you feel*”) to get them to expand on their answers. Then analyze how what they said fits Part Two. If necessary, follow up your interview by later asking them specific questions that directly address Part Two. Don't worry! Most people **love** to talk about themselves, and especially their adventures in deviance.

Turn in a copy of your [NIH training certification](#), a signed informed consent form, a transcript of the interview, as well as an audio file of it (I have digital recorders, as well as transcription pedals, available).

Part Two: Analyze your interview

Answer the following **three prompts**, using direct quotes from your interview as “data” to support your arguments. Be sure to also back up your points with material from the course readings, citing at least **two direct quotes from two assigned books or articles for each of your three answers** (that is, six direct quotes minimum in the entire assignment). Each analysis should be about 3 pages long, for a total of about 10 typed, double-spaced pages.

A) How to make a delinquent – Contrary to views that criminals are “naturally” bad, sociological perspectives argue that delinquents and delinquency is shaped by forces outside of people. In this course, we have considered how various settings and institutions – online, the mass media, “the streets,” schools, and settings of activism – help generate juvenile delinquency. For example, Hecht argued that global economics and family poverty help create homeless youth, Rios argued that a “youth control complex” surrounded the youth that he studied, and Foley found that race and class shaped definitions of delinquency in high school. *What outside forces helped to “make” your interviewee a delinquent?*

(Continued on the next page)

B) The delinquent identity – We have also considered how forces outside of youth shape their identities. For example, Rios argued that, seeing their position as their personal responsibility, youth in Oakland internalized their deviance, and Gordon found that youth gained powerful identities with the help of activist communities. *How did your interviewee define themselves, and what influenced that definition?*

C) Youth resistance and agency – Many of the readings argued that delinquency by young people is not simply immaturity (or “hormones”), but it is a purposeful, and even political, reaction to the unique circumstances of youth. For example, Rios found that youth will take small, stupid risks – even with big consequences – as resistance against demeaning systems of authority, and Foley found that much deviance at school was class and race based. *How could the delinquency of your interviewee be defined as resistance, and what social forces were they resisting?*

Your answer will be graded on:

- 1)** The quality and completeness of your interview and transcription (*Is it complete? Is it useful for answering the prompts in Part Two, or did you need to ask more follow up questions?*). (10 points)
- 2)** How well you answer each question in Part Two (*Is it a careful and well-argued analysis, or is it incomplete, unorganized, or seem to be “thrown together”?*). (10 points)
- 3)** How well you incorporate the readings (*Is it grounded in a deep and well researched evidence that ties together multiple sources and main ideas, or is the use of readings a superficial skim of minor points and an out of context collection of quickly plucked quotations?*). (15 points)

Mini-assignments

- 1 *Teen sexuality and film* (September 10th). Watch **one** of the following films: “Dogtooth,” “Fast Times at Ridgemont High,” “Me and You and Everyone We Know,” or “Tomboy.”* Write up a two-page analysis describing a) which of Raby’s “five discourses of adolescence” it best fits and why, and c) how this film fits into the “field” of teen sexuality and opinions of “appropriate” sexual imagery of youth (Chittenden).
- 2 *Delinquency and punishment* (October 8th). Prepare a paragraph describing an event where you (or a very, very close friend of yours *wink, wink*) engaged in juvenile delinquency, and you were caught. What was the result, how did it fit (or not fit) the experience of the youth in *Punished*. Specifically, how did your experience reflect (or not reflect) how punishment is a “youth control complex”?
- 3 *Identity in high school* (November 5th). Foley describes the world of high school as filled with various identities – including jocks, band fags, vatos, activists, punks, greasers, kickers, nerds, druggies, and nobodies. Which one were you? Bring in a photo of yourself that proves it. Please make it as embarrassing as possible.
- 4 *An example of youth activism* (November 26th). Hit the web, or your own neighborhood, and bring an example of activism among high schoolers. How does their work go beyond the “citizens-in-the-making” model and the traditional education they are receiving?

* Each of these films contains explicit nudity and/or sexual talk involving teen characters, especially **Tomboy** and **Dogtooth**. **Watch at your own risk!** Let me know if you would prefer to develop an alternative assignment.