

SOCI 6182: SPECIAL SEMINAR—SCHOOL VIOLENCE
Course Syllabus, Spring 2008

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Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 11-12 and 2-3:30 & Wed. 10-12 and 1-4

Required Books:

- Cornell, *School Violence: Fears Versus Facts*
- Hinkle & Henry, *The Annals: School Violence*
- Newman et al., *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*

Course Description:

This course will address the nature and extent, causes and consequences, and proposed remedies to widely recognized forms of school violence such as bullying, fighting, sexual assaults/harassment, dating violence, and school shootings. Students will analyze, discuss, and write on a wide range of school violence literature (the assigned books and student-selected academic journal articles) produced by social scientists and expert professionals.

Learning Outcomes:

Adapted from the Sociology Graduate Program's Learning Outcomes, Graduate Catalog (p. 94)

- *Understand the use of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in the study of school violence
- *Understand and apply sociological/criminological theories to the study of school violence
- *Think critically about the craft of social science and issues of social inequality with regard to their application to the subject of school violence
- *Understand the social scientific study of school violence in depth
- *Effectively communicate knowledge of the issue of school violence orally and in writing

Readings & Attendance:

The assigned readings are indicated in the “Tentative Course Schedule.” They will serve as the bases for class discussions; therefore, it is imperative that you have the chapters read before class. You are expected to read/analyze all assigned readings.

Because of the design of the course, regular, productive attendance is the best way to learn, and you will be graded on the basis of how well you have learned. Much of the information you need to do well on exams and assignments is available only in class, so it is vital that you attend and take thorough notes. Chronic absence will severely limit your learning and hurt your performance in this course. You are always responsible for any material covered or announcements made in class. Missed exams and due dates must be formally excused by me.

Excused Absences

I will excuse an absence only in cases of proven unavoidable and **dire** circumstances. You must provide me with thorough, authentic documentation of such circumstances. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent, you must make arrangements with me right away to turn in assignments and/or take exams. Or if an unforeseen emergency incident renders you absent, then you must make contact with me **very soon** after that incident. In the case of an excused absence, you will still be responsible for making up any missed exams or assignments. A different version of the exam will be used as a make-up. **It is your responsibility to bring me proof of an excusable absence.** For example, I will not contact agencies, individuals, and other university departments to acquire your initial proof of excuse (although I will contact them to verify it.) **Also, please note that I am allowed to make judgments on what constitutes an excusable situation,** and I do not see conditions such as a touch of the flu or a typical cold as excusable for something as important as an exam or assignment due date even if you have proof of such a condition. **I will not excuse an absence, in advance or afterward, in situations in which it is simply inconvenient for you to come to class or turn in an assignment.**

Exams:

There will be 2 long-answer essay exams covering the required book readings. Each exam is worth 100 points and will be taken in class. From a list of questions, you will select 5 (**and only 5**) to answer, without the assistance of notes, books, or any other external sources; each question is worth up to 20 points. I will grade the exams based on how well knowledge of the reading materials is demonstrated. Your answers must be very thorough and descript, and well written—organization, clarity, and coherence are needed to convey that you know the material.

Exams must be taken on the scheduled dates in the “Tentative Course Schedule.” A make-up exam will only be given for an excused absence. In most cases, arrangements for alternative exam dates must be made prior to the scheduled exam date. **Exams will not be available on days prior to the scheduled date.** As a University of West Georgia student, you are expected to prioritize your academic obligations over many others such as work, and even many family matters. You are obligated to be present here for all classes throughout the entire

semester, including finals week and the days prior to and after breaks. In most cases, it is inappropriate to make plans that conflict with your course schedules.

Scholarly Paper:

This will be a secondary-source research paper on a particular school violence topic of your choosing. The topic must directly involve a recognized form of violent behavior taking place in school settings (K-12 and college/university), such as bullying, fighting, dating violence, sexual coercion, and shootings. If the topic does not directly pertain to school violence, according to my discretion, I will reject the paper. For example, a paper focusing on drug use, gangs, or violence in the home will be rejected. You should have me approve your topic before writing your paper. Your paper may be an objective report or a well-supported argument. However, **do not editorialize** in your paper—any opinions that are not properly supported by qualified sources will result in severe point loss. Also **avoid personal narratives**.

You may not include work that you have done on other projects—this paper must be original work done exclusively for this course. Your paper must be based on a minimum of 8 separate sources. The qualified sources must be from authentic academic books and journals only—**no websites, newspapers, or magazines** (popular or professional) for example. You should have me approve your sources before using them. **You may not use the required book readings for this course, in any way, in this paper.**

The following conventions will be strictly enforced. The entire paper must be 18-20 full pages (excluding references and title page), double-spaced, with 1.25" margins, Times New Roman font, and 12 point size. Correct in-text, parenthetical, citations and full bibliographical references must be provided. Failure to provide me with the information needed to verify your sources will result in severe point loss or even be considered plagiarism. You must format and compose your paper according to a consistent professional writing style guideline, such as ASA, APA, MLA, or Chicago Style. Anyone interested in the American Sociological Association (ASA) style of writing may visit: <http://www.westga.edu/~soccrim/Styleguide.htm>.

To allow enough time to produce a satisfactory paper, you need to start on this paper right away—**it is due by May 05** at the latest. You may turn the paper in as an e-mail attachment, but **it is your responsibility to make sure that I have a file that I can open by May 05**. It is best to try to e-mail me the paper at least two days before the due date, to allow yourself time to resolve any problems.

I expect the paper to be publishable quality and will grade it according to very high standards. The paper is worth 100 points, and I will grade it according to: Overall Thoroughness and Descriptiveness in Addressing a School Violence Topic—30 points; Overall Organization, Coherence, and Clarity—30 points; Appropriateness & Coverage of Sources—40 points.

Paper Presentation

You will give a 15 minute “roundtable style” presentation (remaining at your seat) of your scholarly paper to the class. The presentation is worth 50 points and will be graded according to your demonstrated breadth and depth of knowledge on your topic, as well as how you use and stick to the time limit; I will subtract points for finishing too soon and not finishing in time. **Do not bring visual aids or handouts**—just engage the class in a dialogue on your topic. The order of the presentations will be decided by a random draw.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism:

Important! This course is covered by the Department of Sociology & Criminology’s Academic Honesty Policy. Familiarizing yourself with this policy will help you avoid plagiarism and other activities that could create serious problems for you. Violations of this policy will be met with sanctions and ignorance of its provisions is not an acceptable excuse. Please read the policy by going to the department’s website (<http://www.westga.edu/~soccrim/>) and clicking on “Statement on Academic Honesty” underneath “Student Resources.” Also read the university policies regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in your student handbook. If you are interested, a precise definition of plagiarism is given by our English Department at <http://www.westga.edu/~engdept/Plagiarism/pladef.html>.

Academic Journals Available Online (free):

Just for your information, in case you are interested...

Western Criminology Review: <http://wcr.sonoma.edu/>

Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice: <http://swjcrj.cjcenter.org/masthead.html>

Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture: <http://www.albany.edu/scj/jcipc/index.html>

Justice Policy Journal: <http://www.cjcj.org/jpj/>

Online Quarterly Review of Crime, Ethics and Social Philosophy:

<http://www.erces.com/journal/Journal.htm>

International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences: <http://www.ijcjs.co.nr/>

Grading:

I use points and grades to assess only the student’s knowledge of the subject matter delivered in a course. I do not *directly* evaluate your behavior. Rather, I directly evaluate how you demonstrate your knowledge of the subject of this course. Neither do I *directly* grade your effort. A great deal of effort on your part is essential in fulfilling the requirements of this course, and increases your chances of getting your desired grade, but does not guarantee that you get your desired grade. If you are working hard but not receiving the grade(s) you want, you need to consider revising your learning strategies for the course and seek the necessary assistance. Further, I do not consider hardships in students’ lives when I grade their work—I will not “give you a break” because you are going through some tough times. I will make reasonable accommodations for students with excusable problems, but I will not lower standards or decrease the amount of work.

Your final grade will be the percentage of your total accumulated points out of the 350 possible points from the two exams, paper, and presentation, using the following scale: **90% + = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; 59% and below = F**

Tentative Course Schedule:

1/14: Introduction

1/28: Cornell: Preface through Chapter 5

2/04: Cornell: Chapters 6 through 10

2/11: Hinkle & Henry: Preface through Douglas E. Thompkins article (first 5)

2/18: Hinkle & Henry: Peter J. Venturelli through A. Troy Adams articles (next 5)

2/25: Hinkle & Henry: Hal Pepinsky through Cohn & Hinkle articles (last 4)

3/03: **Exam 1—Cornell and Hinkle & Henry books**

3/10: Newman et al.: Preface and Chapters 1-3

3/24: Newman et al.: Chapters 4-6

3/31: Newman et al.: Chapters 7-9

4/07: Newman et al.: Chapters 10-11 & Epilogue

4/14: **Paper Presentations**

4/21: **Paper Presentations**

4/28: **Exam 2—Newman et al. book**

5/05: **Scholarly Paper Due**