

## **SOCL 4468: Sociology of Gangs**

### Spring 2020

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**Class Location/Time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30pm - 2:50pm, 116 Stubbs Hall

### **SOCL 4468: SOCIOLOGY OF GANGS (3)**

Prereq.: SOCL 2301 or equivalent. The sociological study of gangs in modern society.

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course presents an overview of the nature of street gangs. A general survey of theory, measurement, and reproach on gangs along with gang control programs and policies will be presented. Diverse research-based perspectives about gangs will be exposed to students, often times contrasting with depictions of gangs from law enforcement and the news/entertainment media. Various mediums will be used to illustrate the gap between the idea of what a street gang is and the reality of street gangs. The emphasis in this course is too critically evaluate what we know about street gangs, their relationship to crime, and what public policies can and should be used to deter crime and violence.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- To **describe** basic definitions of gangs and why these groups are considered to be a problem in society;
- To **explore** different theoretical perspectives used to explain the emergence, development and persistence of gangs;
- To **understand** the extent, nature, and criminal involvement of gangs in both America and globally;
- To **critically evaluate** the effectiveness and the consequences of suppression, intervention, and prevention strategies used to combat gangs;
- To **become smart consumers** of news reports, political rhetoric, and public discussion about youth crime, gangs, and other criminal groups.

#### **ASSIGNED TEXTS:**

Howell, James C. & Elizabeth Griffiths. 2018. **Gangs In America's Communities (3rd Ed)**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

\*Additional articles / chapters are posted on MOODLE.

#### **REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

Gang ethnography and gang films used for course papers (see assignments below).

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING**

Students are expected to come to class on time and remain for the entire class. Attendance and participation are vital components to being successful in this class. The reading assignments should be completed by the dates indicated on the schedule below. In class, you should be prepared to demonstrate your understanding of the reading material (or at least have a set of thoughtful questions) and prepared to offer a point of view about the issues being addressed. Participation by students produces a more thoughtful discussion making the course not only more interesting but more meaningful. Class attendance / participation is worth 20% of your grade.

Reading quizzes will be given out periodically throughout the quarter. If students are actively engaged in class discussion then quizzes will become infrequent. However, if class participation is lacking then quizzes will be relied upon to gauge student preparedness. **Participation will be given to students through a 1 page summary of an assigned supplemental reading. If no supplemental readings are assigned then students responding to questions or asking questions during class will receive up to 2 points maximum per student per class.**

Four class writing assignments will be given throughout the semester (**see examples below**). These will consist of watching a documentary and responding to a writing prompt(s). Papers will be between 3-4 pages in length.

A class paper will be given and due the final week of the semester. Each student will choose a gang ethnography to read and write a 8-10 page essay assessing how themes from class are depicted in the text. This assignment is worth 20% of your overall course grade.

Students will also be required to participate in a group project. Groups will be based upon a students selection of two gang-related films. Generally, students will discuss the myths and realities of how gangs are portrayed in each film and also compare and contrast how gangs are depicted in these films. Each group will be required to present their project on **April 23, 2020** during the second to last week of the semester.

Three in class exams (non-cumulative) will be given on **February 6, 2020; February 27, 2020; April 16, 2020**. The final examination (cumulative) will be given during the examination period on **May 9, 2020** from **1:30 pm to 3:30 pm**. The final is comprehensive. All exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. All students will be taking the class for a letter grade; there is no pass/fail option.

Grades will be distributed as follows:

		<u>Grading Scale:</u>	
<b>Class Attendance / Participation</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>97% - 100%</b>	<b>A+</b>
<b>Quizzes</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>94% - 96.99%</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>Writing Assignments</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>90% - 93.99%</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>Gang Ethnography Paper</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>87% - 89.99%</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>Group Project - Gang Film</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>84% - 86.99%</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>Exams</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>80% - 83.99%</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>77% - 79.99%</b>	<b>C+</b>
		<b>74% - 76.99%</b>	<b>C</b>
		<b>70% - 73.99%</b>	<b>C-</b>
		<b>67% - 69.99%</b>	<b>D+</b>
		<b>64% - 66.99%</b>	<b>D</b>
		<b>60% - 63.99%</b>	<b>D-</b>
		<b>0% - 59.99%</b>	<b>F</b>

**\*Graduate students taking this course are required to read an additional gang ethnography book and write an additional 8-10 page essay connecting course themes with how gangs are discussed in the text. Lastly, an additional 8-10 page essay will be required comparing the gang ethnographies read for the class.**

### **COURSE POLICIES**

Academic Misconduct and Classroom Etiquette: Students are expected to abide by the LSU student code of conduct. Students who are caught cheating on an exam you will be referred to LSU's Dean of Students. Students are also expected to abide by the basic rules of classroom etiquette including: getting to class on time and coming prepared to engage; turning off all electronic devices; not talking during lectures; and remaining respectful of diverse views when engaging in classroom debate. All views are allowed and welcome; however, expressing them in a respectful way is required. Reasonable people can disagree, but disagreement needs to be expressed in ways that are conducive to the free exchange of ideas, productive dialogue, and meaningful learning.

**Use of Technology in the Classroom:** Please turn off **all** cell phones & pagers or any other electronic communication and/or entertainment devices (e.g., MP3, or CD players) before coming to class. Students with phones that ring during class will be asked to leave. Computers and portable devices (e.g., Tablets) are to be used solely to take notes.

**Missed Classes:** If you miss a class, you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week of the day (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for examples of valid reasons for absences). Missing class more than once or twice is likely to compromise your grade.

**Missed Exams:** If you miss an exam, you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week of the exam day (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for examples of valid reasons for absences). All make-up exams will be administered at my discretion and at a time and place of my choosing. If you miss a scheduled make-up exam you will receive a zero for your exam grade, which will make it very difficult to pass this course.

**Grade Disputes:** As mistakes may occur and the instructor admits he is not perfect, students feeling that an error was made in grading an assignment may utilize the following procedure to challenge the score: Students should return a copy of their assignment along with a written statement arguing why the grade needs to be adjusted should be turned into the instructor within two weeks of the assignment's return. An assignment or exam grade is considered final after two weeks of its posting. The instructor will evaluate the student's argument and reevaluate the grade. The instructor will then discuss the argument with the student during office hours. Please be aware, the instructor may possibly downgrade the assignment if during the reassessment he notes additional errors **and any curve applied to the original grading will no longer apply**. Since a paper may be downgraded, group-work will not be reevaluated unless all group members consent to the process.

**Disability:** Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the professor privately to discuss specific needs. Also, contact the LSU Disability Services at (225) 578-5919 as soon as possible to better ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

### **OUT OF CLASS EXPECTATIONS**

It is expected that the students have read the assigned chapters or pages prior to class for the background necessary to properly participate in the discussion and think critically about the concepts addressed. As a general policy, for each hour you are in class, you (the student) should plan to spend at least two hours preparing for the next class. Since this course is for three credit hours, you should expect to spend around six hours outside of class each week reading/writing assignments for class.

### **COURSE SUGGESTIONS:**

Although it is not required, you are encouraged to:

1. Raise your hand in class, question the professor, and engage with the material via discussion!
2. Get acquainted with one another. Exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers. Form study groups. Engage in collaborative learning. Studies show that students who engage in collaborative learning tend to do better in college and beyond.
3. See the professor and/or the GA as often as is necessary to do well in this course. Do not wait until problems are irreparable or concerns are outdated to seek assistance. Try to make it to our office hours but if that is not possible make an appointment. If you extend the effort, we will be available and willing to help you do well in this class.

### **CONTENT & TRIGGER ADVISORY**

Several of the materials, used in class and assigned, contain mature themes with coarse language and adult content - viewer discretion is advised. To a degree, this is the point of using these materials to better understand street gangs and the larger social world - learning can be an uncomfortable process. If you have specific triggers, please let me know and I will note the assignments accordingly. However, this will not release you from the assignment. The trigger warnings are to give you the tools you require to complete the assigned work.

### **COPYRIGHT ISSUES**

Copyright law protects this syllabus, my lectures, and all materials distributed and presented to me during this course. You are authorized to take notes in this class, but that authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your personal use and no other use. You are not authorized, and it is a violation of University policy, to sell, license, commercially publish, post, distribute, transmit, display, nor record notes from this class unless you have my written consent to do so. Students in this course have my permission to share notes with one another or with the Office of Disability Services, but may not transmit them to students not enrolled in this course this semester.

### **RIGHT TO MODIFY SYLLABUS**

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1: INTRODUCTION**

January 16th

#### **THE WARRIORS**

#### **Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Preface

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 1: Boys of Summer

Episode 2: Soft Eyes

### **Week 2: STREET GANG HISTORY**

January 21st

#### **Class Orientation**

#### **Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 1

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 3: Home Rooms

Episode 4: Refugees

Episode 5: Alliances

January 23rd

#### **History of Gangs in the United States**

#### **Institutionalization of Street Gangs**

**Watch:** Rubble Kings

### **Week 3: REALITY / PROMISE OF GANGS**

January 28th

#### **Myths & Realities of Gangs**

#### **Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 2 & 7

Coughlin & Venkatesh, 2003 (Moodle)

Felson, 2006 (Moodle)

Maxson, 1998 (Moodle)

January 30th

#### **National Gang Problem Trends**

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 6: Margin of Error

Episode 7: Unto Others

### **Week 4: DEFINING GANGS & MEMBERS**

February 4th

#### **Definitional Problems**

#### **Studying Youth Gangs**

#### **Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 3

Curry, 2015 (Moodle)

Katz & Jackson-Jacobs, 2004 (Moodle)

Hughes, 2005 (Moodle)

February 6th

#### **EXAM 1**

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 8: Corner Boys

Episode 9: Know Your Place

**Week 5: MACRO-LEVEL GANG THEORY**

February 11th

**Social Disorganization Theory**  
**Reaction Formation Theory**  
**Subcultural Theory**  
**Strain Theory**

February 13th

**Underclass Theory**  
**Routine Activities Theory**  
**Social Conflict Theory**

**Week 6: MICRO-LEVEL GANG THEORY**

February 18th

**Life-course Theory**  
**Social Learning Theory**  
**Interactional Theory**  
**Multiple Marginality**  
**Risk & Protective Factors**  
**Unified Theory**  
**Evolutionary Theory**

February 20th - No Class

**Week 7:**

February 25th - No Class

**MARDI GRAS BREAK**

February 27th

**EXAM 2**

**Week 8: RACE / ETHNICITY & GANGS**

March 3rd

**Latino/Hispanic/Chicano**  
**Black**  
**White**

March 5th

**Asian**  
**Indigenous**  
**Immigrant**

**Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 4

Papachristos & Hughes, 2015 (Moodle)

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 10: Misgivings

Episode 11: A New Day

**Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 5

Ayling, 2011 (Moodle)

Wood & Alleyne, 2010 (Moodle)

**Watch:** The Wire - Season 4

Episode 12: That's Got His Own

Episode 13: Final Grades

**Read:**

Brown et al., 2012 (Moodle)

Chambliss, 1973 (Moodle)

Krohn et al., 2011 (Moodle)

Moore, 2000 (Moodle)

Tapia, 2019 (Moodle)

Freng et al., 2012 (Moodle)

Tsunokai & Kposowa, 2002 (Moodle)

White, 2009 (Moodle)

Moeller, 2017 (Moodle)

**Week 9: GROUP PROCESSES & STRUCTURE;  
GENDER & GANGS**

March 10th

**Gang Structure  
Group Processes  
Social Network Analysis**

**Read:**

Decker & Curry, 2002 (Moodle)  
Klein & Maxson, 2006 (Moodle)  
Sierra-Arevalo & Papachristos, 2015  
(Moodle)

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 6

March 12th

**Female Gang Members**

Esbensen & Carson, 2012 (Moodle)  
Hughes et al., 2019 (Moodle)  
Miller, 1973 (Moodle)  
Panfil & Peterson, 2015 (Moodle)

**Week 10: URBAN GANGS & VIOLENCE**

March 17th

**Gang Violence**

**Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 8

March 19th

**Gangs & Local Communities**

Barton et al., 2019 (Moodle)  
Brantingham et al., 2012 (Moodle)  
Huebner et al., 2016 (Moodle)  
Valasik et al., 2017 (Moodle)  
Valasik, 2018 (Moodle)  
Vigil, 2002 (Moodle)

**Week 11: SPRING BREAK**

March 24th - No Class

**SPRING BREAK**

March 26th - No Class

**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 12: RURAL, SUBURBAN, INTER-/  
TRANS-NATIONAL GANGS**

March 31st

**Lives in Hazard**

**Read:**

Glosser, 2016 (Moodle)  
Johnstone, 1981 (Moodle)  
Watkins & Taylor, 2016 (Moodle)

April 2nd

**Rural & Suburban Gangs**

**Watch:** [Crips & Bloods: Made in America](#)

**Week 13: “NON-TRADITIONAL” GANGS**

April 7th

**Inter-/Trans-National Gangs**

April 9th

**Prison Gangs**

**Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs)**

**Week 14: “NON-TRADITIONAL” GANGS**

April 14th

**Fraternities & Sororities**

**Alt-Right Gangs**

**Terrorist Groups**

April 16th

**EXAM 3**

**Week 15: GANG DESISTENCE**

April 21st

**Leaving Gangs**

April 23rd

**Group Project Presentations**

**Week 16: RESPONSES TO GANGS**

April 28th

**Prevention**

**Intervention**

**Suppression**

April 30th

**Issues with Responding to Gangs / Wrap Up**

**Read:**

Cruz, 2010 (Moodle)

Gatti et al., 2011 (Moodle)

Higginson & Benier, 2015 (Moodle)

Klein, 1996 (Moodle)

Winton, 2014 (Moodle)

Gaston & Huebner, 2015 (Moodle)

Mitchell et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Skarbeck, 2011 (Moodle)

Roks & Densley, 2019 (Moodle)

Rostami & Modani, 2019 (Moodle)

**Read:**

Hughey, 2008 (Moodle)

DeCook, 2018 (Moodle)

Reid & Valasik, 2018 (Moodle)

Valasik & Reid, 2019 (Moodle)

Pyrooz & Densely, 2018 (Moodle)

Decker & Pyrooz, 2011 (Moodle)

Valasik & Phillips, 2017 (Moodle)

**Watch:** [Father G & The Homeboys](#)  
[G-DOG](#)

**Read:**

Carson, 2019 (Moodle)

Carson & Vecchio, 2015 (Moodle)

Deane et al., 2007 (Moodle)

O’Neal et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Pyrooz & Decker, 2014 (Moodle)

**Watch:** [The Interrupters](#)

**Read:**

Howell & Griffiths - Chapter 9 & 10

Bichler et al., 2019 (Moodle)

Bjerregaard, 2015 (Moodle)

Braga, 2015 (Moodle)

Gravel et al., 2013 (Moodle)

Valasik et al., 2016 (Moodle)

Densley & Pyrooz, 2019 (Moodle)

Van Damme, 2017 (Moodle)

**Week 17: FINAL EXAM**

Tuesday / Thursday 1:30 - 2:50

**May 9th (Saturday)**

**1:30pm - 3:30pm**

## Gang Ethnography Paper

Read one of the ethnographies listed below and select two themes (weekly course topics) for comparison from the ethnographic depiction versus other research discussed in this class. Research the literature. Write a **8-10 page** essay that assesses the way these issues are portrayed in the book comparing and contrasting it with the scholarly research. Depth is favored over breadth, but you might introduce your paper with a more general discussion (e.g., definitions, distribution).

Your discussion should include your opinion on how the ethnography might inform/influence public opinion and policy/responses to gangs. The use of scholarly sources beyond the required reading assignments are encouraged, and ignoring additional literature will impact your grade. After you have conducted your initial research, contact me for assistance if you wish direction to other scholarly resources on particular themes or topics.

A electronic copy must be submitted by 5pm on **March 31st**.

If you fail to submit an electronic copy the assignment will be considered late and you will lose 10 points, and an additional **10 points each subsequent day!** Papers must be in 12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, and have 1 inch margins. Below is the grading rubric.

Connecting Course Material with Ethnography -----	65pts
Format (Grammar, punctuation, Spelling, etc.)-----	15pts
Structure of the overall paper-----	10pts
Following Directions -----	10pts

### Ethnography List

**One of the Guys** - Jodi Miller  
**People & Folks** - John Hagedorn  
**A Rainbow of Gangs** - Diego Vigil  
**Dead End Kids** - Mark S. Fleisher  
**Chinatown Gangs** - Ko-lin Chin  
**Gangsters without Borders** - T.W. Ward  
**The Beast** - Oscar Martinez  
**The Racist Mind** - Raphael S. Ezekiel  
**Inside Organized Racism** - Katherine Blee  
**Everything You Love Will Burn** - Vegas Tenold  
**Wounded City** - Robert Vargas  
**The Triangle** - Kevin Deutsch  
**The Truce** - Karen Umemoto  
**Real Gangstas** - Timothy Lager  
**Punished** - Victor Rios  
**Going Down To The Barrio** - Joan Moore  
**Jumped In** - Jorga Leap  
**Gang Life in Two Cities** - Robert Duran  
**Life In The Gang** - Scott Decker & Barrik Van Winkle  
**Mexican American Girls and Gang Violence** - Alverado Valdez  
**The Gang's All Queer** - Vanessa R. Panfil

## **Gang Film Assignment - Group Project**

Select two films listed below, from two separate categories. View the two selected films. Select several main themes from class (weekly course topics) for comparison. Focus on how the film depicts gangs compared to what is known in the gang literature. Pay close attention of the time period around when a film is created and the social context of gangs at that time. Additionally, what is the time period that the film is depicting. Is it portraying street gangs in an accurate manner or are modern day biases present? Special attention should be paid on how, in your opinion, the (mis)representation of gangs in the film might impact/influence public opinion and potentially policy/responses to gangs. Your group will prepare a 10 minute presentation highlighting your findings and argument.

The use of scholarly sources beyond the required reading assignments are encouraged, and ignoring additional literature will impact your grade. After you have conducted your initial research, contact me for assistance if you wish direction to other scholarly resources on particular themes or topics.

Group presentations will take place on Thursday, **April 23rd**.

### **Below is the grading rubric:**

Connecting Course Material with the Films -----	45pts
Comparison of the Two Films-----	25pts
Creativity-----	25pts
Clarity of Presentation -----	5pts
Structure of the Overall Presentation-----	10pts
Following Directions/Time Management -----	15pts

**Film List**

African American Experience

**Blue Hill Ave**  
**Boyz N the Hood**  
**Chi-Raq**  
**Gang Tapes**  
**Juice**  
**Menace 2 Society**  
**New Jack City**  
**South Central**

Latino/Hispanic

**American Me**  
**Blood In, Blood Out**  
**Boulevard Nights**  
**La Mission**  
**Walk Proud**

Asian

**Bang Bang**  
**China Girl**  
**Revenge of the Green Dragons**

Classic

**Deuces Wild**  
**Lords of Flatbush**  
**The Outsiders**  
**Rumble Fish**  
**The Wanderers**  
**West Side Story**

Policing Gangs

**Assault on Precinct 13**  
**Colors**  
**Dirty**  
**Training Day**

Suburban/Schools

**The Breakfast Club**  
**Class of 1984**  
**SubUrbia**  
**The Sandlot**  
**Tuff Turf**

Females & Gangs

**Havoc**  
**Mi Vida Loca**  
**Set It Off**

Urban/Schools

**Dope**  
**Fresh**  
**The Land**  
**One Eight Seven**  
**Stand and Deliver**

Skinheads/Alt-Right

**American History X**  
**The Believer**  
**Green Room**  
**Imperium**  
**Romper Stomper**

Non-Traditional

**Animal House**  
**Lords of Dogtown**  
**Mean Streets**  
**Point Break**  
**Revenge of the Nerds**  
**Shot Caller**

European

**Bullet Boy**  
**A Clockwork Orange**  
**Green Street Hooligans**  
**Kidulthood**

International

**City of God**  
**Sin Nombre**  
**Tsosti**