ETHNICITY, RACE, AND JUSTICE (SPRING 2020)
Sociology / Chican@ and Latin@ Studies / Legal Studies 440
Monday / Wednesday 4:00 – 5:15pm
Sewell Social Sciences Building 5231
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Instructor: Michael Light, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology
Office: 8144 Sewell Social Sciences Building & 310 Ingraham Hall
Office Hours: Monday 1:00-2:00pm & appointment (Sewell)
Email: mlight@ssc.wisc.edu
Instructional Mode: Face-to-Face
Canvas site: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/191094

Credits: 3. This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall/spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Course Description

“Every cobbler thinks leather is the only thing, and for better or worse, I am a sociologist.”
C. Wright Mills (1959)

“The Problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line.”
W.E.B. Du Bois (1899)

This course utilizes a variety of theoretical and empirical tools from social and legal research to examine four interconnected domains surrounding the intersection of ethnicity, race, and justice: 1) racial and ethnic relations in society 2) racial and ethnic differences in crime and violence, 3) racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system, and 4) race and ethnicity under the law. A variety of specific topics will be addressed, including sociological theories of racial/ethnic differences in violence, disparities in punishment (including the death penalty), and the consequences of mass incarceration for racial/ethnic inequality. Given the voluminous amount of legal research specific to racial differences, a major focus of this course will be to move beyond the black/white dichotomy, with a specific emphasis on US Latinos – the largest minority group in the United States.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will develop an empirically grounded understanding of ethnic and racial differences in crime and criminal justice outcomes and be able to analyze these patterns through the application of theory in the social sciences.

2. Students will engage major theoretical debates in social and legal scholarship. Why are there racial/ethnic disparities in crime and violence? How and why have these disparities changed over time? Are minorities treated differently by legal officials? Has mass
incarceration mitigated or exacerbated racial and ethnic inequality? How has the Supreme Court viewed issues of ethnicity, race, and the law?

3. Students will competently interpret representations of data and critically analyze study design in published research on ethnicity, race, and justice.

4. Through engagement with course readings and class discussion, students will establish a foundation for critically assessing the often controversial issues surrounding ethnicity, race, crime, and the law in society.

**Required Materials**
All course readings are available on canvas.

**Course Grading**
Your grade is based on two exams, two written evaluations of articles published in peer-reviewed journals, and participation in class.

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**Grading:** The standard UW grading scale will be used.

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**Exams:** There will be two exams in this course. You are responsible for all material from lectures (including media) and the assigned readings for the exams. The exams will be some combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essays. The exams will not technically be cumulative, but there are concepts that will carry over from the previous parts of the course for which you will be responsible. There will be **no makeup exams** without a valid, documented excuse.

**Participation:** Your participation is gauged by your attendance. You are allowed to miss **three classes** without penalty. More than three unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. We will be using the **Acadly** to take attendance. This is a free app you will need to download to your phone. **The join code is FG4LZF.** It is also VERY important that you do the readings and participate in class. The class size is ideal for generating good discussions and I will count on you all to be able to speak knowledgably about course materials.
Article Evaluations: The ability to evaluate evidence is a central and necessary skill. In these assignments your goal is to systematically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of two peer-reviewed articles, both of which examine critical issues in race, ethnicity, and justice. These written evaluations should be approximately 3 single-spaced pages and contain the following sections:

1) **Research Question**: what is the research question(s) being examined?
2) **Research Gap**: There are only two kinds of research articles; you’re either doing something new or something different. Explain the gap that this article seeks to fill? How do they plan to do that?
3) **Evaluation**: what do they conclude? Do they offer convincing evidence for their conclusion? The question to ask yourself is this: do you buy it? If so, why? If not, tell me why you think that? (**note**: this should be the biggest section of the essay)
4) **Further Research**: what is left unanswered? How could this study be improved?

**Evaluation I: due Feb. 24, 2020**

**Evaluation II: due April 15, 2020**

**Course Outline**
Readings will be made available online at this course’s Canvas site:  
[https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/191094](https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/191094). Readings can be found by clicking on the tab for that week in the semester. It is expected that readings will be done **prior to** the first meeting each week.

The readings are located under the following headlines:

**Week 1: Introduction (Jan. 22nd)**
No readings

**Week 2: Overview and Empirical Reality (Jan. 27th & 29th)**
Week 3: Racial/Ethnic Stratification (Feb. 3rd & 5th)


Week 4: Stratification and Crime (Feb. 10th & 12th)


Week 5: Immigration and Crime (Feb. 17th & 19th)


Week 6: Crime and Criminal Justice beyond White, Black, and Hispanic (Feb. 24th & 26th)

Week 7: Race/Ethnicity and the Politics of Crime and Incarceration (March 2nd & 4th)


Week 8: Perceptions of Fairness and Justice (March 9th & 11th)


Week 9: Spring Break (March 16th & 18th) (NO CLASSES)

Week 10: Catch up and Mid-Term (March 23rd & 25th)

No Readings!
Exam #1 is on Wednesday March 25th!

Week 11: Disparities in Policing and Prosecution (March 30th)


- There will be no class on April 1st (I will be traveling)
Week 12: Race/Ethnicity and Punishment (April 6th & 8th)


Week 13: Mass Incarceration (April 13th & 15th)


Week 14: Race & the Law (April 20th & 22nd)


Provine, Doris Marie. 2007. *Unequal under Law: Race in the War on Drugs*. University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 6)

Week 15: Latinos & the Law (April 27th & 29th)


- During Week 15, we will also plan a review for the Final Exam

*Final Exam is on Sunday May 3rd at 7:25pm!*
Course Policies and Friendly Reminders

- **Classroom Civility.** The study of race/ethnicity and crime requires discussing sensitive and often controversial topics that may be uncomfortable for some students. I encourage both good discussions and critical assessment of issues, however, I require that students will respect their peers and inflammatory remarks will be dealt with accordingly. The University of Wisconsin is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion and welcomes individuals of all ages, religions, sex, sexual orientations, races, nationalities, languages, military experience, disabilities, family statuses, gender identities and expressions, political views, and socioeconomic statuses. Behaviors that threaten, harass, discriminate or that are disrespectful of others will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behaviors will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Dean of Students Office. Please visit UW’s Nondiscrimination policy for more information: https://oed.wisc.edu/statement-of-non-discrimination.htm.

- **Accommodations.** Please inform the instructor if you are eligible for necessary accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course. This may be the case if English is your second language or you experience a physical or psychological condition that makes it difficult for you to complete assignments and/or exams without some modification of those tasks. Accommodations are provided for students who qualify for disability services through the McBurney Center. Their website has detailed instructions about how to qualify: https://mcburney.wisc.edu/.

- **Academic honesty.** As with all courses at the University of Wisconsin, you are expected to follow the University’s rules and regulations pertaining to academic honesty and integrity. The standards are outlined by the Office of the Dean of Students at http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/. According to UWS 14, academic misconduct is defined as:
  - seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation
  - uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise
  - forges or falsifies academic documents or records
  - intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others
  - engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance
  - assists other students in any of these acts.

- **Other Issues.** It is important that YOU stay on top of issues as it relates to the class. The worst thing you can do is come to me at the end of the semester and bring up issues that happened weeks and months earlier.

**Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights.** The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science.

**Department learning objectives.** Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content described above, the course is designed to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:
Critically Evaluate Published Research. Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.

Communicate Skillfully: Sociology majors write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.

Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes: Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.