

SOC 6630 – Comparative Criminology

Dr. Susan M. Carlson
Department of Sociology
Western Michigan University

Fall Semester 2010

Thursday 4-6:20

KCSR Conference Room

Phone: 387-5275

E-mail: susan.carlson@wmich.edu

Homepage: <http://homepages.wmich.edu/~scarlson>

Office: SAN 2404

Hours: Tuesday 2-7:30, after
class, and by appointment

The field of comparative criminology includes studies by area specialists who study one particular country other than their own, or a group of countries in a particular region of the world. In these studies comparisons are implicit, with the researcher's own country serving as the point of comparison. Others in the field explicitly make comparisons of similarities and differences between nations with the goal of developing theory to explain these cross-national similarities and differences.

This seminar begins with an examination of comparative methods used in the social sciences to provide background for reading original research that uses these methods to address research questions in the fields of criminology and criminal justice. Then we will turn to research on one particular topic in the field, comparative studies of punishment.

Students will prepare comprehensive reviews of the international/comparative literature on a topic of their choice. They will share the results of these reviews with the seminar.

By the end of the seminar, students will have a working knowledge of comparative research methods. In addition, they will have developed an appreciation for how comparative studies enhance our understanding of key areas within the field of criminology.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Cavadino, Michael and James Dignan. 2006. *Penal Systems: A Comparative Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Garland, David. 2001. *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nelken, David. 2010. *Comparative Criminal Justice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ragin, Charles C. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Papers

For the weeks we do assigned readings, all seminar participants will prepare a brief discussion paper covering each article and/or chapter read. These should NOT be summaries of the readings themselves, but your thoughts that reflect your intellectual engagement with each piece. They should include at least one part that you found new, provocative, puzzling, unclear, confusing, and/or interesting. You may take issue with the author's posing of the research question, methods used, and/or interpretation of the key findings. Most important of all, **they should include something that you personally find most interesting and that you would like to talk about during our seminar discussion**. Thus, they should pose a clear question that can be readily discussed by seminar participants. There is no set length for these questions/reactions. Your question/reaction for each chapter/article may be very short (e.g., around 200 words), or it may be longer. Just keep in mind that all seminar participants will be reading them (see below).

The discussion papers will be due on Tuesday by 8:00 a.m. and should be e-mailed to each seminar participant (including me 😊). I will arrange them into an agenda of themes and questions for our seminar discussion on Thursday. All seminar participants should read the discussion papers before they come to class. During the seminar, when we get to a specific agenda item, students who contributed to that issue in their papers will be asked to speak first on the topic.

Discussion papers and seminar participation will constitute 40% of your semester grade. I will not grade the discussion papers. You will receive full credit if you turn in a paper and have covered all the articles/chapters in it. You will lose credit for not turning in a paper by the deadline (no late papers accepted) or if they are incomplete.

Seminar Term Paper

Each student is required to write a comprehensive review of the comparative/international research literature on a criminological topic of interest. Acceptable topics would include a particular theory of group of related theories (e.g., research using Marxist theories, or research using feminist theories), a criminal justice issue (e.g., death penalty, gun control, juvenile delinquency), or a part of the criminal justice system (e.g., courts, policing). However, it may NOT include punishment as this is a topic we will be covering in our seminar readings. The paper should cover all the international/comparative research literature on your topic published between 1980 and 2010.

To find the relevant literature, you should begin with doing keyword searches using the *Criminal Justice Abstracts* and the *Sociological Abstracts* (these can be searched simultaneously in the CSA data base). I would also strongly urge you to use the bibliographic software *Refworks* to organize your citations and the write-and-cite feature in writing your paper. In addition to these searches, be sure to scrutinize the bibliographies of the papers you find. A lot of comparative research appears in anthologies that may or may not be abstracted by the *Criminal Justice Abstracts* and the *Sociological Abstracts*. There is no minimum or maximum page limit because some of your topics will receive more attention in the comparative criminological literature than others. Your goal is to cover what is out there in a comprehensive way.

Your comprehensive review should be structured like those in the *Annual Review of Sociology* (the library has a full on-line subscription from ASA (recent years) and archived in *JSTOR*, so use some of these reviews as models). You will need to come up with some structure that makes sense to organize your literature review. For example, you may want to breakdown your studies by the type of comparative method used—e.g., variable-centered, case-centered, qualitative comparative method, mixed methods—and have a section on each one. Another alternative might be an organization based on theoretical perspectives. In the end it will depend on what you find and the themes that exist in the literature. In-text citations should be in *American Sociological Association* style which is available in *Refworks* under *American Sociological Review*.

For each article (or group of articles if the same authors write several using the same data), you will include a brief description of the theory used, methods, key findings, and strengths and weaknesses that you find. In the concluding section of your paper you will summarize the current knowledge on your topic and make recommendations (based on gaps you found in the literature) about future directions for research (some of which you might want to pursue!!!).

On December 2nd and 9th, students will present the preliminary drafts of their papers to the class. These drafts will be distributed to seminar participants one week before they are to be presented so all of us will have a chance to read them. The presentation should be structured like one you would give at a professional conference. Allow about 20 minutes to summarize your paper and

be sure to use PowerPoint or some other way to summarize your work. Seminar participants will then discuss your paper and offer constructive feedback of how you might improve your presentation and the paper. Use this criticism well in revising your paper. All seminar papers are due by 6:30 p.m. on December 16th.

I will grade your presentation and final draft of your paper. The presentation is worth 10% of your final grade, while the paper constitutes 50%.

SUMMARY OF GRADING:

Discussion papers and seminar participation	40%
Presentation of seminar term paper	10%
Final draft of term paper	<u>50%</u>
	100%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog http://catalog.wmich.edu/content.php?catoid=14&navoid=464#stud_acad_cond that pertain to Student Academic Conduct. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity, and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact Ms. Dorothy Fancher at 387-4128 or dorothy.fancher@wmich.edu, or Ms. Beth Denhartigh at 387-2120 or at beth.denhartigh@wmich.edu at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor. For more information, please visit <http://www.dsrs.wmich.edu/>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Introduction to Course

September 9 Welcome, overview of seminar, selection of topic for term project

Part I. Comparative Methods in the Social Sciences

September 16 Ragin (1987) Preface and Overview, and Chapters 1-5; Bollen (1993)

September 23 Nelken (2010) All

September 30 Special issue, *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* (Fall 2009)

Part II. Comparative Research on Punishment

October 7 Garland (2001) Preface and Chapters 1-4

October 14 Garland (2001) Chapters 5-8

October 21 Cavadino and Dignan (2006) Preface and Chapters 1-6

October 28 Cavadino and Dignan (2006) Chapters 7-11 and 17

November 4 Recent journal articles on comparative punishment TBA

November 11 Recent journal articles on comparative punishment TBA

[No class November 18, American Society of Criminology meeting and November 25, Thanksgiving break]

Part III. Comparative Research on Selected Topics

December 2 Research paper presentations, topics 1 and 2

December 9 Research paper presentations, topics 3 and 4

December 16 Papers due by 6:30 p.m.