SOC 561 - VIOLENCE AND U.S. SOCIETY

Dr. Susan L. Caulfield       Fall, 2004
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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to cover various topics related to violence and U.S. society. A cursory examination will be made of traditional definitions and studies of violence, with more depth devoted to topics not generally addressed. This course will push the boundaries of traditional definitions, in an attempt to better understand both the definitions that are created and used by the criminal justice process and, more importantly, those definitions that are not used or are ignored. Topics to be covered include political violence, state violence, militarism, violence against women, children, and people of color, economic violence, and violence and the media.

A key focus of this course is on social structure, and an examination of the social arrangements that surround acts of violence. In addition, when discussing violence, one must pay attention to the needs of those affected by violence. If those needs are not being met, then changes must be implemented. What those changes are, and how they can be manifested, will be discussed. In that definitional boundaries are being pushed, some of the learning will rely more on metaphor, than on direct connections. Be open to possibilities; you may find yourself surprised at what you find.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: That students will acquire a better understanding of what violence entails, who or what is subsumed under that heading, and the future outlook for this area of interest. It is hoped that students will further develop their critical acumen in this area and become prepared to present and discuss a variety of topics that are seen as falling under this heading.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: That students will develop an understanding of the general topic of violence in U.S. society, both the broad related concepts and how to apply such concepts in an analytical review of them. At the completion of this course, it is anticipated that each student will have skills in, if not mastered, the following learning objectives:

• demonstrate an understanding of the numerous definitions of violence, ranging from the more traditional, law-based definitions to lesser known definitions
• demonstrate an understanding of the various sub-groups that are impacted by acts and definitions of violence
• articulate an understanding of sociological perspectives related to the topic of violence, including paradigms, domain assumptions, and the role of social arrangements
• be able to use a sociological lens in analyzing written accounts of violence, theories of violence and proposed responses to violence
• be able to conduct research on topics related to violence, using scholarly sources
• demonstrate an ability to write, sociologically, about topics related to violence
• demonstrate a broad array of knowledge regarding the numerous facets of violence in U.S. society


plus READINGS ON RESERVE AT EDUCATION LIBRARY

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: It is my belief that many people are rarely pushed to utilize their full potential and that, given an opportunity, each of us is capable of further developing our gifts, talents, and skills. Importantly, I believe that people do their best work when they are self-directed, given opportunities to try new things, allowed to fail, encouraged to assess their progress, and facilitated through their own process of learning. I also believe that working in groups is important and in two key ways. First, working in groups is something most of us will do throughout our lives, whether it is in the workplace or the home. Practicing effective ways to work in groups is, then, relevant to all of our lives. Second, working in groups allows each of us to benefit from the gifts and talents of others. None of us is a perfect being and few of us are equipped with all the skills needed in every domain of our lives. Therefore, working with others enriches the learning experience for each and every one of us. I approach learning as something done best when individuals are given opportunities to solve problems and to develop their critical thinking skills. This means at times that some students will feel as though they are flailing about and unsure of what they are doing. It is at these times that it is best to trust that continued effort will bring desired results. I believe that learning is less about the final product (i.e., grade or amount of new information) as it is about the process of discovering ways in which we learn, ways in which we can improve, and ways in which we can make contributions to our field of interest. My overall hope is that students will become life-long learners and that the information and skills addressed in this course will become important components in their academic, and non-academic, toolbox.

FRAMING THE COURSE/CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE: It is important when any group begins working together that there is clarity on the goals and expectations for the group=s work.
The time you spend with your base group both inside and outside of the classroom, and the time we spend in the classroom are important components of the overall learning experience. To aid in making these experiences as beneficial as possible, there are guidelines to be followed by everyone, students and professor alike.

First, **it is important that everyone show up and be fully present**. This means present beyond merely the physical sense of the term. It means being focused on the work of SOC 561, whether that work is centered, at the time, on lecture, base group work, student presentation, etc. It means that each of us must leave our other concerns, issues, dilemmas, etc., outside the classroom door. This does not mean that these other things are not important to people; instead, it means that everything has a time and a place and we must honor the time that is set aside for this class.

Second, **it is important that we conduct ourselves with honor and integrity**. This means that each of us will take personal responsibility for what we do and be held accountable for what we do. To move from a place of integrity includes being truthful without using blame or judgment, being cognizant of others and their feelings or beliefs, and speaking for ourselves, not putting words in other people’s mouths.

Third, **it is important that none of us collude with negativity**. This essentially means that we will not make negative statements about people, tasks, or events, because negativity keeps us in the past, rather than allowing us to move forward and make progress in the adventure of learning. (For example, "I don't like group work because I got stuck in a bad group once," will not be an acceptable stance for a person to assume.)

Fourth, **it is unacceptable to engage in "third party-ing."** This means that there will be no discussions where the focus is to share one’s perceptions of another person’s actions and, invariably, seek allies for one's own position. Our practice will be that we will not say anything about a third party that we would not say to that person. It is disrespectful to create a discussion that involves someone who is not present to define/state their own position.

Fifth, **each of us agrees that we should be actively engaged in our education**. This means that we will come to each class meeting or base group meeting willing to participate. We will each share ownership in what occurs in any meeting, and be willing to share our perspectives, respectfully disagree with each other, and come to our own conclusions. This also means that each of us will avoid passivity and procrastination, both of which can lessen our learning experience and put either ourselves or other class members at risk on an assignment.

Sixth, **each of us is responsible for our own inclusion**. This means that none of us is a mind reader, nor can anyone else be expected to know what another person needs. Needs that can arise during a course include the need for clarity, the need for additional help on certain skills, the need for instructions to be repeated, the need to address conflict with base group members, or the need to check in on expectations and goals. Importantly, the first step to meeting any need is going to the person and stating what is needed. By being responsible for our own inclusion, we can often get our needs met earlier and also keep small problems from turning into large problems.
Seventh, **each of us will promote a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” perspective.** Issues about the social world are never simple. It is a rare instance, indeed, when we can place any topic into an either/or perspective (e.g., right vs. wrong). Instead, we will endeavor, at all times, to allow for more than one perspective to be legitimate, to be possible, to be allowed to be heard.

Eighth, **each of us agrees not to impose “our stories” on others.** All too often, since people see the social world from their own perspective, they try to impose that perspective on other peoples’ lives. For example, assuming that someone is lazy because they need help reflects the perceiver’s idea of laziness more than it reflects anything about the person being observed.

Ninth, **each of us will accept that conflict is co-created.** This means that with the rare exception, if we are in conflict with someone, we hold some responsibility for that conflict. Our role in the conflict might range from unintentionally misleading, miscommunicating, or misunderstanding another to having made attributions about another person that are not true, yet bring consequences to subsequent interactions. For example, if something does not go well in a base group project, everyone must participate in the resolution and be open to exploring any role they may have played in the creation of the conflict. If someone is not sure how they may have played a role in any conflict, the first step is to "check-in" with the other(s) and ask for clarification on what they perceived as having happened.

Tenth, **each of us will agree to trust the process.** All of us are creatures of habit and most of us do not like it when we do not do well at a given task. However, much of life is more of a process than an outcome and rarely do we get anywhere without doing the work. This course will bring up moments of uncomfortability. It is important to trust that much planning has gone into the course and that people not only survive the course, some even excel in it.

Of course, it is possible that any one of us might slip on occasion regarding the guidelines. If that does happen, and you are aware of it, attempt to rectify it as soon as possible. If it happens with another person, be respectful in approaching them about it.

**IMPORTANCE OF GROUPS:** While students will be evaluated on an individual basis in this course, a great deal of class time will be spent working as a group. That is, we will spend more time in discussion and collaboration than in note-taking. While the nature of working in groups brings up feelings of discomfort for some, it is an important technique for both learning about the subject matter and for learning about different approaches to the topic at hand. Each student has a responsibility to the larger group for the duration of the semester. This responsibility includes showing up for all class meetings, fulfilling one’s obligations in terms of preparation, integration, and writing, and being a resource to other members of the group. Each person will bring different gifts and talents to the group. Each person may also bring different domain assumptions. All differences should be treated with respect and seen as contributing rather than distracting from the work of the group.
WHY READ, WHY COME TO CLASS, WHY TALK?

First of all, I think the readings are worthwhile, interesting, sometimes even exciting. Some of them will fill your head with facts and figures, others will challenge some of your most prized ideas and opinions. I wouldn't assign the readings if I didn't think they would contribute to your overall knowledge of the topic. Granted, some may seem less than thrilling to you, but at least give them a chance by reading them all the way through. In addition, as assignments will attest, knowledge of the reading material is crucial to doing well in the course. After all, the University would like me to evaluate your performance (i.e., your grasp of the material).

Coming to class is important (else I could be replaced by a textbook). Lectures are an opportunity to present additional material, to integrate ideas, and to clarify things to which you have been exposed. Class meetings are a time for discussion, both individually and through group exercises. Such discussion is crucial to a solid understanding of the issues being presented.

Finally, as to the last question, Why talk?
The issues addressed in this course are not simple by any means, nor is there necessarily a right or wrong answer to them. Instead, we discuss what the issue is about, and we explore different possibilities as we search for our own position. Discussion is a crucial component of this course and I want you to feel free to raise questions and address comments to the issues at hand. When making an argument for or against a particular position, it is important to use more than personal opinion to support your point. The use of course reading materials, lectures, and previous discussions will strengthen your position and allow you to be more critical in your assessments of issues related to violence. Critiques of the reading materials, lecture topics, and discussions are welcome so long as they are done in a respectful and informed manner.

Granted, my own position (if it, in fact, is my position) often can dominate a discussion. However, this usually occurs when there is little response on the part of others. Unfortunately, some students are intimidated whenever they are asked to elaborate or support a statement that they have just made. Please keep in mind that students are not graded on their opinions. But, at the same time, our culture is far too reliant on sound bites and endless rhetoric, sentences and statements that we assume to be correct simply by uttering them. We all need to work on demonstrating to others why we hold a particular position and where, if anywhere, we can find evidence to support what we say. The object of such an approach is to encourage, not discourage open discussion in the classroom.

So, please engage in class discussion - all of us will be better for the effort.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The requirements of this course will vary by student and are determined through a contract system. There are two requirements that must be met by all students; these are the journal entries and reading response entries. The nature of the requirements will be determined by each student, based on several optional assignments. Each student will create and sign a contract that details the number and type of projects s/he will perform during the semester. Each contract must be written such that 1000 points will be
attempted. There are 400 points that each student will earn by doing certain assignments that are required of all students.

The ability to understand and analyze concepts, rather than memorize them, is the focus and purpose of all assignments. Before creating and signing the contract, careful examination should be made of the details provided for each of the optional assignments. In addition, note that there are due dates for the different optional assignments. For example, should one choose to do two book critiques, they may choose them for the 1st and 3rd due dates, or the 1st and 2nd due dates, etcetera. In other words, each student has some say in when her/his work will be due. It therefore follows that each student must accept responsibility for meeting his/her self-selected deadlines.

The following items are required of each student and will be included in each student's contract:

Course Journal, 10 entries, as assigned........................................ 200 points
Reading Response, 10 entries, as determined by student... 200 points

The following items are a list of optional assignments to be included in each student's contract as determined by each student. Additional information on each of these assignments is listed elsewhere in this course pack. Please review the additional information prior to creating an individual contract so as to ensure an understanding of what will be expected of you via your individual contract.

Book Critique, 4 maximum, 3-5 pages each..............................................100 points each
Creative Enterprise (details to be worked out with the professor)................... 100-200 points
Film Critique, 2 maximum, 3-5 pages each................................................100 points each
Media Presentation, 1 maximum, paper plus10-15 minutes presentation........ 100 points
News Analysis, 1 maximum, 3-5 pages.........................................................100 points
Research Paper, 1 maximum, 20-25 pages.................................................. 300 points

There will be deadlines for assignments. Due to the nature of the individual contracts, deadlines will mean different things for each student; therefore, it is imperative that students assume responsibility for meeting those deadlines.

**CALCULATION OF FINAL GRADE IN COURSE:** Based on requirements, there is a possible 1000 points to be earned in this course. Final letter grades are based on the following scale:  
A = 930 - 1000 points; BA = 880 - 929 points; B = 830 - 879 points; CB = 780 - 829 points; C = 730 - 779 points; DC = 680 - 729 points; D = 600 - 679 points; E = < 600 points.

**POSTING OF GRADES:** Posting of grades will be done on WebCT on a regular basis throughout the semester. The WebCT grade system allows for students to access their grades, and their grades only. There will be no public posting of grades, nor will grades be available via
the phone or email. Students are expected to check their grades for accuracy throughout the semester.

**MAKE-UP POLICY:** Missed assignments/exams will be recorded as grades of zero. All assignments are due when listed. Late assignments will be penalized 50% if turned in by the next class meeting; the penalty increases to 75% if more than one week late.

**EXTRA-CREDIT POLICY:** There is **NO** extra credit work available. All students are evaluated based on their performance on the stated criteria.

**THE SEARCH FOR ANONYMITY:** For ALL assignments and examinations, identify yourself with the LAST 4 DIGITS OF YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER, preferably in the top, upper, right-hand corner of the first page of assignments. Please DO NOT write your name on anything you turn in for evaluation.

**COMMUNICATION POLICY:** As with any human endeavor, changes will be necessary, questions will be raised, errors will be found in course material, and pertinent information will need to be shared. Therefore, students are expected to keep in contact, via email, so as to be aware of any changes to class assignments or other announcements. **This communication will take place via the WebCT page for the course;** therefore, students must activate and use their WMU email account.

[In addition, students must be aware of changes to the WMU email system. According to the Dean’s office:

**Students will have a change in email address to a firstname.middleinitial.lastname@wmich.edu address if they do not already have this email address.** **As the new student information system is phased in, the university will be doing business with students electronically, instead of on paper. University offices need a consistent email address for this communication.** **Students will not be able to automatically forward all of the email from their WMU account to an outside account.** **Student email accounts will be handled in a new email system, that is accessible through the new portal (GoWMU.wmich.edu). This new email service for students will be considerably better than email services currently provided to them and it will be integrated with the new student information system.]**

**LATE ARRIVAL AND ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Late arrivals to class are disruptive to the work of the collective. If a student is late and finds the door closed, s/he should wait until the classroom door has been opened before entering into the room. In addition, students are expected to remain in the classroom throughout the assigned class time. It is disruptive to the collective to have people come and go. Please come to class prepared to stay throughout the
assigned time of the class. When possible, a break will be taken partway through the class meeting.

**CELL PHONE POLICY**: If you must carry a cell phone to class, please be considerate of everyone in the class and have your phone either turned off or set so as it does not make any noise. It is unacceptable for anyone to make or receive cell phone calls during class time. Should you need your phone for emergency purposes, please have it set on vibrate and should you need to take a call, please make it a point to leave the classroom before talking on the phone and, should a presentation be in progress, please wait until it is a more suitable time to leave the room.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**: All persons are expected to do their own work. Failure to do so will result in a loss of all points for the respective activity. While students are encouraged to study in groups, they are expected to turn in individual work. The exception to this is, of course, base group work, where one assignment is submitted and said to represent all members of the base group.

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate Catalog (pp. 274-276) or Graduate Catalog (pp. 26-28) that pertain to Academic Integrity. 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 Conduct. 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.

Plagiarism is considered a serious violation and always results in a grade of zero. Ignorance will not prevent a grade of zero from being assigned. Students are advised to make a careful and thorough examination of the Writing Guidelines handout, which is included elsewhere in the course pack.

**USE OF OFFICE HOURS**: Students are encouraged to make use of office hours as a time to ask for clarification or elaboration of course material, or to discuss other matters related to violence in U.S. society. The stated office hours are set aside for the sole purpose of helping students. Please take advantage of this opportunity.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic/Reading/Media</th>
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<tr>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>Introduction to course; course objectives; discussion of contract Framing the classroom experience: principles and activities. Presentation and discussion of key course concepts: Ideology, Domain Assumptions, Social Arrangements and Institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>Defining violence; assessing violence; addressing justice</td>
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<td>IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE, Ch. 1; MAUER &amp; CHESNEY-LIND 61-113</td>
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<td>[INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS DUE 9.7, at the beginning of class]</td>
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<td>9.14</td>
<td>Structural and Cultural Roots of Violence</td>
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<td>GIL; GILLIGAN; IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE Ch. 2; MAURIN; SIGLER</td>
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<td>9.21</td>
<td>Interpersonal Violence and Family Violence</td>
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<td>EISIKOVITS, WINSTOK &amp; GELLES; IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE Ch. 3 &amp; 4; MAUER &amp; CHESNEY-LIND Ch. 7 &amp; 8; MICHALSKI; PIERRE (ALL); WINSTOK, EISIKOVITS, &amp; GELLES</td>
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<td>9.28</td>
<td>Economic Violence</td>
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<td>EHRENREICH (ALL); EISENHOWER; IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE Ch. 6; MAUER &amp; CHESNEY-LIND 165-193; POLLACK</td>
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<td>10.5</td>
<td>Political/State Violence</td>
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<td>CONWAY, SUEDFELD &amp; TETLOCK; IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE Ch. 7; MAUER &amp; CHESNEY-LIND 1-58; MOORE, A.</td>
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<td>10.12</td>
<td>Structural Violence and Law as Violence</td>
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<td>IADICOLA &amp; SHUPE Ch. 8; MOORE, M.</td>
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10.19  Militarism and War as Violence

CAULFIELD (1999); SEUSS (ALL of Butter Battle Book); COPELAN; EMBER & EMBER; MALONE; MARULLO & HLAVACEK; SCARRY; STAFF OF THE DEFENSE MONITOR; WINTER, PILISUK, HOUCK & LEE

[November 1st, LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY]

10.26  Religious Violence and The Personal AS Political

CAULFIELD & WONDERS; deJONGE; IADICOLA & SHUPE Ch. 5, ZWEIG & ABRAMS (Introduction and Enemy-making)

11.2  Adolescents and Violence

CAULFIELD (2000); GELLES; MAUER & CHESNY-LIND Ch 9; PROTHROW-STITH; SCHWEBEL & CHRISTIE

11.9  If Murder Is No Accident, How Do We Prevent It?

PROTHROW-STITH & SPIVAK (ALL)

11.16  Redressing Violence

IADICOLA & SHUPE Ch. 9; WEBSTER & PERKINS

11.23  Restorative Justice as a Response to Violence

MAUER & CHESNEY-LIND 197-292; SULLIVAN & TIFFT (ALL)

11.30  Peacemaking as a Response to Violence

CAULFIELD & EVANS; McKay & MAZURANA; REARDON

12.7  COLLECTIVE MEETS FROM 5:00-7:00