Course description

This course provides students with broad coverage of key issues and emerging themes in scholarship on the interconnections between race, ethnicity, crime, and justice. Many of the most pressing issues in criminology are significantly linked to issues of race and ethnicity. We will explore those linkages in a way that gives priority to objective facts and empirical findings. The course is organized into four units:

I. **Racial and ethnic differences in crime and victimization.** This unit first discusses introductory facts and concepts central to the study of race, ethnicity, crime, and justice. We then consider how rates of criminal offending and victimization vary across racial and ethnic groups. As part of this, we examine research that identifies the causal factors that explain these differences.

II. **Race and ethnicity, policing, and the courts.** This unit examines issues of race and ethnicity as they relate to the police and courts, which are the key entry points into the criminal justice system. In the process, we cover research on such issues as racial profiling by the police and prosecutorial discretion in the courts.

III. **Race and ethnicity, sentencing, and corrections.** This unit examines issues of race and ethnicity for individuals who are deeply enmeshed in the criminal justice system. One question has guided much research: Does offender race and ethnicity affect the sentence that is received, even after controlling for key legal variables (the crime that has been committed and the record of prior offending)? This question will occupy much of our attention in this unit, but we also will consider issues of race and ethnicity that emerge in correctional settings, especially jails and prisons.

IV. **Race and ethnicity in reference to the death penalty.** No aspect of crime and justice creates more controversy than the death penalty. A fair portion of that controversy follows from the possibility that a defendant’s race and ethnicity influence the use of this most serious punishment. We will consider the history, facts, and themes that have emerged on this issue and will devote special attention to the detailed case study chronicled in the book *The Big Eddy Club: The Stocking Stranglings and Southern Justice.*
Course objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Demonstrate their knowledge on racial and ethnic differences in criminal offending and victimization, including their understanding of the major factors that explain these differences.
- Demonstrate their knowledge regarding the ways in which issues of race and justice come into play with key institutions of the criminal justice system (the police, the courts, and corrections).
- Demonstrate their knowledge regarding the ways in which issues of race and ethnicity have influenced the use of the death penalty, and apply that knowledge to a recent death penalty case study.

Reading material

The reading for this course will come from four sources:

- PDF copies of recent journal articles (these will be provided on the course Canvas site).

The sequence for each unit

The four units of the course will be covered in 3–5 week periods, and these units will follow a similar sequence:

- Reading week(s): A “context statement” for this unit will be posted under Files on the Canvas site. This 2-3 page statement (1) provides an overview of the topic being covered in this unit and (2) places the readings in the overall context of
that topic. During reading weeks, students are to review the context statement and start into the reading assignments.

- **Discussion week(s):** Students will continue their reading, while also providing postings for an online discussion on Canvas’s discussion board.

- **Exam week:** Students will finish their reading and prepare for and take the open-note/open-book unit exam that will consist of one essay and a timed multiple choice test (5 questions) that is completed in Canvas. Exams will be posted by Monday at 12:00 noon EST and everything must be submitted by Friday at 5:00 p.m. EST.

The units will always progress from reading to discussion and then to the exam, but because the reading assignments vary from unit to unit, the units will vary in terms of how many weeks are devoted to reading and discussion. At the beginning of each unit, I will clarify the sequence for that unit, and all deadlines appear in the schedule below.

**Details regarding discussion postings**

During discussion weeks, I will post a discussion question on Canvas’s discussion board by 12:00 noon on Monday. You must provide an original post in response to that discussion question by 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday of that same week.

Responses are expected to be approximately 3-4 paragraphs, but the most important issue will be content—your posting should answer the question that was posed, systematically incorporate relevant information from the reading assignments, and be clear, organized, professional, and well-written. Also, to encourage an interesting and productive dialogue, I discourage you from waiting until the deadline to make your postings. This original post will be worth 3 points (3=excellent, 2=acceptable, 1=poor, 0=no post submitted).

In addition to your original post, you must also reply to at least one posting offered by another student. This posting also is expected to be informative and well-written, although it is not expected to be as lengthy as your original post. This response post will be worth 1 point (1=satisfactory or above, 0=unsatisfactory). The deadline for this reply post also is 5:00 p.m. EST on the Friday of discussion weeks.

Putting these two (original post + reply post) together, each discussion week produces a total of 4 possible points.

**One key rule that will govern this process:** Discussion postings cannot be made up and late postings will not be accepted.
One other point: These discussion postings are meant to simulate in some way the normal discussion that might occur in a classroom. Their potential to be informative really depends on each student providing thoughtful, well-articulated responses, and then taking the time to read and consider the postings offered by other students. When this is done, these discussions can truly be an interesting part of the course. To assist with this, I will offer a wrap-up of each discussion that addresses some of the themes that emerged and offers some of my own views.

Exams include both essay and multiple choice/true-false components.

Regarding the essay portion (worth 15 points): During an exam week, I will post an essay question by 12:00 noon on Monday and I must receive your completed answers by 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday of that same week. In answering the essay question, you should provide a clear, well-organized discussion that is professional and well written. The best answers will be those that directly address the issues raised by the question, correctly describe and elaborate on the relevant and appropriate issues from the reading, and are well-written (organized, clear, and free of distracting problems with misspellings, typos, and punctuation/grammar).

Regarding the multiple choice/true-false component (worth 10 points): This portion of the exam will be completed within Canvas, using its quiz tool (more on that later). The exam will be available sometime on Monday-Tuesday of the test week, and then it must be completed by 5:00 p.m. EST on Friday of that same week. The exam will consist of 5 questions, with each worth 1 point. Once you start the exam, you must complete it, and you will have 10 minutes to do so.

For both portions of the exam, I place no restrictions on your use of notes or the course readings. In other words, the tests are “open book” and “open note.” You cannot, however, gain assistance from or provide assistance to another student—your exam must reflect your independent effort. Communicating with other students about exam questions or answers during an exam week is prohibited and a violation of the academic honesty policy.

And last, at the beginning of each test week, directions will be provided that specify all the relevant details.

Grades

There are a total of 120 possible points in the course:

20 points from discussions (4 points per discussion X 5 discussions)
80 points from unit exams (20 points per exam X 4 unit exams)

Your final grade will be based on your course average (points earned divided by 120), with the below thresholds used to assign letter grades. Important point: There will be no curving or rounding of grades beyond that which is specified in these thresholds.

A   93.5%  C   73.5%
A-  89.5%  C-  69.5%
B+  86.5%  D+  66.5%
B   83.5%  D   63.5%
B-  79.5%  D-  59.5%
C+  76.5%  F Below 59.5%

Other course policies

1. It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with the Canvas online system. This includes (among other things) learning how to navigate the site, how to submit posts for discussions, and how to submit documents for exams. These things should be learned in advance so that no deadlines are missed; also, if questions emerge, the “help” button on the Canvas site should be used.

2. Changes in the reading, schedule, or any other part of the course may occasionally be made. It is each student’s responsibility to stay involved in the course and remain informed of any changes.

3. In any online discussions, be sure to communicate in ways that show respect to other students and viewpoints.

4. It is my expectation that all assignments will be turned in on time, and I do not anticipate accepting any late assignments. I therefore recommend that you stay on top of your assignments and avoid the practice of cramming right before a deadline. It is recognized, however, that in a very small number instances, unavoidable emergencies occur that may warrant accepting a late assignment. Under such circumstances, you need to contact me by e-mail as soon as possible to address your situation.

5. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and
in institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm.)

6. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (a) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (b) provide a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
97 Woodward Avenue, South
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/
SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READING, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit I. Racial and ethnic differences in crime and victimization

Dates: Monday, January 6-Friday January 31 (weeks 1-4 of the course)
Reading: The preface and Chapters 1-3 from Walker et al.’s The Color of Justice.
Preface and Chapter 1 from Tonry’s Punishing Race.

***Friday, Jan. 24, 5:00 p.m., deadline for DQ1 discussion post/reply***
***Friday, Jan. 31, 5:00 p.m., deadline for completing Unit I. exam***

Unit II. Race and ethnicity, policing, and the courts

Dates: Monday, February 3-Friday, February 21 (weeks 5-7 of the course)
Reading: Chapters 4-6 from Walker et al.’s The Color of Justice.

***Friday, Feb. 14, 5:00 p.m., deadline for DQ2 discussion post/reply***
***Friday, Feb. 21, 5:00 p.m., deadline for Unit II. exam***

Unit III. Race and ethnicity, sentencing, corrections

Dates: Monday, February 24-Friday, March 13 (weeks 8-10 of the course)
Reading: Chapters 7 and 9 from Walker et al.’s The Color of Justice.
Chapters 2 and 3 from Tonry’s Punishing Race.

***Friday, Mar. 6, 5:00 p.m., deadline for DQ3 discussion post/reply ***
***Friday, Mar. 13, 5:00 p.m., deadline for Unit III. exam***

- - - FSU Spring Break: March 16-20 - - -

Unit IV. Race and ethnicity in reference to the death penalty
**Dates:**
Monday, March 23-Friday, May 1 (weeks 11-15 of the course)

**Reading:**
Chapters 8 and 11 from Walker et al.'s *The Color of Justice*.
Chapters 4 and 5 from Tonry’s *Punishing Race*.

***Friday, Apr. 10, 5:00 p.m., deadline for DQ4 discussion postings***
***Friday, Apr. 24, 5:00 p.m., deadline for DQ5 discussion postings***
***Friday, May 1, 5:00 p.m., deadline for Unit IV. exam***