

Race, Ethnicity, Crime, and Justice
Florida State University
College of Criminology and Criminal Justice
CCJ 5669, Spring 2022

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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. When Police Kill. This mini-unit (two weeks) focuses explicitly on the book *When Police Kill*, by Franklin Zimring. This book is considered by many to be the most thorough investigation of police shootings to date. Understanding the dynamics it describes makes it possible to better understand racial disparities in exposure to police shootings.

IV. 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.

V. 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:

- ◆ Walker, Samuel, Cassia Spohn, and Miriam Delone. 2018. *The Color of Justice: Race, Ethnicity, and Crime in America* (6th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage (ISBN: 9781337091862). 36077
- ◆ Zimring, Franklin. 2018. *When Police Kill*. Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0674986800 [e-copy available on Amazon.] 39460
- ◆ Rose, David. 2011. *The Big Eddy Club: The Stocking Stranglings and Southern Justice*. The New Press (ISBN: 9781595586711). 20417
- ◆ PDF copies of recent journal articles (these will be provided on the course Canvas site).

The sequence for each unit

Most units of the course (Unit III. is the exception) are covered in a roughly 3-week period, 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.

Thus, these units progress from reading to discussion and then to the exam. The mini-unit we have for Unit III. is the exception. It contains just 2 weeks, and both of those weeks are discussion weeks and there is no exam. For all units, however, I will clarify the sequence with an announcement on its first day, 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 11:59 p.m. ET on Sunday 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 4 points (4=excellent, 3=good, 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 11:59 p.m. ET on Sunday of discussion weeks.

Putting these two (original post + reply post) together, each discussion week produces a total of 5 possible points.

One key rule that 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 11:59 p.m. ET on Sunday 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 5 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 11:59 p.m. ET on Sunday 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 115 possible points in the course:

35 points from discussions (5 points per discussion X 7 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 115), 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/A+	93.00-100.00%	B+	87.00-89.99%	C+	77.00-79.99%
A-	90.00-92.99%	B	83.00-86.99%	C	73.00-76.99%
		B-	80.00-82.99%	C-	70.00-72.99%
D+	67.00-69.99%	F	59.99% or below		
D	63.00-66.99%				
D-	60.00-62.99%				

Course policies

1. 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.
2. In any online discussions, be sure to communicate in ways that show respect to other students and viewpoints.
3. 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 of instances, unavoidable emergencies occur that may warrant accepting a late assignment. Under such circumstances, you need to contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation.
4. **University Attendance Policy:** Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.
5. **Academic Honor Policy:** 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 institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy>)

6. **Academic Success:** Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Dean of Students office to learn more.
7. **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Florida State University (FSU) values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet integral requirements of the course.

To receive academic accommodations, a student:

(1) must register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS);(2) must provide a letter from OAS to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and, (3) should communicate with the instructor, as needed, to discuss recommended accommodations. A request for a meeting may be initiated by the student or the instructor.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided. 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

Office of Accessibility Services
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
oas@fsu.edu
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

8. **Confidential Campus Resources:** Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program
University Center A, Rm. 4100
(850) 644-7161
Available 24/7/365
Office Hours: M-F 8-5
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services
Askew Student Life Center, 2nd floor
942 Learning Way
(850) 644-8255
<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services
Health and Wellness Center
(850) 644-6230
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

9. **COVID:** As our President has informed the university community, FSU expects everyone on campus to use face-coverings. In regions where virus rates are high, the CDC recommends that even vaccinated individuals wear masks in public indoor spaces, like classrooms, especially where social distancing is not possible. Florida infection and hospitalization rates are greater now than they were at the height of the 2020 surge due to the Delta variant, a more infectious and easily transmissible version of the COVID-19 virus. The best way to protect against serious illness is to be fully vaccinated, but not everyone among us can be. Because the Delta variant can infect even vaccinated individuals and can be spread by them to others, it poses a special threat to members of the community with underlying health conditions and children at home who are too young for vaccination.

For these reasons, FSU expects each member of the community to comply with the public health protocols our President set forth on August 9, 2021, including (1) wearing masks in public indoor spaces, (2) getting fully vaccinated, (3) being tested for the virus if you have symptoms, and (4) staying home and away from others if you are sick. Please remember that you should NOT attend class in person if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or are quarantining after exposure. Finally, please bear in mind that the COVID-19 situation is fast-moving, and that university guidance on the issue may change at any time.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READING, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit I. Racial and ethnic differences in crime and victimization

Dates: Wednesday, January 5–Sunday January 30 (weeks 1–4 of the course)
Reading: The preface and Chapters 1–3 from Walker et al.'s *The Color of Justice*.
McNulty and Bellair. 2003. "Explaining racial and ethnic differences in serious adolescent violence." *Criminology*41:709-747.

Sunday, Jan 23, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ1 discussion post/reply

Sunday, Jan 30 11:59 p.m., deadline for completing Unit I. exam

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

Dates: Monday, Jan 31–Sunday, February 20 (weeks 5–7 of the course)
Reading: Chapters 4–6 from Walker et al.'s *The Color of Justice*.
Kochel et al. 2011. "Effect of suspect race on officers' arrest decisions."
Criminology 49:473-512.

Sunday, Feb 13, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ2 discussion post/reply

Sunday Feb 20, 11:59 p.m., deadline for Unit II. exam

Unit III. When Police Kill

Dates: Monday, Feb 21–Sunday, Mar 6 (weeks 8-9 of the course)
Reading: *When Police Kill* (by Zimring) (entire book)

Sunday, Feb 27, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ3 discussion post/reply

Sunday Mar 6, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ4 discussion post/reply

Unit IV. Race and ethnicity, sentencing, corrections (Spring Break occurs in this unit)

Dates: Monday, Mar 7–Sun Apr 3 (weeks 10-12 of the course)
Reading: Chapters 7 and 9 from Walker et al.'s *The Color of Justice*.
Warren et al. 2012. "The imprisonment penalty for young black and Hispanic males: A crime-specific analysis." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*49:56–80.
Goodman. 2008. "'It's just black, white, or Hispanic': An observational study of racializing moves in California's segregated prison reception centers." *Law and Society Review* 42:735–770.

***Sunday, Mar 27, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ5 discussion post/reply ***

Sunday, Apr 3, 11:59 p.m., deadline for Unit IV. exam

Unit V. Race and ethnicity in reference to the death penalty

Dates: Monday, Apr 4-Thu Apr 28 (weeks 13-15 of the course + final exam week)
Reading: Chapters 8 and 11 from Walker et al.'s *The Color of Justice*.
Rose. 2011. *The Big Eddy Club: The Stocking Stranglings and Southern Justice*.

Sunday, Apr 17, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ6 discussion postings

Sunday, Apr 24, 11:59 p.m., deadline for DQ7 discussion postings

Thu, Apr 28 11:59 p.m., deadline for Unit V. exam