

Soc 461/WMST 476/AJ 460: Women, Crime and Justice
Spring 2008

Instructor: Michelle Hughes Miller, PhD
Class Information: M, W, F, 10-10:50 a.m. in Lawson 201
Office Hours: M and W, 1-4 pm in Faner 3436
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Required texts:

Belknap, Joanne. 2007. *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime and Justice*, 3rd Edition. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Alarid, Leanne Fiftal and Paul Cromwell. 2006. *In Her Own Words: Women Offenders' Views on Crime and Victimization*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Additional readings as assigned. They will be available electronically.

Course description:

This course is an introduction to the study of women's involvement in crime. While criminology has historically been an androcentric discipline, in recent years scholarship on women's relationship with crime has greatly increased and improved. Nevertheless, most criminology courses still treat women's experiences of crime as asides or supplementary to the main subject matter of the course. We won't do that, here. In this course, we will focus our criminological gaze *on women's experiences*, first as criminals and then as victims of crime. We will discuss theories about why women commit crime, analyze research on the types of crime women commit, and consider the experiences of women who are imprisoned. This discussion will inevitably lead us to a consideration of women's experiences of victimization, where we will consider the primary forms of victimization that women experience and the criminal justice system's response to women victims.

There are many ways to approach a topic such as Women, Crime and Justice, two of which I will mention here. First, in this course we will use feminist criminology to inform our understanding of women's experiences and we will spend little time comparing men's lives to women's lives. In short, consider this course an opportunity to take a break from the "gender wars" and instead consider it an opportunity for you to learn more about the diversity *among* women. While there are similarities between men's and women's criminal and victimization experiences (which we will consider), our focus will be on how *women* experience structural and cultural pressures and how their lives reflect a gendered world. It is my hope that what you learn in this class can inform your later courses in criminology as you return to the study of men's crime.

Second, there is a long-standing controversy within feminist criminology about the nature

of women. The debate has centered around the level of control women have in their lives, with some researchers focusing on women as victims (of society and of individual perpetrators) while others have focused on women as active decision-makers who choose crime and who choose strategies to deal with their victimization. In this course we will begin with the assumption that women do live in a gendered world which can be both oppressive and victimizing, but that women still retain agency and thereby choose their own actions. While that isn't purely free will, women (and, I would argue, men) do exercise *constrained* will. In other words, women can be both victims and agents.

The three major goals for this course are for students to:

- 1) develop an understanding of the complex relationship between women, crime and society;
- 2) be able to knowledgeably analyze rhetoric surrounding women's criminality and women's victimization.
- 3) identify strategies to address women's victimization and criminality.

Course requirements:

This class will be treated as an advanced undergraduate/introductory graduate level course. As such, you are expected to come to each class prepared, to avail yourselves of additional information on the topic, and to complete all assignments in a timely manner. *As befits their academic status, class expectations for graduate students are enhanced. First, graduate students must complete all of the assignments for undergraduates as described below. However, they can only choose Option E for the public policy paper. Second, graduate students will be expected to prepare a guest presentation for the class on a topic to be negotiated with the professor (worth an additional 50 points). Finally, graduate students should be aware that higher evaluation standards will be used in grading all their materials.*

Exams: There will be a midterm and a take-home final exam in the class. Each exam is worth 100 points and will consist of short answer and long answer essay questions. The final exam will not be comprehensive.

Final policy paper: You will be expected to develop a 6-10 page paper, worth 100 points, choosing one of the five paper options described below. I must approve the specific topic of your paper. *To gain my approval, you are required to meet individually with me during my office hours prior to February 15, 2008, to discuss your paper topic.* Failure to meet with me will result in a 10 point reduction on the final grade for the paper.

These are research-based papers; as such, each paper should use a minimum of 10 *academic sources* and must follow all university rules related to academic honesty. If you are not familiar with the definitions and consequences of plagiarism and cheating or with your rights,

refer to the SIUC Student Conduct Code or see me for clarification. If I discover you have used someone else's words as your own I will choose from among the sanctions possible in the university regulations, including: failure on the assignment and failure in the class. I may also refer you to the Student Judicial Board for serious violations. Do NOT commit academic dishonesty on any assignment for the class.

The policy paper is due on May 2, 2008, during class. Late policy papers will lose 10 points per day. More information will be distributed about the paper assignment later.

Option A: Choose one aspect of the SIUC Student Conduct Code that can be improved to more adequately reflect information about women's criminality and/or victimization and write a new code. The bulk of your paper should be a research justification for the changes you propose.

Option B: Identify one aspect of prison programming for women in Illinois that can be improved and write a proposal to the Illinois Department of Corrections regarding your recommendation. As with Option A, the bulk of your paper should be a research justification for your proposal.

Option C: Develop an orientation program for new students at SIUC that considers issues of women's victimization. This orientation program can be for any reasonable audience (e.g. men, women, dorm residents, new faculty). Be sure the research you present supports your audience choice.

Option D: Write a summary of research on girls' criminality that is designed for middle school teachers interested in intervention or prevention programming. This should be a literature review that is comprehensive enough that middle school teachers can take the information and develop their own crime prevention/intervention programming.

Option E: Write a traditional research paper on a topic related to women, crime and justice. Because this option requires less creativity, the expected length of the paper is a minimum of 10 pages.

Electronic bulletin board: You are expected to respond on-line to class discussion, readings, or lectures every week by posting your comments to the on-line class bulletin board. You can also use this board to ask for clarification of assignments or to talk with a fellow classmate about a group activity.

The course schedule contains 24 discussion questions that are designed to spark analysis of the class materials. In addition, each chapter in the Alarid & Cromwell book has discussion questions. You can write a response to any of these questions as a Webboard posting. You will also be assigned (see below) to present in class on one syllabus discussion question and two Alarid & Cromwell chapters. On these days, your in-class comments should be written up for a Webboard posting, so your classmates have a record of your answers.

The Web Bulletin Board can be accessed at: <http://wb.lib.siu.edu/~soc461>. You need to access this website and sign in as a new user and follow the directions from there. See me if you have questions. Your postings are each worth 10 points (100 points possible) as long as they reflect a thoughtful, critical response to class materials.

Class Participation: In addition to attendance, which is expected, you have the ability to earn participation points this semester through your involvement in several in-class activities (100 points total, divided as discussed below). I also will give credit to those of you who actively and regularly engage in class discussion. This does not mean you should dominate our class conversation; rather, I expect you to come to class prepared, engage your fellow students, and support a critical learning environment for everyone. More than 3 absences during the semester will result in a loss of 20 class participation points.

a. *Women in Prison Project:* On **March 5, 2008**, the class will collectively present a visual history of women's prison experience. Participation in researching, creating, and discussing this display is required, along with a one page group synopsis (with citations) of what you learned about women's prisons in your era. This project is worth 25 points. More information about this project will be distributed later.

b. *Syllabus discussion questions.* You will be assigned one syllabus discussion question to answer for the class, and you should plan on leading class discussion over the question. While some questions will have multiple presenters, I do NOT expect you to work together to prepare your answers. You will also need to post a written response to the discussion question on the class Webboard within two days of the class in which you present AND hand in a typed one-page version on the day of your presentation. This assignment is worth 25 points.

c. *Article Reviews:* The Alarid & Cromwell book contains short articles on women offenders which we will be discussing in class. For each article, two of you will be assigned to (a) summarize the article and (b) analyze the article in terms of the rest of our course materials. During the course of the semester you will be assigned two chapters. For each chapter, you will be presenting your conclusions in class and typing up a 2 page summary/analysis (individually) to post to the Webboard within two days of your presentation and turn into me (on the day you present). Consider the following questions for your presentation/paper:

1. What are the main points of the article?
2. From what perspective is the author writing? What evidence is the author using to support his/her claims?
3. What key concepts are the authors using and how do they define them?
4. Does this article agree or disagree with other materials we have read/discussed in the class? What does the article add to our understanding of women, crime and justice?
5. What does the article not consider? Or, what points are missing in the piece? What questions arise from the article?

Each article review is worth 25 points.

Course policies:

1. Grades: Final grades for undergraduates are determined by combining all points earned and referring to the following scale: A=90% or better; B= 80-89%; C= 70-79%; D= 60-69%; F= below 60%. For undergraduates, a total of 500 points are possible in the class. Graduate students have a possible of 550 points.

2. Make-ups and late assignments: In-class activities, such as the Women in Prison project and discussion presentations, can not be made up. Exams can only be made up with a written excuse from a qualified professional. Late papers lose 10% of their worth each day they are late.

ANTICIPATED COURSE AND READING SCHEDULE:

B= Belknap; A/C= Alarid and Cromwell

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assigned Reading</u>
Jan 14	INTRODUCTION	
Jan 16 Jan 18	FEMINIST CRIMINOLOGY	B: Ch 1 A/C: Ch 13, 17

****WOMEN AS CRIMINALS****

Jan 23 Jan 25	NATURE OF FEMALE OFFENDING <i>Question 1:</i> Predicting the future: what will happen to female crime rates over the next 50 years? <i>Question 2:</i> Within the same category of crime (e.g. homicide, theft), are women's and men's crimes the same?	B: Ch 3 A/C: Ch 10
Jan 28 Jan 30 Feb 1	THEORIES OF WOMEN'S CRIMINALITY <i>Question 3:</i> To what extent do biological differences explain the differences in male and female criminality? <i>Question 4:</i> To what extent do differences in socialization explain the differences in male and female criminality??	B: Ch 2 (pp. 31-53) A/C: Ch 9 A/C: Ch 11
Feb 4	FINDING WOMEN'S AGENCY <i>Question 5:</i> If U.S. society becomes more equal (in terms of gender) over the next	B: Ch 2 (pp. 53-94)

50 years, will the women's liberation theory be supported?

Question 6: Will the reasons for female involvement in criminality change over the next 50 years?

Feb 6	PATHWAYS TO WOMEN'S CRIME	A/C: Ch 1
Feb 8		A/C: Ch 2
Feb 11		A/C: Ch 3
Feb 13		A/C: Ch 15

Question 7: How does victimization lead to criminality?

Question 8: What is the relationship between criminality and femininity?

Feb 15	CASE STUDY: FEMALES, GANGS & VIOLENCE	VIDEO
	<i>Last day to meet with Dr. Miller regarding your paper topic</i>	
Feb 18		A/C: Ch 5, 6
Feb 20		A/C: Ch 16, 19, 21
Feb 22		A/C: Ch 12, 20

Question 9: Is violence a problem or a solution for girls?

Feb 25	CRIME PROCESSING	B: Ch 4
Feb 27		A/C: Ch 4, 8

Question 10: Does chivalry and paternalism exist in the CJ system?

Question 11: Should the defendant's path to crime be considered in sentencing?

Feb 29	WOMEN AND PRISON	B: Ch 5
Mar 3		A/C: Ch 7
Mar 5	WOMEN IN PRISON PROJECT	

Mar 7	Final Comments on Women Criminals	A/C: Ch 22
	EXAM 1 distributed; due Mar 17	

Week of March 10 Spring Break!

****WOMEN AS VICTIMS****

Mar 17-19	THE NATURE OF WOMEN'S VICTIMIZATION	
	<i>Question 12:</i> Do the patterns of women's victimization reflect issues of race, social class, nationality, etc.?	

Mar 21-26 VICTIMIZATION THEORY AND FEMALE VICTIMS B: Ch 6
Question 13: What sociological factors encourage us to denigrate victims?
Question 14: Are women socialized into being victims?
Question 15: Why are women victimized, according to feminist theory?
(Choose one type of feminism for your answer)

Mar 28 **No Class: Library Research Day**

Mar 31-Apr 9 SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION B: Ch 7
Apr 7 A/C: Ch 14
Apr 9 **Guest Speaker**

Question 16: Is (should) sexual victimization that takes place within a family (e.g. incest, marital rape) treated differently by the CJ system than sexual victimization that is stranger or acquaintance based?
Question 17: Do we live in a rape culture?
Question 18: What services are available for a sexual assault victim in this community and on campus? Are these services sufficient?

Apr 11-21 INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE AND STALKING B: Ch 8
Question 19: Are definitions of intimate partner abuse sufficiently clear to allow for appropriate CJ processing?
Question 20: When is violent resistance to victimization or retaliation for victimization justified?
Question 21: What services are available for a domestic violence victim in this community or on campus? Are these services sufficient?

Apr 23 SEXUAL AND STREET HARASSMENT
Question 22: What aspects of U.S. society encourage sexual and street harassment?
Question 23: What aspects of U.S. society discourage a CJ or official response to sexual or street harassment?

Apr 28 WOMEN'S VICTIMIZATION ON CAMPUS SIUC Student Conduct Code
Question 24: What policies exist at SIUC that respond to a member of the university community (administrators, faculty, staff, or students) who has committed violence against women? Are these policies appropriate and sufficient?

Apr 30 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON WOMEN VICTIMS B: Ch 12
FINAL EXAM distributed

May 2 **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON WOMEN, CRIME AND JUSTICE
POLICY PAPER DUE**

Tuesday, May 6, 2:50 p.m. **FINAL EXAM DUE**