

**SOCIOLOGY 4XX3**  
**THE SOCIOLOGY OF AT-RISK YOUTH**

Fall, 2016  
Day and Time of Classes: Wednesdays, 8:30-11:20  
Class Location: KTH/B107

Instructor: Allison Chenier  
Ext.: 27346  
Office Hours: Wednesday 11:30-12 KTH 643  
Email Address: cheniam@mcmaster.ca

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OUTLINE, TEXTS AND METHOD OF EVALUATION**

This course examines the sociology of at-risk youth, including youth delinquency. This course is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of issues facing at-risk youth in Canada. Particular emphasis will be given to contemporary issues in Canadian youth justice. The course begins with an overview of the social construction of youth deviance and then moves on to legislation and the changing philosophies that shape our official responses to youth crime. We will study important correlates of youth crime, such as the peer group, social disadvantage, and mental health to shed light on the lives of at-risk youth and the link to the youth justice system. We will also examine special populations of at-risk youth, such as girls, Aboriginal youth, and street youth. We will end the course by looking at the official responses to youth deviance and crime. Students are encouraged to critically assess the official responses to youth crime as well as consider implications for legal and social policy.

This course also has an academic placement component. Students will be volunteering as tutors and informal mentors to high school students through the “Pathways to Education Program”. This community engaged scholarship component is a unique and valuable opportunity for students to gain deeper insight into the problems facing at-risk youth in their own community. This placement component will also allow students to apply what they are learning in this course. This will be of particular value for those students who are interested in education, welfare, and health. Because the placement component involves a significant time commitment, after the first week of class we will be meeting for only two hours. Information on the “Pathways to Education Program” and details about scheduling will be given in the first week of class.

Students are expected to do all required readings, come to all classes, and participate in class discussions. The evaluation components for the course include class participation, midterm, essay, and bi-weekly reading assignments.

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course addresses four University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (see <http://ccl.mcmaster.ca/COU/pdf/Undergraduate%20Degree%20Level%20Expectations.pdf>). First, this course will allow students to develop knowledge of the key concepts, theoretical explanations, and emerging issues in the field of at-risk youth and youth justice. Second, students will be exposed to and critically examine the different methodologies used to not only measure youth crime in Canada, but also critically examine social scientific methodologies that develop our understanding of youth crime more broadly. Thirdly, through the written exams and essay components of the course, students will learn to communicate and make cogent arguments regarding one or more aspects of youth justice. Finally, the academic placement component of the course will allow students to transfer the skills and knowledge learned in class to a practical setting.

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

Tanner, Julian. (2009). *Teenage Troubles Youth Deviance in Canada*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Winterdyck, John and Russell Smandych. (2012). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *Youth At Risk and Youth Justice A Canadian Overview*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Textbooks are available at the bookstore. Other readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn or will be on Reserve at the library.

## EVALUATION:

|                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Class participation           | 15% (to be decided in December) |
| Bi-weekly reading assignments | 25%                             |
| Midterm                       | 20%                             |
| <u>Essay</u>                  | <u>40%</u>                      |
| Total                         | 100%                            |

## CLASS PARTICIPATION (15%)

Attendance at all lectures is essential for success in this course. Students are expected to be familiar with materials introduced in class lectures and videos as well as all assigned readings. Lecture notes will not be posted nor distributed by the instructor. If you miss a lecture, please make arrangements with another student to borrow notes. In order to avoid disruptions, please put cell phones on silent and turn computer notification sounds off during lecture.

Students are also expected to contribute meaningfully each week to our class discussions. The small class size will allow us to engage with the material together. Participation grades will be allocated in December.

## BI-WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS (5 x 5% each)

Students will be divided into two groups on the first week of class. Students are responsible for submitting a 1-2 page reflection paper on a bi-weekly basis. These reflections should incorporate the week's required readings and, if possible, include links to their experiences at Pathways to Education. Each student will submit five reading assignments throughout the term. They are worth 4% each for a total of 20% of the final grade.

## MIDTERM EXAM (20%)

The midterm exam will consist of long answer questions. The midterm will cover course material from weeks one through six. The midterm will take place in class **Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>**.

## ESSAY (40%)

One benefit of community engaged scholarship is the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned in class to a practical situation. Thus, for the essay component students will be reflecting on their academic placement in "Pathways" and will be relating it to a topic covered in class. The choice of topic is up to the student and it is not required that students examine only one topic. As will become clear in the course, often at-risk youth are dealing with more than one issue in their lives. The essay is to be 10 pages, double-spaced. Students should consult at least six academic sources outside of the course texts as they apply the course material to their experiences in placement. Students are encouraged to come talk to me early in the term to discuss essay topic ideas. A hard copy of the essay is due in class **Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**.

### ACADEMIC PLACEMENT:

Academic placements are subject to the guidelines set out by the Faculty of Social Science. The benefits to academic placements are many: students are able to apply what they are learning in class through practical and hands-on experiences; they are able to learn from those with experience working in the field; and they are able to make contacts and build their resume. All of these benefits will enrich learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Students are **required** to complete a **minimum of 24** hours of placement at “Pathways to Education Program”, where they will volunteer as tutors or mentors on a weekly basis for students in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 (<http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/en/hamilton>). This program is offered to youth in North Hamilton and takes place at the North Hamilton Community Health Centre (NHCHC). Two hours of orientation will be given the first week of class.

### COURSE SCHEDULE:

\*\*\*Readings may be added throughout the term. Notices of additional readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn\*\*\*

*SECTION ONE: Introductions, the Social Construction of Deviance, Legislation, and the Nature and Extent of Youth Crime in Canada*

#### **WEEK ONE: September 7th**

Course outline and introductions  
Pathways to Education Program orientation

Required Reading: None

#### **WEEK TWO: September 14<sup>th</sup>**

The Social Construction of Youth Deviance

\*\*\*Students in Group 1 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 1
- Parnaby, P. (2003). “Disaster Through Dirty Windshield: Law, Order and Toronto’s Squeegee Kids”. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 28 (3), 281-308. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

#### **WEEK THREE: September 21<sup>st</sup>**

Guest lecture—Waterloo Regional Police Service

#### **WEEK FOUR: September 28<sup>th</sup>**

Theories of Juvenile Delinquency

\*\*\*Students in Group 2 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 3

- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 8

### **WEEK FIVE: October 5<sup>th</sup>**

Legislation and the Nature and Extent of Youth Crime

\*\*\*Students in Group 1 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 2
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 2, 3, 6

*SECTION TWO: Correlates to Youth Crime*

### **WEEK SIX: October 12<sup>th</sup>--No classes-Mid term break ☺**

### **WEEK SEVEN: October 19<sup>th</sup>**

Risk Factors-School and the Family

\*\*\*Students in Group 2 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 5
- Cernkovich, Stephen A. and Peggy Giordano. (1987). "Family Relationships and Delinquency". *Criminology*, 25(2): 295-321. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

### **WEEK EIGHT: October 26<sup>th</sup>**

Risk Factors-Peers/Gangs

\*\*\*Students in Group 1 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 7
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch.12
- Decker, Scott. (1996). "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence". *Justice Quarterly*, 13 (2): 243-264. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

Supplemental:

- Hemmati, Tony. (2006). "The Nature of Canadian Urban Gangs and Their Use of Firearms: A Review of the Literature and Police Survey". Department of Justice Canada. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

### **WEEK NINE: November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Midterm Exam—No readings

## **WEEK TEN: November 9<sup>th</sup>**

### Risk Factors-Substance Abuse and Mental Health

\*\*\*Students in Group 2 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

#### Required:

- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 10
- Erickson, Patricia G. and Jennifer E. Butters. (2005). "How Does the Canadian Juvenile Justice System Respond to Youth with Substance Use Associated Problems? Gaps, Challenges, and Emerging Issues". *Substance Use & Misuse*, 40:953-973. (Available on Avenue to Learn)
- Harrison, Lana D. Et al. (2001). "The Drugs-Violence Nexus Among American and Canadian Youth". *Substance Use & Misuse*, 36(14): 2065-2086. (Available on Avenue to Learn)
- Ulzen, Thaddeus and Hayley Hamilton. (1998). "The Nature and Characteristics of Psychiatric Comorbidity in Incarcerated Adolescents". *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 43(1). (Available on Avenue to Learn)

## *SECTION THREE: SPECIAL POPULATIONS*

## **WEEK ELEVEN: November 16<sup>th</sup>**

### Special Populations-Girls

\*\*\*Students in Group 1 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

#### Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 8
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 7
- Barron, Christie and Dany Lacombe. (2005). "Moral Panic and the Nasty Girl!". *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 42(1): 51-69. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

## **WEEK TWELVE: November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

### Special Populations-Aboriginal Youth

\*\*\*Students in Group 2 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

#### Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 4
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 11
- Grekul, Jana and Patti LaBoucane-Benson. (2008). "Aboriginal Gangs and Their (Dis)Placement: Contextualizing Recruitment, Membership, and Status". *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 50(1): 59-82. (Available on Avenue to Learn)
- Sethi, Anupriya. "Domestic Sex Trafficking of Aboriginal Girls in Canada: Issues and Implications". *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 3(3): 57-71. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

## **WEEK THIRTEEN: November 30<sup>th</sup>**

Special Population-Street-Involved Youth

\*\*\*Students in Group 1 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 6
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 12
- Boisvert, Jean-Francois, et al. (2005). "The Health of Street Youth". *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96(6): 432-437.
- Gaetz, Stephen. (2004). "Safe Streets for Whom? Homeless Youth, Social Exclusion, and Criminal Victimization". *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 46(4): 423-456. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

### *SECTION THREE: RESPONDING TO YOUTH CRIME*

## **WEEK FOURTEEN: December 7<sup>th</sup>**

Responding to Youth Crime

\*\*\***Term Paper Due**\*\*\*

\*\*\*Students in Group 2 submit a reading assignment\*\*\*

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 9
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 4, 5

### ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. (For example, submitting weekly written assignments or an essay that has already been submitted for credit in another course.)
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **DEPARTMENTAL/UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

Do NOT fax assignments. Please see your instructor for the most appropriate way to submit assignments.

The Sociology staff do NOT date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers. Written weekly assignments and the midterm will be returned in class.

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Spring/Summer 2015. Please consult the MSAF policy, which can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar under General Academic Regulations. You may submit a maximum of 1 Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation.

If you are absent more than 3 days, exceed 1 request per term, or are absent for a reason other than medical, you MUST visit your Associate Dean’s Office (Faculty Office). You may be required to provide supporting documentation.

This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

Students should check the web, the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin board outside the Sociology office (KTH-627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (eg. class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.