

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

Fall, 2018

Day and Time of Classes: Tuesdays, 11:30-2:20

After first week: 11:30-1:30

Class Location: ETB 227

Instructor: Allison Chenier

Ext.: 27346

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30

KTH 643

Email Address: chenieam@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 and antisocial behaviour, 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, Indigenous youth, and street youth. Throughout the course, 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 volunteer reflection papers.

**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. (2015). *Teenage Troubles Youth Deviance in Canada*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Winterdyck, John and Russell Smandych. (2016). 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	20% (see description below)
Pathways reflections	10% (2 x 5%)
Midterm	30%
<u>Essay</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

## CLASS PARTICIPATION (20%)

Showing up for class is “attendance”. What you do when you show up is “participation”. This is a seminar-style course, which means that I will lecture for part of the time, followed by discussion as a group. The small class size allows for meaningful conversation about the weekly topics and the volunteering component of the course. What is critical is the quality of one’s contribution—evidence that you adequately prepared for class to engage with the material. Comments should be pertinent to the topic, add facts and perspectives to the discussion, link to experiences at Pathways to Education, and connect to the broader social world.

The participation grade for this course is made up of two components. I will assess your participation and give you a grade out of 10. But there is a self-assessment component as well. Students are to submit a brief, reflective essay of approximately 200-300 words to the dropbox on Avenue to Learn by November 27<sup>th</sup> (week 13). This is meant to be an honest review of your overall performance as a member of this class. Together with my assessment, participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

A few points to consider including in the self-assessment:

- Take credit for your accomplishments, but also responsibility where your participation may have fallen short of your goals or expectations for a 4<sup>th</sup> year seminar class.
- What substantive contributions have you made to discussions that illustrate your participation?
- In what areas do you think you need to improve the quality of your contributions? How can you achieve these goals?
- Assign yourself an overall grade between 1 and 10.

## PATHWAYS REFLECTIONS (2 x 5% each)

Students are to submit two reflections based on their experiences with the volunteering component at Pathways to Education. These reflections are due in the dropbox on Avenue to Learn **Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> and Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>**. Students are not required to submit a hard copy in class. These reflections should link course material to what you have experienced while at Pathways to Education. Each reflection should be two pages double-spaced, with proper formatting and references. Students should use these reflections to critically assess course material and our responses to at-risk youth.

### MIDTERM EXAM (30%)

The midterm exam will consist of essay questions and identification questions, which will be based on key concepts. The midterm will cover course material from weeks one through six. The midterm will take place in class **Tuesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

### ESSAY (40%)

The essay is to be a minimum of eight (8) pages and a maximum of ten (10) pages, plus references. In-text citations and references must adhere to APA formatting guidelines (for help see the Owl Purdue APA guide online). Material from the course and a minimum of four (4) outside scholarly sources are required. A copy of the paper is to be submitted in the dropbox on Avenue to Learn on **Tuesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>** by the end of class. Late papers will be penalized 10% per business day. Students are to make an argument and use empirical and scholarly resources to support that argument. This course uses the plagiarism-detection software Turn It In for the essays.

Students are to choose between these essay options:

1. Research consistently finds that the group most likely to engage in antisocial behaviour and youth crime are male adolescents. Using what you have learned in this course and empirical research, make an argument for why boys are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour than girls. What does this mean for how we respond to the behaviours of male and female youth? Students who choose this option should make clear connections to criminological theory and research in articulating their position and response recommendations.
2. This course takes the position that youth crime and antisocial behaviour are socially constructed and our responses to youth are based on that construction. How does our current youth justice legislation reflect our constructions of at-risk youth? Is this the best way to respond to at-risk youth who come in conflict with the law? Why or why not? Students who choose this option should consider the correlates to youth crime when framing their argument.
3. The youth criminal justice system is often used to respond to at-risk youth. Considering of one of the following special populations (girls, Indigenous youth, street-involved youth, victims of human trafficking), what are the challenges with a formal criminal justice response for these youth? Is this response adequate? Students need only consider one special population in their argument and analysis.
4. Adolescent experiences in school have been considered by many scholars to be an important correlate to antisocial behaviour and youth crime. How does school relate to the likelihood of criminal offending, both in adolescents and later adulthood? How might schools intervene to alter youth criminal trajectories?
5. Students can write on a topic of their choice, but it must be approved by me no later than October 30<sup>th</sup>. Non-approved papers will not be graded.

A few hints when writing the paper:

- Take a clear position and use scholarly and empirical research to support your argument. Wishy washy arguments result in wishy washy grades.

- Papers should be edited and thoroughly proofread for awkward phrasing, citation errors, and grammatical errors. By this stage in your academic career, papers should be clear, concise, and contain an introduction with a thesis statement, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Papers that have errors in citation, paragraphs that are an entire page, and typos will lose 10% off the top.

#### 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.

Students completing unpaid placements as part of an academic course are required to complete the following documents and return them to your instructor or Ruthanne Talbot:

- 1) Students must sign the [student declaration letter](#), required to let them know, via sign-off, they have coverage via WSIB or ACE/private coverage and to report incidents accordingly;
- 2) Placement “employers” sign off on [letter to placement employers](#), noting that they have been informed that WSIB coverage (or ACE/private coverage) is provided via the MTCU, and therefore their respective WSIB standings (i.e. premiums) will not be effected, and;
- 3) Students and placement “employers” will sign off on the [Pre-Placement Safety Orientation Checklist](#).

#### 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 4<sup>th</sup>**

Course outline and introductions  
Pathways to Education Program orientation

Required Reading: None

#### **WEEK TWO: September 11<sup>th</sup>**

The Social Construction of Youth Deviance

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 18<sup>th</sup>**

Theories of Juvenile Delinquency

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 3
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 8

**WEEK FOUR: September 25<sup>th</sup>**

Legislation and the Nature and Extent of Youth Crime

Required:

- Tanner, Ch. 2
- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 2, 3, 6
- Sprott, Jane B., & Allan Manson. (2017). “YCJA Bail Conditions: ‘Treating’ Boys and Girls Differently”. *Canadian Criminal Law Review*, 22 (1), 77-94. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

*SECTION TWO: Correlates to Youth Crime*

**WEEK FIVE: October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Risk Factors-School and the Family

\*\*\*Pathways to Education reflection paper #1 due\*\*\*

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)
- Kierkus, Christopher A., & Douglas Baer. (2002). “A social control explanation of the relationship between family structure and delinquent behaviour”. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 44 (4), 425-458. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

**WEEK SIX: October 9<sup>th</sup>: No classes—Reading Week ☺**

No readings

**WEEK SEVEN: October 16<sup>th</sup>**

Risk Factors-Peers/Gangs

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 EIGHT: October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Midterm Exam—No readings

**WEEK NINE: October 30<sup>th</sup>**

Risk Factors-Substance Abuse and Mental Health

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)

*SECTION THREE: SPECIAL POPULATIONS*

**WEEK TEN: November 6<sup>th</sup>**

Special Populations-Girls

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 ELEVEN: November 13<sup>th</sup>**

Special Populations-Indigenous Youth

\*\*\*Pathways to Education reflection paper #2 due\*\*\*

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)

**WEEK TWELVE: November 20<sup>th</sup>**

Special Populations-Victims of Human Trafficking

Required:

- Winterdyck and Smandych, Ch. 14
- 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)
- Bach, Jesse E., & Stacey Diane A. Litam. (2017). "Kind Regards": an examination of one buyer's attempt to purchase a trafficked child for sex". *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 23 (2), 222-233. (Available on Avenue to Learn)

### **WEEK THIRTEEN: November 27<sup>th</sup>**

Special Population-Street-Involved Youth

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)

### **WEEK FOURTEEN: December 4<sup>th</sup>**

Responding to Youth Crime

**\*\*\*ESSAYS ARE DUE IN THE DROPBOX BY END OF CLASS\*\*\***

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.

In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be

required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

### **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.