

Communities & Crime

CRIM 4660

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Course Meets: TF 1:35-3:15; Kariotis Hall 209

Required Text: All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Graphical Syllabus



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Course Mission

When you look out across the urban landscape, it becomes clear that the city is not a single community, but a composite of many neighborhoods, each with their own physical, demographic, and social characteristics. Crime often features prominently in this variation, with people evaluating a given neighborhood by the rates of robberies, assaults, and homicides. But crime is just one part of a complex and rich ecosystem of people, places, and the interactions among them. This course will focus on better understanding this ecosystem, and the role that crime plays within it, focusing on three themes:

- 1) **What are the dimensions of a community?** We will use theory to identify and categorize the elements of a community, be they relatively-stable conditions or dynamic patterns of behavior, and to understand how they fit together.
- 2) **What factors influence crime?** We will look at how conditions and processes both within the community and in the broader city can impact crime rates. In doing so, we will pay particular attention not only to *whether* certain factors influence crime, but to *how* they do so.
- 3) **How do we learn about communities?** We will use the neighborhoods of Boston as a living classroom that we can visit to gain real-world insights on how communities work. We will learn about *systematic social observation* as a methodology for using the visible elements of a neighborhood to infer additional information about it.

Course Format:

- The course curriculum will be broken into three main parts: Crime and the Elements of a Community, Observing Community Dynamics, and Impacts of Societal Dynamics.
- The course will be highly interactive and students **must attend all class periods**.
- Most classes will focus on the discussion of readings. These will often be directed by student facilitators (see Assignments for more detail).
- Other class meetings will focus on peer-review, in which students will discuss and provide each other with feedback on what they are learning and where they see their final projects going (see Assignments for more detail).
- Blackboard will be used frequently for class materials. Please make certain that you are aware of your password for accessing Blackboard and are comfortable using it.

Assignments:

- **Reading responses:** There will be readings due for most class meetings. Each will be accompanied by a short prompt for which a brief response will be turned in.
- **City walk memos:** A major component of the course will be the observation of neighborhoods. In each students will visit a part of the city—often one to which they have never (or rarely) been—with the goal of attending to a particular aspect of the

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setting. These will be summarized in a city walk assignment (3-4 pg. memo unless otherwise stated).

- **Class facilitation:** Many of the discussion classes will be led by student facilitators. Students will sign up on the first week of class to facilitate a single class discussion. Facilitators will turn in a set of “discussion questions” to the instructor in advance of class that will be the basis of their discussion. They will also turn in a short memo following their facilitation on the discussion itself.
- **Final Project:** Throughout the semester students will develop a protocol for observing a particular feature of urban neighborhoods that they find theoretically interesting. The final product will be a scientific paper (12-15 pgs.) that describes this as a pilot study. Students will also present this work in one of the final class meetings.

Grading:

- 10% Attendance & Participation
- 15% Reading Responses and Other Small Assignments
- 10% Class Facilitation
- 15% Project Proposal, etc.
- 20% Walk Memos
- 10% Final Presentation
- 20% Final Project

Academic Honesty:

- Students are expected to abide by Northeastern University’s Academic Integrity Policy, which you can read at: <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academicintegrity/>

Incompletes:

- The grade incomplete (INC) is granted only where a student is approved to make up a single key requirement of the course, such as one of the major assignments.

Other Expectations:

- Class will start promptly. Please be on time. If you are late for any reason, please enter without disturbing the class.
- The use of communication devices during class will not be tolerated. Upon entering, please turn off all cellular phones, Blackberries, or other such devices.
- Late assignments will be discounted 20% per weekday. **After a week, they will no longer be accepted.** If an assignment was to be posted online in advance of class to stimulate discussion there will be **no opportunity for late credit.**
- Late assignments or absences will only be excused in the case of a doctor’s note, or evidence of an academic conflict.

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Course Schedule: All readings and assignments are for the class with which they are listed **not the following class**. Readings are on Blackboard unless otherwise noted. (Note that the schedule and associated assignments are subject to change. Bb=Blackboard)

Date	Themes	Substantive Readings, Etc.	Assignments
1/13	<i>Welcome</i> <i>What is a Community?</i>	—	—

CRIME AND THE ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY

1/16	<i>The Act of Crime</i>	Lawrence E. Cohen & Marcus Felson. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. <i>American Sociological Review</i> .	—
1/20	<i>Demographics Pt. I:</i> <i>Segregation</i>	Ruth D. Peterson & Lauren J. Krivo. (2012). Excerpt from <i>Divergent Social Worlds</i> .	—
1/23	<i>Demographics Pt. II:</i> <i>Social Disorganization</i>	Robert J. Sampson & W. Byron Groves. (1989). Community structure and crime: Testing social disorganization theory. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> .	**First City Walk**
1/27	<i>Social Process Pt. I:</i> <i>Structure vs. Process</i>	Christopher Jencks & Susan E. Mayer. (1990). The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighborhood. In <i>Inner-City Poverty in the United States</i> .	—
1/30	<i>Social Process Pt. II:</i> <i>Informal Social Control</i>	Robert J. Sampson, Stephen W. Raudenbush, & Felton Earls. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. <i>Science</i> . Paul E. Bellair. (2000). Informal surveillance and street crime: A complex relationship. <i>Criminology</i> .	—

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2/3	<i>Formal Enforcement Pt. I: Community Policing</i>	David Weisburd & John E. Eck. (2004). What can police do to reduce crime, disorder, and fear. <i>The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i>	—
2/6	<i>Formal Enforcement Pt. II: Legal Cynicism</i>	David S. Kirk & Andrew V. Papchristos. (2011). Cultural mechanisms and the persistence of neighborhood violence. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> .	**Second City Walk**
A Specific Example: Broken Windows Theory			
2/10	<i>Introduction to Broken Windows Theory</i>	James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling. (1982). The police and neighborhood safety. <i>The Atlantic</i>	—
2/13	<i>Broken Windows and Behavior</i>	Daniel T. O'Brien & David S. Wilson. (2011). Community perception: The ability to assess the safety of unfamiliar neighborhoods and respond adaptively. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> . Kees Keizer, et al. (2008) The spreading of disorder. <i>Science</i> .	—
2/17	<i>Broken Windows and Crime</i>	Robert J. Sampson & Stephen W. Raudenbush. (1999). Systematic social observation of public spaces: A new look at disorder in urban neighborhoods. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	—
2/20	<i>Broken Windows Policing</i>	A debate from <i>Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives</i> (2006), edited by David Weisburd & Anthony Braga. William H. Sousa & George L. Kelling. <i>Advocate</i> : Of “broken windows,” criminology, and criminal justice. Ralph B. Taylor. <i>Critic</i> : Incivilities reduction policing, zero tolerance, and the retreat from coproduction: weak foundations and strong pressures. Plus two recent essays from the popular press.	**Third City Walk** Graffiti walk #1

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OBSERVING COMMUNITY DYNAMICS

2/24	<i>What can we observe?</i> In-class workshop	—	**Initial Project Proposal**
2/27	<i>Territoriality</i>	Perkins et al. (1993). The physical environment of street crime: Defensible space, territoriality and incivilities. <i>Journal of Environmental Psychology</i> . Caughy et al. (2001). A brief observational measure for urban neighborhoods. <i>Health & Place</i> . With particular attention to the methods.	—
3/3	<i>Family dynamics</i>	He Len Chung & Laurence Steinberg. (2006). Relations between neighborhood factors, parenting behaviors, peer deviance, and delinquency among serious juvenile offenders. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> . Daniel Nettle. (2012). Behaviour of parents and children in two contrasting urban neighbourhoods: An observational study. <i>Journal of Ethology</i> .	—
3/6	<i>Gentrification</i>	Andrew V. Papachristos & Melissa A. Fugiero. (2011). More coffee, less crime? The relationship between gentrification and neighborhood crime rates in Chicago, 1991 to 2005. Jackelyn Hwang & Robert J. Sampson. (2014). Divergent pathways of gentrification: Racial inequality and the social order of renewal in Chicago neighborhoods. <i>American Sociological Review</i> . With particular attention to the methods	**Fourth City Walk**
3/17	<i>Hotspots</i>	Anthony A. Braga, et al. (2010). The concentration and stability of gun violence at micro places in Boston, 1980-2008. <i>Journal of Quantitative Criminology</i> .	**Revised Project Proposal**
3/20	<i>What can we observe?</i>	—	—

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	<i>Revisited</i> In-class workshop		
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IMPACTS OF SOCIETAL DYNAMICS

3/24	<i>Mass Incarceration</i>	Clear et al. (2003). Coercive mobility and crime: A preliminary examination of concentrated incarceration and social disorganization. <i>Justice Quarterly</i> .	**Fifth City Walk**
3/27	<i>Economic Organization Pt I: Economics of Crime</i>	Sudhir A. Venkatesh. (1997). The social organization of street gang activity in an urban ghetto. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> .	—
3/31	<i>Economic Organization Pt. II: Societal Competition</i>	Martin Daly, et al. (2001). Income inequality and homicide rates in Canada and the US. <i>Canadian Journal of Criminology</i> .	—
4/3	<i>Progress Check-In</i> In-class Workshop	—	**Revised Project Proposal**
4/7	<i>Community Institutions</i>	Lee Ann Slocum, et al. (2013). The elusive relationship between community organizations and crime. <i>Criminology</i> .	—

WHAT HAVE WE SEEN?

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4/10	<i>What have we seen?</i> Last in-class workshop	—	—
4/14	<i>Presentations</i>	—	—
4/17	<i>Presentations</i>	—	—
4/21	<i>Presentations</i>	—	—