

PBJ 312 – THE STUDY OF HOMICIDE AND LETHAL VIOLENCE

FALL 2016



Disclaimer: This class is about murder. This topic may be considered by some to be particularly grisly or unnerving. During the course of the semester, we may watch video clips or movies, hold discussions about, and/or make reference to newspaper articles that are graphic portrayals of heinous crimes, criminals, and their victims. If you find this type of material to be upsetting, you may wish to enroll in another course.

PBJ 312 – THE STUDY OF HOMICIDE & LETHAL VIOLENCE

T/Th 8:00 – 9:20 a.m.
Mahar Hall – Room 102
Fall 2016

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Phone: (315) 312-3403
Office Hours: M 3:00 – 4:30 p.m., TH 11:00 am – 12:30 p.m., or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Homicide is one of the most disturbing crimes known to mankind, yet at the same time, it is also perceived to be one of the most common, due to the pervasive media coverage it receives. This course is an analytic examination study of murder in the U.S., including different types of homicides, offenders, victims, and the various circumstances surrounding these events. Topics will include theoretical explanations for homicide, different types of murder, and the role of the criminal justice system in responding to these crimes (from investigation to prosecution). Homicide also will be situated in the current discourse by reviewing notable cases.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this semester, you will:

- Understand homicide from a social context, including the impact of the media.
- Be able to differentiate between the different types of homicides (including offenders, victims, and circumstances).
- Understand the data sources associated with U.S. homicide.
- Understand the relevant theories used to study and explain murder.
- Be able to address the various debates surrounding deterrence and control of violence, such as the death penalty and gun control.

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbook: Fox, J.A., Levin, J., & Quinet, K. (2012). *The Will to Kill: Making Sense of Senseless Murder* (4th Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. **ISBN 13: 978-0-13-137567-3**

Reader: Schildkraut, J., & Elsass, H.J. (2016). *Mass shootings: Media, myths, and realities*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. **ISBN 13: 978-1-44-083652-7**.

Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard prior to the start of the semester. One peer-reviewed journal article will accompany the textbook readings for each chapter. You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading on the day for which it is assigned. Failure to come prepared may result in you being counted absent at the instructor's discretion.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and class participation are mandatory and will be taken into consideration in the grading process. You will complete the assigned readings prior to class and come to each class prepared to engage in class exercises and discussions. Attendance is defined as coming to class, prepared, on time, and staying for the duration of the class period. The material covered in class will come from a variety of sources beyond just your textbook readings. Poor attendance and/or participation will have a negative impact on your grade.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class. If you do miss a class, please make sure that you obtain the information covered from a classmate.

Excused absences must be arranged for in advance or documented in writing. Examples of excused absences are illness; family emergencies; obligations beyond your control, such as a job interview; and participation in SUNY Oswego athletic events. You will be required to provide satisfactory documentation of such absences.

Arriving Late/Leaving Early: Late attendance and leaving early are discourteous to the instructor and other students and demonstrates a lack of responsibility. Please do not come in late or leave early without prior approval from the instructor. If you arrive to class more than ten (10) minutes late or you leave early without prior arrangement, this will be deemed an unexcused absence.

Blackboard System

This course makes use of the Blackboard system. Over the course of the semester, I will post announcements, the syllabus, PowerPoints, review sheets, class handouts, related media discussed in class, and assignments on Blackboard. Some items are set to release on certain dates. Please inform me as soon as possible of any technical difficulties not remedied by Blackboard's help feature.

To be successful in the course, you will need access to reliable internet service. When you submit an assignment, you will receive an email receipt for the submission. Save this email receipt. If I do not receive an assignment, and you cannot provide this email receipt, you will not receive credit for the assignment. Be sure to allow yourself adequate time to complete the assignment. Technology failure is not an accepted excuse for missing an assignment.

Technology and Electronic Devices

Please make sure that any cell phones, PDAs, or iPods are turned off or switched to silent prior to the start of class. If your cell phone or related device goes off during class, or you are found to be using your cell phone during my lecture, you will be asked to leave the class and will be marked absent for the day. If there is an exigent circumstance in which you are expecting an urgent call or message, see me before class to discuss this.

Laptop computers, iPads/tablets, and other forms of computers and electronic devices are strictly prohibited in class. Tape recorders/digital recorders require my permission before each use. Actively recording devices must be placed at the front of the room. All students must be

informed of the presence of the device, and it may be turned off at my request or at the request of any student during a sensitive discussion. If the device was needed for accommodative purposes, I will provide an alternate way for the student to receive the material during such times.

Assignments and Assigned Readings

Please make sure that you have completed all assigned readings prior to the assigned class period. All assignments will be due at the beginning of the class period on the assigned date. Any assignments turned in after the start of the class period will be considered late. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements with the instructor have been made.

Your Grade

Please do not wait until the semester is over to voice concern about your grade. If you are concerned about your grade at any point, please come discuss this with me. I am happy to meet with you to discuss your performance and help you work towards your desired grade. You may contact me via Blackboard course mail. Grades will not be discussed through your personal email account.

Office Hours

Office hours are available for you to address questions, concerns, and any issues you may wish to discuss about the course. Please do not hesitate to take advantage of this time, especially if you are experiencing a problem with the course. The sooner we address a problem, the more likely we are to resolve it favorably. If you are unable to meet during the office hours for any reason, please feel free to contact me to arrange an appointment.

Contacting Me

Email is the best way to get in touch with me as I am not always on campus or available by phone. Please be sure to include your name and course name in the subject line, and use professional language. I check email regularly and multiple times per day, and will respond to you within 24 hours unless you have been notified prior that I will be unavailable. If for any reason you do not get a response within 24 hours, I most likely did not receive your email. Please feel free to resend your email or speak with me at the end of class or during office hours.

Your Email Address

From time to time, I will e-mail the class with important information (i.e., instructions for an assignment, announcements, etc.). Emails, especially containing confidential information, only will be sent to a student's SUNY Oswego email account or via the mail tool in Blackboard. Please be sure you make my e-mail address a safe address on your account so that my e-mails are received and not sent to junk mail.

Retention of Graded Material

Education requires evaluation, both of individual students' performance, as well as the performance of an academic program as a whole. Work you submit for grading in this course may be retained by the Department in order to assess the quality of curriculum we offer to students of Public Justice.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Intellectual Integrity

The College Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism applies to all assignments and exams in this course. This also includes academic dishonesty and cheating on the taking of attendance. You should familiarize yourself with that policy, which is reproduced in the College Catalogue and can be accessed in its entirety at the website address below. If it is determined that you have cheated or plagiarized on an assignment or exam in this course, the professor reserves the right to assign a grade of E for that assignment or exam, or a grade of E for the course, depending on the circumstances.

"Intellectual integrity on the part of all students is basic to individual growth and development through college course work. When academic dishonesty occurs, the teaching/learning climate is seriously undermined and student growth and development are impeded. For these reasons, any form of intellectual dishonesty is a serious concern and is therefore prohibited."

(http://catalog.oswego.edu/content.php?catoid=26&navoid=1803#inte_inte)

Disability Services

If you have a disabling condition which may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) located at 155 Campus Center, phone (315) 312-3358, dss@oswego.edu. Please also see me after class or during office hours to discuss your needs.

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) provides support services and adaptive technologies to students who have a legally documented disability or students who suspect that they may have a disability. Students must contact the office before adaptive services can begin. Certain services, such as alternative testing, require advanced notice and are contingent upon the student initiating the process in a timely fashion. Alternative testing may occur at a time other than the time the rest of the class is taking the exam.

University Closings

School closings will be communicated through the SUNY Oswego homepage and local media. Students can call the Oswego Information Line at (315) 312-3333. SUNY Oswego participates in the New York Alert emergency messaging system. This system allows University Police and the SUNY Public Affairs office to contact students in the event of emergencies, including campus-wide closing due to inclement weather. Participation in this system can be set up through the personal information page of students' myOswego accounts. If I must cancel class, I will post a sign on the door, add a message on our course website (ANGEL), and/or send a class email as soon as possible.

Non-Discrimination Policy

SUNY Oswego values the contributions to learning for its members that result from maintaining a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. The goal of SUNY Oswego is to nurture members' abilities and capacities for appreciation of living and working together in a diverse learning environment. Members must not expose others to discriminatory acts of any form related to gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, or disability since such acts, either active or passive, create a hostile environment.

Members of the college community who experience or observe discrimination, an incident of sexual discrimination, sexual assault, harassment, violence, or exploitation, whether occurring on or off campus, should immediately report the incident. For further information on this policy, and reporting procedures, access the following link:

<http://www.oswego.edu/about/titleix/discriminationpolicy.html>

GRADING

You will be expected to complete a series of assignments throughout the course of the semester. Details for all assignments are below.

Exams (2):	20%
Homicide Offender Movie / Profiling Paper:	30%
Reader Reflection Blog and Responses:	20%
In-Class Reaction Papers (5):	10%
Discussion Questions (5):	10%
Attendance and Participation:	10%

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

A	94% - 100%	B	83% - 86%	C	73% - 76%	D	63% - 66%
A-	90% - 93%	B-	80% - 82%	C-	70% - 72%	D-	60% - 62%
B+	87% - 89%	C+	77% - 79%	D+	67% - 69%	E	0% - 59%

Exams

There will be 2 exams throughout the course of the semester – a midterm and a final. The final examination will be held during the final examination period. Each exam will be composed of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and matching questions. All material covered in class (lectures, multimedia supplements, guest speakers, etc.), as well as your assigned readings, are subject to be on the exam.

No textbooks or notes may be used on the exam. I will provide you Scantron forms for the exams. Both the exam and Scantron must be turned in. Failure to turn in the original exam with your name on it will result in a zero (0) for the test.

Promptness is important on exam days, as it is both distracting and unfair to your fellow students. If you arrive more than ten (10) minutes after the start of the class period on exam days, you will not be permitted to take the exam. Further, you will not be permitted to make up the exam without verifiable documentation of an emergency (at the instructor's discretion), and you will receive a zero (0) for the exam.

If you miss an exam without a prior arrangement, you must provide me with verifiable proof for your reason **within 24 hours** of missing the exam, and the verifiable proof must be dated the day of the exam. It is also your responsibility to set up a time to take a make-up exam. Please note that not all excuses for a missed exam warrant the opportunity to take a make-up exam. If I deem the circumstances warrant a make-up exam, the make-up exam must be completed within one week of the original test date. If you do not follow this policy, or cannot provide me with a verifiable reason for missing the exam, you will receive a score of zero (0) for the exam.

Homicide Offender Movie/Profiling Paper

You will submit a 5- (full) to 7-page essay exploring a homicide offender as he/she is viewed and portrayed through the popular media. This paper requires you to view a film and write an essay that integrates classroom learning with various themes portrayed in the movie. Additional information will be handed out in class and will be made available on Blackboard in the Offender Profiling Paper folder. Your paper topic / movie choice must be approved in advance by the date listed on the syllabus. Failure to do so will result in a 5% deduction from your paper's grade.

Each paper must be a minimum of 5 full pages but no more than 7 pages long, not counting your references and cover page. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with a standard 1" margin and 12-point font. You must also include a cover sheet formatted in APA style, including the title of the paper and your name. I will provide a rubric for you so that you know how these papers will be graded prior to handing them in.

Your final papers are due by the start of class on the date they are due. All papers must be uploaded through the Dropbox feature in the Learning Modules tab on the Blackboard course website. **You must upload a Microsoft Word document file with the appropriate extension included in the file name (.doc or .docx). Your last name must appear in the file name. Papers in incorrect file formats will be returned and marked late.** Any assignments submitted after the start of class time will be deducted ten (10) points for each day late, up to three (3) days after the due date. Papers submitted more than three (3) days late will not be graded.

If you have any questions about this process, make sure that you have those questions answered prior to the paper's due date.

Reader Reflection Blog

Upon completing reading of your required reader, you will be expected to write a reflection blog about how the text has (or has not) shaped your perceptions about mass shootings. In addition to the initial blog post of 750-1,000 words (minimum), you will be expected to respond to **at least ten (10)** of your classmates to spark a discussion. Additional information is available on Blackboard.

In-Class Reaction Papers

With each documentary that is shown, you will be required to write a short reaction paper in class. You will be provided a prompt to answer and should relate the course material with the video in your response.

Discussion Questions

During the semester, you will be required to submit five (5) discussion questions based on the supplemental readings (not your textbook. You will choose the five (5) readings for which you will submit questions. Questions must be submitted via email to the instructor no later than 5:00 p.m. on the day before the start of a new chapter.

Questions must be open-ended (not answerable with a "yes" or a "no") and must tie your readings together to the broader topic. If your question is selected for discussion in class, you will receive two (2) points of extra credit.

COURSE SCHEDULE

T	8/30	Course Introduction; Syllabus; Review Paper Assignment
TH	9/1	The Lure and the Law of Homicide <i>WTK: Chapter 1</i>
T	9/6	Explaining the Will to Kill <i>WTK: Chapter 2</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Duntley & Buss (2011)</i>
TH	9/8	Explaining the Will to Kill *** Paper Topics Due for Approval via Email by 5 p.m. ***
T	9/13	The Killers and their Victims <i>WTK: Chapter 3</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Chan et al. (2010)</i>
TH	9/15	The Killers and their Victims
T	9/20	Intimate and Family Murder <i>WTK: Chapter 4</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Heide (1993)</i>
TH	9/22	Intimate and Family Murder
T	9/27	Intimate and Family Murder <i>Documentary: The Menendez Brothers</i>
TH	9/29	The Young and the Ruthless <i>WTK: Chapter 5</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Piquero (2013)</i>
T	10/4	*** ROSH HASHANAH – NO CLASSES ***
TH	10/6	The Young and the Ruthless Well-Schooled in Murder <i>WTK: Chapter 6</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Schildkraut & Hernandez (2014)</i>
T	10/11	Well-Schooled in Murder *** Reader Reflection Blog Due on Blackboard ***
TH	10/13	Rampage <i>WTK: Chapter 9</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Harris & Harris (2012)</i>
T	10/18	Midterm Exam Review
TH	10/20	*** MIDTERM EXAM *** Chapters 1-6, 9

T	10/25	Medical Murder <i>WTK: Chapter 8</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Crofts-Yorker et al. (2006)</i>
TH	10/27	Serial Killers <i>WTK: Chapter 7</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Farrell et al. (2011)</i>
T	11/1	Serial Killers
TH	11/3	Serial Killers <i>Documentary: America's Serial Killers / Men Who Like To Kill</i>
T	11/8	Murderous Terror <i>WTK: Chapter 11</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Reitman (2013)</i>
TH	11/10	Hate Homicides <i>WTK: Chapter 10</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: McVeigh & Cunningham (2012)</i>
T	11/15	Hate Homicides <i>Documentary: American Justice – Raised on Hate</i> *** Homicide Offender Profiling Paper Due ***
TH	11/17	*** ASC – NO CLASSES / READING DAY ***
T	11/22	Cult Killings <i>WTK: Chapter 12</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Dein & Littlewood (2000)</i>
TH	11/24	*** THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASSES ***
T	11/29	Cult Killings <i>Documentary: David Koresh</i>
TH	12/1	Catching Killers <i>WTK: Chapter 13</i> <i>Blackboard Reading: Guillen (2002)</i>
T	12/6	Catching Killers <i>Documentary: Forensics – You Decide</i>
TH	12/8	Getting Away with Murder, or Not <i>WTK: Chapter 14</i> Final Exam Review
T	12/13	*** FINAL EXAM *** Chapters 7-8, 10-14 NOTE: Exam begins at 8:00 a.m.

SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER

This syllabus is tentative and may change due to unforeseen circumstances. The best way to stay informed is to check e-mail and to attend class. If there are any changes to the syllabus, I will notify you in writing via Blackboard and will provide you with an updated copy.

It is important for you to keep up with your syllabus and refer to it regularly to keep up with the course schedule and policies. If you lose your syllabus, please e-mail me and I'll send a copy to you via e-mail. A copy of the syllabus is also available on the Blackboard course site. Please note that losing your syllabus does not constitute an excuse for missing assignments or noncompliance with course policies.