

# Deviant Behaviors and Deviant Cultures 920:504: 01

*Professor Karen A. Cerulo  
Department of Sociology  
Class Time: Wednesday 4:10PM to 6:50PM  
Location: Davison Hall, Room 127*

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

What exactly is deviance? Is it an objective quality or is it subjectively defined? Is deviant behavior “caused” by some internal or external factor or is it “negotiated”, ever changing and culturally constructed? Does deviance serve a purpose for a society ... if so, for whom? Can any society eliminate deviance? During the semester, we will review a wide variety of theories that address these very questions. Some of these theories are classics and still have significant impact on the field—e.g. strain theory, differential association theory, labeling theory, neutralization theory, control theory, etc. Other theories are relatively new and have refreshed and excited the field—i.e. queer theory, feminism and critical race theory, social time theory, theories of moral panics, risk societies, creativity and innovation, etc.

In reviewing the literature, we will see that some theories take a macro approach to deviance and others take a micro approach. Some prioritize the place of social structure, some the role of culture in the construction/perceived prevalence of deviance, others contain some combination of both. The theories have been applied to wide varieties of behaviors including sex, drugs, violence, suicide, the body, creativity, media images, artistic expression, small group interactions, paranormal beliefs and much, much more.

Over the course of the semester, we will explore different schools of thought in the deviance literature—different perspectives on why we conform or deviate ... different ideas about our lived experience as insiders or outsiders, sinners or saints, members of the silent majority or part of a vocal, even resistant subculture. We will look at both the abstract theoretical ideas and the substantive applications of those ideas. In several classes, we will attempt to apply theories ourselves by experiencing a film, media clip, or account of a contemporary news event and seeing how a particular theory does or does not give us insight into action.

## OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING GOALS

This course examines the interrelations between culture, structure, and the definitions of conformity and deviance. We will explore a variety of issues, with an eye to mastering the following topics:

- Understanding the meaning of deviance—how is it defined and how much consensus, if any, surrounds the definition.
- Understanding different theoretical approaches in the study of deviance.
- Understanding the contemporary debates in the field.
- Understanding the applications and forms of analysis that each theory demands.
- Understanding the role of deviance in contemporary society.
- Understanding the paradox of deviance and its prevalence in societies devoted to maintaining conformity.

## BOOKS

All readings for this course will be posted on Sakai. To access them:

- Go to <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal> and log in. Our course site, identified by our course number, should immediately pop up as one of your Sakai locations.
- Look at the bar on the left side of the screen and click on “Resources.”
- Look for the reading using the author’s last name. If I use an author more than once, I’ll have name and topic listed.

*Note:* If you have trouble accessing the Sakai site, please contact them at [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto:sakai@rutgers.edu) or **848.445.8721**. Sakai Help Desk representatives are available **Monday through Friday 8:00AM-6:00PM**. Limited evening, night, and weekend coverage is also provided by NBCS Operations Staff outside of our help desk hours. Anything that the Operations Staff cannot answer is forwarded to OIRT Staff.

## CLASS ENVIRONMENT

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Knowing this, our classroom should be considered a “safe place” for everyone. Students are encouraged to engage in discussion and debate related to the readings and topics scheduled for the class provided that one’s views are not intended to provoke, insult, or damage another member of the class or the instructor. To facilitate such an environment, all of us (students and instructor) must act with mutual respect and common courtesy.

## REQUIREMENTS

This course presents a variety of requirements designed to tap the full array of your intellectual strengths and skills:

**1) Attendance:** I will view student input as vital to this course. Faithful attendance is a must, and students are expected to come to class prepared and ready to enter discussion. Unless you have a true personal emergency, you are expected in every class meeting. Please arrange your other appointments and your travel schedule accordingly.

Attendance and participation will constitute **20% of your final grade.**

**2) “Deep Thoughts”:** Good discussion is critical to successful class meetings. I will do some limited lecturing, but primarily, I want to hear from you. So to help us make the most of each period, every student is expected to come to class with two “reactive” discussion questions that grow from the readings assigned for the day. In some weeks, you may find your questions focuses on one or two of the readings; other times, you may find questions that emerge from the readings as a group. Writing these questions down will focus your thinking and facilitate good classroom exchanges.

Your questions will be collected at the end of each class period and graded on a weekly basis. This work will constitute **20% of your final grade. No late papers will be accepted.**

**3) Research Proposal:** Each student must propose a research topic addressing any of the substantive areas covered by the deviance literature. Your proposal must answer several key questions:

- a) What is your research question or puzzle?
- b) What theories from the course inform your inquiry *and why*?
- c) Who is currently interested in this issue—provide six references (along with a brief summary of the articles or books) that could help you in your study.
- d) What method will you use to study your question?

You will write two drafts of the research proposal, developing it first during class discussions and then in consultation with me. Draft 1 will explore only a topic and related literature in the field (points a and c above). We will discuss these preliminary drafts in class. Draft 2 will incorporate all four of the above points and will be due on our final class meeting.

Your final proposal should be between 15-20 pages in length. The proposal will constitute **60% of your final grade.**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### MTG. 1—9/2: Intro to the Course

Welcome back to campus—another year begins! Today...

- we will review the organization of the course as well as the course requirements.
- we will visit the question “What is Deviance?” I will deliver a short lecture on contrasting definitions of deviance and some general distinctions or paradigms that guide the theoretization of deviance. We will discuss these issues as a group.

**Assignment:** No reading for the first class, but please make sure you can access the Sakai site as everything we do will emerge from it.

### MTG. 2—9/9: Demonic Theories and Moral Panics

The devil made me do it! Sounds ridiculous, right? But when we review the historical development of demonic theories of deviance and newer theories of moral panics, we see that “old” ideas (e.g. the devil, evil), while not realistically discussed as “causes” of deviance in contemporary culture, may indeed be lurking in the popular mindset regarding why people become deviant. Today, we will quickly review the early demonic theories, look at contemporary uses of demonic causation, and explore a major transformation of these ideas via work on moral panics and risk.

#### Assignment:

- Pfohl, Stephen. 2009. “The Demonic Perspective: Otherworldly Interpretations of Deviance.” Pp. 19-47 in *Images of Deviance and Social Control*. New York: Waveland Press.
- Goode, Erich and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. 2014. “Moral Panics: Culture, Politics and Social Construction.” Pp. 363-370 in T. Anderson (ed.) *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Flinders, Matthew, and Matthew Wood. 2015. "From Folk Devils to Folk Heroes: Rethinking the Theory of Moral Panics." *Deviant Behavior* 36(8): 640-656.
- Kavanaugh, Philip R. and R. J. Maratea. 2014. “Connections: (A)Moral Panics and Risk in Contemporary Drug and Viral Pandemic Claims.” Pp. 378-387 in T. Anderson (ed.) *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

### MTG. 3—9/16: Biological Theories of Deviance

Historically, people have had some interesting ideas regarding the connections between our bodies/biologies and deviant behavior. Early theories penned by Lombroso, Sheldon, the “twin study” scholars, and the chromosomal theorists have now been largely dismissed. Today, the action centers in theories of the brain or the endocrine system. But have the general models changed that much?

*(Assignment on next page)*

(Mtg. 3, con't.)

**Assignment:**

- Pfohl, Stephen. 2009. "The Physiological Pathology Tradition: From Body Types to Chromosomes." Pp. 108-116 in *Images of Deviance and Social Control*. New York: Waveland Press.
- Rafter, Nicole. 2008. "Contemporary Biocriminology" Pp. 199-236" in *The Criminal Brain: Understanding Biological Theories of Crime*. New York: NYU Press.
- In Class Viewing: *Brains on Trial* (PBS)  
Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0eSqIAmKxU>  
Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBK\\_fgTZvk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBK_fgTZvk)

**MTG. 4—9/23: Strain Theory**

Robert Merton's Strain is arguably one of the most influential theories of deviance penned in the twentieth century. It is no surprise then that some scholars, rather than rejecting it, work to expand, amend and update it. Today, we'll discuss the original theory as well as some newer iterations. Then, we will use an episode of a popular TV ensemble show as a vehicle to apply, problematize and explore the pros and cons of Strain Theory.

**Assignment:**

- Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie" *American Sociological Review* 3: 5: 672-682.
- Agnew, Robert. 2006. "General strain theory: Current status and directions for further research." Pp. 101-123 in F. T. Cullen, J. Wright, and K. Blevins (eds.) *Taking stock: The status of criminological theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Applying Strain Theory—in class viewing: TBA

**MTG. 5—9/30: Playing with Merton—How do you spell strain?**

Merton considers strain in relation to the "American Dream"—i.e. economic success goals and the strain they create. Today, using physical appearance as our site of inquiry, we will consider the cultural side of strain theory—specifically the role of cultural capital in a) creating strain and b) creating deviance. We will also explore attempts to change cultural images and values in ways that could diminish strain. *Several video clips will aid our discussion.*

**Assignment:**

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The Forums of Capital" – read Pp. 1-7.  
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>
- Fowler, L. A. and A. R. Moore. 2012. "Breast implants for graduation: A sociological examination of daughter and mother narratives." *Sociology* 2(1): 109-115.

(Assignment continued on next page)

(Meeting 5 con't.)

- van Amsterdam, Noortje. 2013. "Big fat inequalities, thin privilege: An intersectional perspective on 'body size'." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20(2): 155-169.
- Johnston, Josée, and Judith Taylor. 2014. "Feminist consumerism and fat activists: A comparative study of grassroots activism and the Dove real beauty campaign." *Signs* 40(1): 941-966.

### **MTG. 6—10/7: Learning to be Deviant**

Learning, as an explanation for deviant behavior, posed a pointed response to Strain Theory, and it remains a viable theoretical alternative among sociologists, psychologists and criminologists. This perspective is best illustrated in “Differential Association theory” and “Social Learning theory.” Today, we will review both theories, some contemporary applications, and two interesting extensions – one cognitive and one biosocial.

#### **Assignment:**

- Matsueda, Ross L. "Differential association theory." *Encyclopedia of criminology and deviant behavior* 1 (2001): 125-130.
- Akers, Ronald L., and Gary F. Jensen. 2009. "The empirical status of social learning theory of crime and deviance: The past, present and future." **Pp. 37-42 only** in F. T. Cullen, J. Wright, and K. Blevins (eds.) *Taking stock: The status of criminological theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- **Read one of:**
  - Hinduja, Sameer, and Justin W. Patchin. 2013. "Social Influences on Cyberbullying Behaviors among Middle and High School Students." *Journal of Youth and Adolescents* 42: 711-722.
  - Fox, Kathleen A., Matt R. Nobles, and Ronald L. Akers. 2011. "Is stalking a learned phenomenon? An empirical test of social learning theory." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 39: 1: 39-47.
- Simons, Ronald L., and Callie Harbin Burt. 2011. "Learning To Be Bad: Adverse Social Conditions, Social Schema and Crime." *Criminology* 49: 2: 553-598. (*Don't be discouraged by length – a full third of the paper is references.*)
- Watts, Stephen J., and Thomas L. McNulty. 2015. "Delinquent Peers and Offending Integrating Social Learning and Biosocial Theory." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 13:2: 190-206.

### **MTG. 7—10/14: Paper Topics**

Today, we will devote the class to discussing each person's research topic for the final assignment. In essence, we will “workshop” your ideas as a group, trying on topics and approaches and seeking out literature that may be helpful to you.

## MTG. 8—10/21: Interactionist and Constructionist Theories of Deviance

Interactionist and Constructionist theories opened the door for a more dynamic understanding of deviance ... one that problematized ideas of fixed pathologies, objective criteria or universal goals. In part 1 of today's class, we look at some of the basic concepts at the core of these theories: the definitional process, labeling, dramaturgy, impression management, primary and secondary deviance, master status, retrospective interpretation, and finally, power. In part 2 of the class, we will look at some media constructions of deviance and see when and if these concepts come alive.

### Assignment:

- Thomas, W. I. 1923. "The Definition of the Situation" Pp. 42-44 and 49-50 in *Unadjusted Girl*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. "The Art of Impression Management." Pp. 30-34 and 208-212 in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Becker, Howard. 1963. "Definitions of Deviance." Pp. 3-18 in *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Lemert, Edwin M. 1951. "Primary and Secondary Deviance" Pp. 214-219 in *Social Pathology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Hughes, Everett Cherrington. 1945. "Dilemmas and contradictions of status." *American Journal of Sociology* 50(5): 353-359.
- Edwin Schur. 1971. "Retrospective Interpretation." Pp. 52-56 in *Labeling Deviant Behavior*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Nordberg, Jenny. 2014. "The Afghan Girls Who Live As Boys." *The Atlantic* (September 8) <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/09/the-underground-girls-of-kabul/379762/>
- (We'll watch these together)  
Rachel Dolezal: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG9Q2\\_Hv83k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IG9Q2_Hv83k)  
Caitlyn Jenner: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oxPAn\\_8-uY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oxPAn_8-uY)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQSvII6K8n4>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a\\_jiNqFjDQ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_jiNqFjDQ8)

## MTG 9—10/28: Constructionism and Cultures of Violence

Today, we will continue to apply constructionist ideas, exploring how cultures of violence are created and institutionalized both within groups and, in a broader sense, by the media.

### Assignment:

- Armstrong, Elizabeth A., Laura Hamilton and Brian Sweeney. 2006. "Sexual Assault on Campus." Pp. 494-511 in P. Adler and P. Adler (eds.), *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context and Interaction*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

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(Mtg 9 con't.)

- Nilsson, Gabriella. 2013. "Balls Enough: Manliness and Legitimated Violence in Hell's Kitchen." *Gender, Work & Organization* 20(6): 647-663.
- Parham-Payne, Wanda. 2014. "The Role of the Media in the Disparate Response to Gun Violence in America." *Journal of Black Studies* 45(8) 752–768 .
- Coeckelbergh, Mark. 2014. "Drones, information technology, and distance: mapping the moral epistemology of remote fighting." *Ethics and information technology* 15(2): 87-98.

### **MTG. 10—11/4: Deviant Identities: Acquisition, Neutralization, Exits.**

Today, we explore the process by which people become (or unbecome) deviant. Focusing on the actor, we explore the steps in becoming deviant, ways in which actors neutralize their behavior, and how actors exit from deviant identities.

#### **Assignment:**

- Becker, Howard. 1963. "Deviant Careers." Pp. 25-39 in *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Melder, Mark O. 2014. "The Moral Careers of Militia Group Participants: A Case Study." *Deviant Behavior* 35(8): 611-627.
- Shigihara, Amanda M. 2013. "It's Only Stealing a Little a Lot: Techniques of Neutralization for Theft Among Restaurant Workers." *Deviant Behavior* 34(6): 494-512.
- Granberg, Ellen M. 2013. "Now my 'old self' is thin" Stigma Exits after Weight Loss." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74(1): 29-52.

### **MTG: 11—11/11: Stigma, Carnival and Edgework**

In today's class, we look at a case of intellectual evolution in the deviance literature. We begin with Goffman's notion of "stigma"—typically defined as one or more discrediting traits that reduce one's life chances. We move on to Bakhtin's notion of carnival. Carnival is a new way of considering stigma—one that focuses on the celebration of stigma. Finally, we explore the concept of "edgework." Edgework centers on using stigmatized actions as a form of resistance. In addition to the reading on edgework, we will do some hands on analysis of "The Impressionists" as edgework artists. In this way, we'll explore innovation as a form of deviance.

#### **Assignment:**

- Goffman, Erving. 1963. "Stigma and Social Identity." Pp. 256-265 in T. Anderson (ed.) *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Elliot, Shanti. 1999. "Carnival and dialogue in Bakhtin's poetics of folklore." *Folklore Forum* 30(1/2): 129-139.

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(Mtg 11 con't.)

- Booth, Paul. "Slash and porn: media subversion, hyper-articulation, and parody." *Continuum* 28.3 (2014): 396-409.
- Lyng, Stephen. "Edgework: A social psychological analysis of voluntary risk taking." Pp. 219-228 in T. Anderson (ed.) *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Rajah, Valli. 2007. "Resistance as edgework in violent intimate relationships of drug-involved women." Pp. 229-242 in T. Anderson (ed.) *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York: Routledge..

### **MTG. 12—11/18:** Individual meetings

Today, we will not meet as a class. Rather, I am setting aside a huge block of office hours so that every student can meet with me and discuss issues or problems connected to the final assignment. By meeting today, you can finalize things well in advance of the assignment due date.

***REMEMBER--No meeting on 11/25—Rutgers is on a Friday Schedule***

### **MTG. 13—12/2: Feminist and Queer Theoretical Approaches to Deviance**

In today's class, we will explore the ideas presented in feminist and queer theories of deviance. We will also explore some new developments in the field.

- McPhail, Beverly A. 2015. "Feminist Framework Plus Knitting Feminist Theories of Rape Etiology Into a Comprehensive Model." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 16(2): 1-16.
- Valocchi, Stephen. "Not Yet Queer Enough The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality." *Gender & Society* 19.6 (2005): 750-770.
- Pfeffer, Carla A. 2014. "'I Don't Like Passing as a Straight Woman': Queer Negotiations of Identity and Social Group Membership." *American Journal of Sociology* 120(1): 1-44.
- Herring, Scott. 2011. "Material deviance: theorizing queer objecthood." *Postmodern Culture* 21(2): 1-10.

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## **MTG. 14—12/9: Social Control: Social Time Theory and Control Theory**

In today's class, we explore two theories of deviance—one new and one that poses a completely different approach to deviance. Donald Black looks at conflict and deviance in a new way—as a function of social space and time. Control theory presents us with a new analytic question. The focus is not so much on why we deviate, but on why we conform.

### **Assignment:**

- Black, Donald. 2011. "Introduction." Pp. 3-17 in *Moral Time*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, Bradley. 2013. "Genocide and Social Time." *DILEMAS: Revista de Estudos de Conflito e Controle Social* 6: 3: 465-488.
- Schreck, Christopher J. 2014. "Social Control Theories." Pp. 1-8 in *The Encyclopedia of Theoretical Criminology* DOI: 10.1002/9781118517390.wbetc132.
- Thyne, Clayton L., and Ryan D. Schroeder. 2012. "Social constraints and civil war: Bridging the gap with criminological theory." *The Journal of Politics* 74(4): 1066-1078.

***Final Papers due on 12/9 – no late papers accepted!***