

**Sociology 497 – Neighborhoods and Crime**  
SPRING 2023

Meeting time: 10:00 am - 12:40 pm (Mondays)

Meeting room: Davison Hall, 128

**Professor:** Ricardo Martinez-Schuldt

**Office:** Room 139 in Davison Hall

**Email:** ricardo.martinez.schuldt@rutgers.edu

**Office Hours:**

In person: 9:00am – 10:00am (Wednesdays)

Virtual (Zoom): By Appointment (Fridays)

**Course Overview:**

Discourse related to (street-level or interpersonal) crime and public policy often emphasizes high-profile incidents of violence or characterizes crime as a city-level social problem. Empirically, though, crime rates vary substantially *across* neighborhoods and *within* cities. This course will introduce students to some prevailing theoretical perspectives that conceptualize crime as a neighborhood-level phenomenon and offer explanations for why crime rates diverge across neighborhoods. Doing so will require students to engage with theories that empathize social ecologies, structural conditions, or cultural aspects of neighborhoods. In addition, we will critically examine the links between theory, data, and analytic methods to understand how scholars uncover “neighborhood effects.” Finally, this course will discuss how the social process of immigration structures public safety as well as consider the role of policing in reifying and reshaping understandings of neighborhoods.

**Course Learning Goals:**

Through completion of this course, students will:

- Acquire an understanding of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken to account for neighborhood-level variation in interpersonal crime including homicide, robbery, and assault
- Learn about the current state of knowledge regarding variation in crime across U.S. neighborhoods
- Critically analyze the conceptual and empirical underpinning of research related to social ecologies, structural conditions, culture, and crime.
- Identify new research questions related to the study of crime at the neighborhood-level

Several methods will be used to measure achievement of the above learning goals:

- Writing weekly memos that summarize and analyzes each set of readings
- Participating in in-depth weekly discussions of assigned readings
- Writing a review for a recently published academic journal article broadly related to neighborhoods and crime (article to be selected by each student)
- Providing a conference-style presentation for the paper identified for the paper review

**Diversity statement:**

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.

**Required readings:**

All readings will be available on Canvas as pdfs. See the course outline below for the required readings throughout the semester.

**Grading:**

Final grades are weighted according to the following arrangement:

Reading memos	25%
Class discussion (participation)	15%
Review paper	30%
<u>Paper presentation</u>	<u>30%</u>
Total	100%

Grades will be earned based on the following table.

**Grading Scale**

A	90 - 100%
B+	85 - 89%
B	80 - 84%
C+	75 - 79%
C	70 - 74%
F	0 - 69%

**Grading Components:**

*Reading memos* – Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for writing a total of 7 reading memos in response to each of the sets of readings. Reading memos will be due before 11:59pm on the Saturdays before each class. For each reading memo, you are expected to (A) briefly summarize the main argument(s) and/or findings of the reading sets, (B) discuss assumptions of the work including the logical strengths and weaknesses of the argument, OR assess the evidence provided by empirical papers, OR discuss implications of the work for future research, and (C) provide one question that you would like to be clarified OR one question you would like to discuss in class. Each reading memo is worth 4 points (1 point for each part A, B, and C, and 1 point for submitting a response that is coherent and free of grammatical errors).

Reading memos that are submitted late without excuse will be penalized at a rate of 10 percentage-points for each day they are late (effectively a letter grade deduction per day).

*Class discussion* – This is a graduate-level seminar. As such, student participation will be integral to the production of knowledge inside the classroom. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material every week. Class participation will be assessed on the frequency and *quality* of your classroom participation. Class room participation that does not sincerely engage with the reading material or undermines the collegial atmosphere of the class will not contribute to your participation grade.

*Review paper* – You will independently identify one empirically-grounded research paper related to the broad topic of neighborhoods and crime. You will then serve as a reviewer for the paper as if it had been submitted for publication. Serving as a reviewer will require you to write a 2 to 4-page (single-spaced, 12 New Times Roman font) commentary on the paper. In your review, you must briefly summarize the key argument(s) and finding(s) of the paper. Then, you will assess the theoretical framing of the paper, the data, the methodological approach, and interpretation of results. In assessing the paper, you must engage with and reference at least one of the articles we covered in class (you are free to reference more).

I recognize that this assignment can seem intimidating and/or may be difficult seeing as the papers you select will already have been through the review process. However, it is important to remember that **no** academic research article is flawless/perfect. That said, I still encourage you to **avoid** selecting a paper that is published in *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, or *Criminology*.

Review papers that are submitted late without excuse will be penalized at a rate of 10 percentage-points for each day they are late (effectively a letter grade deduction per day).

*Paper presentation* – During the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the final class period (March 6<sup>th</sup>), you will present the paper you reviewed as if you were the lead author of the article attending an academic conference. That is, you will construct a 10–15-minute power-point (or equivalent) presentation of the work. The presentation should cover the paper's motivation, the research question(s), the data, the analytic method, results, conclusion, and implications for future research.

We will discuss specific aspects of (good) academic conference presentations midway through the course.

### **Responsibilities:**

You are expected to come to every class and on time (at 10:00am). You are responsible for letting me know ahead of time if you are going to miss a class meeting.

You are expected to let me know in advance or as soon as possible if a situation arises that will prevent you from completing assigned work on time.

You are expected to complete the readings before the class they are assigned.

You are expected to show respect to your fellow classmates and to the instructor.

## **University Resources**

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates/coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources. For a discussion of the documentation need to receive accommodations, see <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, the office of disability services will provide you with a Letter of Accommodation. Please share this letter with me as early in the course as possible and we will discuss accommodations. To begin this process, please complete a registration form. See: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/getting-registered>

Counseling Services: The university provides access to a number of services to assist with situations or experiences that may interfere with your ability to perform and participate in the Rutgers' community. For a list of counseling services and more information on each service, see <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

## **Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy:**

By participating in this class, you agree to adhere to the principles of academic integrity as outlined in the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy. [See here](#) for the current policy as well as a list of potential actions that would violate the policy.

## **Course Outline and Required Readings:**

WEEK 1: January 23<sup>rd</sup> – Residential segregation and urban poverty

- Wilson, William Julius. 1987. "Social change and social dislocations in the inner city," p. 20 – 62 in *The truly disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Krivo, Lauren, Ruth D. Peterson, and Danielle C. Kuhl. 2009. "Segregation, racial structure, and neighborhood violent crime." *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(6): 1,765 – 1,802.

WEEK 2: January 30<sup>th</sup> – Social disorganization and collective efficacy

- Bursik, Robert J. 1988. "Social disorganization and theories of crime and delinquency: problems and prospects." *Criminology*, 26(4): 519-551.
- Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy." *Science*, 277: 918-924.
- Sampson, Robert J. 2012. "The theory of collective efficacy," p. 149-178 in *Great American City: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### WEEK 3: February 6<sup>th</sup> – Community organizations

- Small, Mario Luis, Erin M. Jacobs, and Rebekah Peeples Massengill. 2008. “Why organizational ties matter for neighborhood effects: resource access through childcare centers.” *Social Forces*, 87(1): 387 – 414.
- Sampson, Robert J. 2012. “Civic society and the organizational imperative,” p. 179-209 in *Great American City: Chicago and the enduring neighborhood effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sharkey, Patrick, Gerard Torrats-Espinosa, and Delaram Takyar. 2017. “Community and the crime decline: the causal effect of local nonprofits on violent crime.” *American Sociological Review*, 82(6): 1,214 – 1,240.

### WEEK 4: February 13<sup>th</sup> – Neighborhood mobility and structural connectedness

- Levey, Brian L., Nolan E. Phillips, and Robert J. Sampson. 2020. “Triple disadvantage: neighborhood networks of everyday urban mobility and violence in U.S. cities.” *American Sociological Review*, 85(6): 925-956.
- Sampson, Robert J. and Brian L. Levy. 2020. “Beyond residential segregation: mobility-based connectedness and rates of violence in large cities.” *Race and Social Problems*, 12: 77-86.
- Phillips, Nolan E. Phillips, Brian L. Levy, Robert J. Sampson, Mario L. Small, and Ryan Q. Wang. 2021. “The social integration of American cities: network measures of connectedness based on everyday mobility across neighborhoods.” *Sociological Methods & Research*, 50(3): 1,110-1,149.

### WEEK 5: February 20<sup>th</sup> – The code of the streets and legal cynicism

- Anderson, Elijah. 1994. “The code of the streets.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 273(5): 80 – 94: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/05/the-code-of-the-streets/306601/>
- Carr, Patrick J., Laura Napolitano, and Jessica Keating. 2007. “We never call the cops and here is why: a qualitative examination of legal cynicism in three Philadelphia neighborhoods.” *Criminology*, 45(): 445 - 480.
- Kirk, David S. and Mauri Matsuda. 2011. “Legal cynicism, collective efficacy, and the ecology of arrest.” *Criminology*, 49(2): 443 – 472.

WEEK 6: February 27<sup>th</sup> – Immigration and crime.

- Lee, Mathew T., Ramiro Martinez Jr, and Richard Rosenfeld. 2001. “Does immigration increase homicide? Negative evidence from three border cities.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42(4): 559 – 580.
- Ousey, Graham C. and Charis E. Kubrin. 2018. “Immigration and crime: assessing a contentious issue.” *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1: 63 – 84.

WEEK 7: March 6<sup>th</sup> – Constructing neighborhoods through policing (and student presentations)

- Gordon, Daanika. 2020. “The police as place-consolidators: the organizational amplification of urban inequality,” *Law and Social Inquiry*, 45(1): 1-27.
- Bell, Monica. 2020. “Located institutions: neighborhood frames, residential preferences, and the case of policing.” *American Journal of Sociology* 125(4): 917 – 973.

\*\*\* Review papers due before 11:55pm on Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup> \*\*\*