

## Reflections of Deviance in the Media

Carol Warner (618) 632-9652 [Socprof364@aol.com](mailto:Socprof364@aol.com) Summer 2008

The story of deviance and social control is a story of the battle to control the ways people think, feel and behave. It is a story of winners and losers. Winners in the battle are able to control “deviant acts” and are crowned with a halo of goodness, acceptability & normality; while losers are often viewed as evil, sleazy, dirty, dangerous, sick, immoral, crazy or the like. This course will take a sociological look at society’s labeling of the deviant through the media.

Along the way we will look at various perspectives employed through the years to explain deviant behavior – perspectives ranging from otherworldly interpretations of deviance to deviance as a sickness and certainly including several of the sociological micro-theories currently found useful for analytical purposes.

Each of the modes of analysis will be examined through the use of both print and film, and we will spend much of our classroom time looking at audio visual materials and shining a sociological light on them for the purpose of meaningful discussion.

**EXAMINATIONS:** There will be no examinations given in this course. Your grade will be determined according to your class participation in the forms of both oral discussion and completion of outside-of-class assignments.

**PAPERS:** There will be three major papers due in this class.

Writing Assignment One:

The first one will require each student to select a topic dealing with deviant behavior and to do a first-hand account of that phenomenon. This may include filming deviance, becoming a non-participant observer in a setting labeled deviant, or, possibly, becoming a participant in a deviant activity. (Please note: Your instructor is not requesting that you do anything that even borders on the illegal – the deviant setting in which you may choose to be a participant or observer **MUST** not get you, me or this academic institution in trouble. The deviant activity you select, must be considered relatively minor deviance.)

Once you have described (if you do a video presentation, your paper must still describe) the deviant behavior, you are then tasked with relating your selected subject matter to popular film or internet material. Toward that end, you are to bring in a clip of the portion of a film or internet material that deals with this subject; and, in your paper make the necessary connections. Utilizing one of the perspectives in your text is essential for the purposes of this writing assignment. Due on the third meeting of this class.

### Writing Assignment Two:

This paper will involve an in depth analysis of an example of popular broadcast media. This will involve your selecting a television or radio program – (film will be okay, if that's your preference) – and explaining the images of deviance contained within utilizing one theoretical perspective covered in class.

I will expect this paper and project ready for presentation on the sixth meeting of this class.

Print Media Assignment – writing assignment three: There will be one assignment that requires you to search through print media – past and/or present – and bring to class for discussion purposes examples that could be categorized as deviant. These could include short stories, advertisements, public service messages, photos of billboards, etc. You might choose to do a comparison of similar subject matter across time. You might choose material geared toward a particular subculture that is largely considered to be deviant by a significant proportion of the population, or even a message that might be viewed as destructive by significant numbers of people. Certainly you are not limited to the above. Be creative as you hunt for material for this project. When you have completed this assignment, you will share your findings with the class. This assignment is due for presentation on the fifth meeting of this class; however, if you are ready to share your material earlier, I will arrange to make class time available to evaluate your efforts. An accompanying paper analyzing your subject matter will be due the week of presentation.

**Text:** The text for this class is Images of Deviance and Social Control: A Sociological History, latest edition, by Stephen Pfohl. I will be using the text as a guide, as we work through various media messages to be viewed and discussed in class. You will find it useful to aid in your analysis of each project.

**Grading:** Your grade will be based upon the proportion of the 300 point maximum that you earn during the class. Each of the two papers and your oral presentations of them are worth 100 points each; Your print media project and oral presentation of it will be valued at 75 points and the remaining 25 points will be awarded on the basis of willingness to be an active class participant.

*With respect to the grading system:* students who have achieved 93% of the maximum point count offered will have earned an A; and an A- for 90-92. 87% to 89% will earn a B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 a B-, etc.

- A = outstanding understanding of the material; excellent ability to analyze course subject matter; ability to structure thought and present it in a logical flow in a grammatically appropriate manner.
- B = good understanding of the material; good ability to analyze course subject matter; ability to present work in a logical flow with few grammatical errors.
- C = knowledge of the material; fair ability to analyze subject matter; written presentation that is not difficult to read by traditional standards (ie: reasonable grammar and flow).

- D = inadequate knowledge of the material; inadequate ability to analyze course material.
- F = No demonstration of knowledge of material or analytical ability.

**Return of Assignments:** I shall make every effort to let you know in a timely manner, the score you earned on each of the various projects submitted to me. In most instances, I will give you my reaction during the class period following the one in which it was submitted.

**Instructor's Availability Outside of Class:** I will be happy to meet with any member of the class at any time that is mutually convenient to discuss matters pertinent to this course. My office hours are immediately before and after class, but I can make myself available at other times as well.

Feel free to use my home phone number at your discretion or to contact me via email. I will accept phone calls between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. any day of the week, and always return messages left on my answering machine. I check email several times each day and can give you a prompt response to your questions in that fashion as well.