Overview

Debates about the role of crime in the media have been among the most sustained and divisive in the field of communications, and they are dependent on a foundation of equally divisive debates about “media influence.” This course will broaden this discussion to consider the culture of crime in relation to conventions of news and entertainment in the mass media, and its larger social and political context. Topics will include competing theories in criminology, crime reporting, the role of place in crime stories, moral panics and fears, crime and consumer culture, and the social construction of different kinds of crimes and criminals. Over the semester, students will be expected to develop a comprehensive research project that investigates a particular crime story or phenomenon.

Required Text

The reading material for this course is available at Advance Copy, 522 LaGuardia Place, listed under the professor’s name and course title.

Assignments and Grading

Project Proposal (September 26) ................................................................. 10%
Midterm Exam (October 24) ................................................................. 30%
Project Draft (November 21) ................................................................. 10%
Final Project Essay (December 12) ................................................................. 30%
Online Contributions ........................................................................ 10%
Attendance ......................................................................................... 10%
**Final Research Paper**

Each student enrolled in the class will undertake a research project that will be ongoing throughout the semester. Students will be graded on originality, breadth of research and the application of course material. The final paper is expected to be 8-10 pages long and is worth 30% of the final grade, but it is worth 50% of the final grade when the proposal and draft are factored in, so it is well worth your investment in mental time and energy.

**Evaluation Standards and Policies:**

All submitted work must be typewritten on white, 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. The student’s name, date, and essay title should appear on the cover page, and pages should be numbered. A formal style manual should be consulted for proper citation and quotation formatting. Grades will be partly based on the appropriate application of the norms and conventions of standard English. Late submittals will result in a drop in grade. No Incompletes are given for this course. Plagiarism is not tolerated, and will result in failing the course. Consult University rules and guidelines regarding this serious breach of ethics.

A=Excellent. Demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skilful use of source materials, illuminating examples, fluent expression, and contains no grammatical or typographical errors.

B=Good. This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, examples, illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear.

C=Adequate/fair. This work demonstrates some understanding but remains superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations. Writing or articulation may appear vague, hard to follow, or loaded with typos and other technical errors.

D=Unsatisfactory. This work demonstrates a serious lack or error in understanding, and fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing is deficient.

F=Failed. Work not submitted or attempted.
Schedule of Classes and Readings

Week 1/ September 5

Introduction, Course structure

Week 2/September 10-12

Understanding Crime Reporting

Lotz, “Crime over Time,”
Chibnall, “The Production of Knowledge by Crime Reporters,”

Week 3/September 17-19

Crime News and Photography

Reel, “This Wicked World,”
Chibnall, “Chronicles of the Gallows,”
Ruth, “The Individual, Society, and the Uses of Crime,”

Week 4/September 24-26

Media Influence and Crime

Freedman, “Villain or Scapegoat?” and “Survey Research”
Van den Bulck, “The Relationship between TV Fiction and Fear of Crime,”

**Project Proposal Due**

Week 5/October 1-3

Crime Film and Gangsterism

Bell, “Crime as an American Way of Life,”
Ruth, “Dressed to Kill,”
Krutnik, “Film Noir and America in the 1940s,”
~Selected screenings~
Week 6/ October 10 (no classes Monday October 8)

*Police Procedure and Journalists*

  Fishman, “Crime Waves as Ideology,”
  ~Selected screenings~

Week 7/October 15-17

*Moral Panics*

  Cohen, “Deviance and Moral Panics,”
  Hall et al., “The Social History of a ‘Moral Panic,’”
  Hall et al., “Social Production of News”

Week 8/October 22-24

*Review and Midterm Exam*

Week 9/October 29-31

*Crime, Fear and Geography*

  Low, “Fear of Crime,” and “Fear of Others,”
  Davis, “Beyond Blade Runner,”

Week 10/ November 5-7

*Crime and Poverty*

  Bullock et al. “Media Images of the Poor,”
  Gilens, “The News Media and the Racialization of Poverty,”
  Gilens, “Media Distortions”

Week 11/November 12-14

*Race and Crime*

  Eschholz et al. “Race and Attitudes Toward the Police,”
  Reeves, “Re-covering Racism,”
  Reinarman and Duskin, “Dominant Ideology and Drugs in the Media,”
Week 12/November 19-21

Gender and Crime

Stabile, “The Most Disgusting Objects of Both Sexes,”
Cavender et al., “The Construction of Gender in Reality Crime TV,”
Wykes, “Constructing Crime: Culture, Stalking, Celebrity and Cyber”

**Project Draft Due**

Week 13/November 26-28

Crime Solving on Television

Bondebjerg, “Public Discourse/Private Fascination,”
Doyle, “‘COPS’: Television Policing as Policing Reality”
Donovan, “Armed with the Power of Television,”

Week 14/December 3-5

Crime Solving Continued

Sparks, “The Moral World of Television Crime Stories,”
Gever, “The Spectacle of Crime, digitized: CSI”
~Selected screenings~

Week 15/ December 10-12

Crime and the Internet

Sandywell, “Monsters in Cyberspace,”
O’Neil, “Rebels for the System,”

**Final Paper Due**
Police procedurals and propaganda: TMen, 711 Ocean Drive, Naked City

711 Ocean Drive
Murder in Harlem
Big Steal
Night and the City
This Gun for Hire
City that never sleeps
Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye
Dead Reckoning

Cinefile: Dark and Deadly, Paul Joyce, 1995 (60 mins).
Pulp Fictions: The Film Noir Story, The New York Centre for Visual History, Jeffrey Schon, 1994 (50 mins)