



CRJ 7200-04 (3 Credits)



MINORITIES & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Synchronous Class: Monday 6:00 – 9:00 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9684949255>

CONTACT

 Dr. Stuart Parker

 368-6751

 Stuart.parker@kbcc.cuny.edu

 Office: D309

Student Hours: Thurs 3 PM – 4 PM

or by appointment

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“Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.”

“What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.”

- Carter G. Woodson

WELCOME STUDENTS!



I'm super excited to explore the three key themes of this course with you - we'll be looking at how different groups are labeled as "**minorities**," why certain activities are considered "**criminal**," and what "**justice**" really means. Together, we'll delve into how society and culture shape these concepts, not just in the US, but across the world and throughout history.

I want to create a open and inclusive environment that encourages diverse perspectives. My goal is to equip you with the tools to think critically about social justice issues, so you feel confident analyzing and discussing them in your daily life.

Let's work together to create a supportive and equitable classroom where everyone feels represented and validated!

I. LEARNING OUTCOMES



- Be able to describe how institutions, cultural narratives and economic forces influence the definitions of crime and the forms of justice that operate in a particular society.
- Be able to describe the process is social construction that underlies a particular set of behaviors labelled criminal and the systems of enforcement that surrounds it.
- Be able to describe ways of improving one or more aspects of the current system of criminal justice in this country.

II. CREATING A PARTNERSHIP



My Expectations of You:

- **That you believe in your abilities and intelligence** to be successful in this course.
- **That you will ask questions.** The whole point is to learn something new and grow in ways you did not expect.
- **That you will make mistakes.** No one gets everything right the first time, and one of the best ways to learn is to try and learn from your mistakes.
- **That you will treat everyone in the class with respect.** All ideas are welcomed as long as they are offered in a reasonable and respectful way.

My Expectations of Myself:

- **That I will prepare materials** that help you master the basic skills of the course.
- **That I will be available to answer questions,** provide prompts to help you think deeper about the questions we explore, and provide additional learning opportunities if you want to pursue this subject further.
- **That I will treat each of you fairly and with respect,** and will foster a classroom environment where it is okay to ask questions, take risks and make mistakes.
- **That I will give you** multiple opportunities to understand and learn the core concepts. Instead of focusing on how quickly you learn, my grading will focus on what you have learned throughout the course.



III. TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SEMESTER

Course Theme:

The theme of this course is Borders, Social Control, and Systems of Extraction. Rather than the traditional idea that the criminal justice system aims to identify and punish criminals, my approach focuses on how different groups are treated and controlled within the system. Policing, courts, and corrections are used to extract value in the form of labor, wealth, or profit from minority groups. This requires us to examine the political and economic forces that shape the criminal justice system throughout history.

Power Tools:

Regardless of whether you want to become a sociologist, this course will equip you with valuable "power tools" to understand and predict social and economic dynamics that shape behavior. These skills will enable you to make better decisions about achieving your goals.

Your Brain is a Muscle:

Intelligence is not fixed, and everyone can improve. Learn from mistakes, persist, and challenge yourself. Reframe failure as feedback and keep trying!

Focus on how much you learn, not submitting all the work to earn a good grade

Learning Is Social:

You really only understand something when you can explain it to another person. I will facilitate you learning the key ideas of the course with each other in the following ways:

- **Small group** work in each class session.
- **Annotations** on all of the texts that we read so that you can share ideas, thoughts and questions with your classmates.
- **Sharing** your Civic Engagement Lab and Controversy Paper ideas with your peers.

How much you get out of these experiences depends upon how actively you engage with those around you.

Assignments:

- **Participation.** Each week there will be opportunities to share your ideas with others in the class through discussion boards, blogs and annotations.
- **Civic Engagement Lab.** Attend three Criminal Justice System-related events, such as a court hearing or a city council hearing on Rikers Island's closure. Details on the assignment will be provided in the second class.
- **Controversy Analysis.** As the culminating learning activity of the course, you will choose a current controversial issue within the CRJ system and analyze both sides of the controversy and present an argument for your preferred solution.
- **Midterm and Final exam.** Midterm and final exams will assess your understanding of the course concepts and provide feedback on your knowledge.
- **Extra Credit.** There will be a folder in the course information section of Blackboard composed of enrichment assignments for extra credit. Choose a book from the list provided for up to 10 points towards the final grade.

Grading:

Participation: 10%

Civic Engagement Lab: 20%

Controversy Analysis: 25%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

- **The Grade Center.** The Grade Center feature in Blackboard won't be used. You will see assignments and numbers in the Grade Center, but I maintain my own spreadsheet to calculate grades. I work hard at grading and returning your work on a timely basis. You can tell how you are doing in the class by looking at what assignments you have completed, which assignments remain and how you have done on each.
- **Turnitin.** Use Turnitin, which can be accessed on Blackboard, to submit Analytic Essays, the Midterm and Final Exams.
- **Attendance.** Attendance is essential for success, as group work, activities and discussions will build upon assignments like readings and videos.

- **Blackboard.** The assignments for each class, along with other course materials will be on Blackboard.

If you cannot currently access Blackboard you should contact the help desk at KCC:
718-368-6679

If you need to increase your proficiency with blackboard you may look here:
<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/CIS/functions/bb/userguides/blackboardcollaborate.html> for more information.

Textbook:

The required text for the course will be:

The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander **ISBN:** 978-1620971932

Since this book was first published in 2010, it has become a foundational text that has had a lasting impact on our understanding of the criminal justice system and how to reform it.

The recommended text for the course will be:

Homegoing by Yaa Gyasi **ISBN:** 978-1101947135

This novel, by a young Ghanaian-born woman who grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, is essential reading, particularly if you are not from the United States. It will give you deep, complex and compelling background knowledge that will help you understanding the enduring influence of the Atlantic Slave Trade on this country.

Data:

Use your observations and experiences as sources of data throughout the semester.

- **History.** Sociologists aim to understand what causes change over time and apply sociological concepts to historical facts to explain why something happened and make predictions about the future.
- **Single concept - The Social Construction of Reality.** Focus on understanding social construction as the key concept to develop a sociological way of thinking.
- **Feedback.** Use feedback from the instructor and classmates to your advantage to learn and succeed in the course.

Resources:

- **Writing.** Strong writing skills are essential to success and students are encouraged to take advantage of resources to improve their writing.

In order to improve your writing skills you may want to take advantage of the Kingsborough Writing Center

Library Room L219 A description of their services can be found at:

<http://www.kbcc.cuny.edu/rwc/Pages/default.asp>

If you need help with grammar and sentence mechanics you can also find help at:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

The College also has a Writing Fellows program which you will be able to access during the semester. More information will be forthcoming later in September.

- **Accommodations.** If you have any particular learning needs please let me know in whatever way feels comfortable to you and we will figure out a way to make the class work for you. Access-Ability Services (AAS) serves as a liaison and resource to the KCC community regarding disability issues, promotes equal access to all KCC programs and activities, and makes every reasonable effort to provide appropriate accommodations and assistance to students with disabilities. I will make any accommodations that you need once you provide documentation from the Access-Ability office (D205). Please contact AAS for assistance.
- **Communication.** I have created a gmail account for this course which you can use for any questions, requests or information that you want to share with me.

The address is:

crjjusticekcc@gmail.com.

I will check this account once in the morning and once again before 5:00 PM. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but please note that I am also Chair of the department and there will be times when my response time will be a little longer. You should also feel free to reach out to your fellow students for information as well.

- **Consultation Hours.** I will start the semester with a Zoom consultation hour from 5:45 – 6:45 on Thursday afternoons. I will adjust this time or add times to accommodate different groups of students throughout the course of the semester.

Kingsborough Community College Protocols:

- **Diversity policy of the College.** The administration, faculty, staff, and students at Kingsborough Community College believe that the college is best served by having a campus that is truly diverse. We strive to create a campus where the voices, talents, and skills of all members of the college are valued and respected, and where all members of the college community can thrive. We maintain that a student body, faculty, staff, and administration that reflect the diversity of New York City is vital for the success of our community, allowing opportunities for people with different perspectives, abilities and backgrounds to interact with and learn from each other. We at Kingsborough Community College believe that a focus on inclusive excellence—the proactive fostering of greater diversity, inclusion, and ultimately equity at every level of college life—will maximize success for all members of the college community.
- **Preferred Gender Pronoun and Name.** I affirm all forms of gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to inform me on your preferred gender pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/equal-opportunity-and-non-discrimination-policy/>

<https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2017/02/24/protecting-the-rights-of-transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-students/>

- **Safe Zone Ally.** One of the central features of an educated person is the ability to disagree with others, without being disagreeable. As a student at KBCC, you have the right to expect a quality education that is free from prejudice. Regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, or ability, you will be treated and respected equally. Bigotry and harassment are not tolerated. I urge you to articulate your beliefs on a wide range of issues, and to do so while treating yourself and your colleagues with genuine respect.

- **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism.** Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Cheating, forgery, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest acts undermine the educational mission of the City University of New York and the students' personal and intellectual growth. At Kingsborough students are expected to bear individual responsibility for their work, to learn the rules and definitions that underlie the practice of academic integrity, and to uphold its ideals. Ignorance of the rules is not an acceptable excuse for disobeying them. Any student who attempts to compromise or devalue the academic process will be sanctioned. Sanctions may include failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. (See www.cuny.edu under "Current Students") Engaging in acts of academic dishonesty can end a student's school career, have an impact on the person's professional life and jeopardize future career goals.

The full CUNY policy on Academic Integrity can be found at:

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/sa/policies/AcademicIntegrityPolicywithoutmemo.pdf>

Writing Growth Rubric – for Analytic Essays

	Emerging	Novice	Proficient
Intro & Thesis	Author jumps right into the details without introducing the topic or offering a thesis statement	A discussion of the general problem that the essay will address, but no thesis statement at the end.	A discussion of the general problem that the essay will address, with a clear thesis statement at the end telling the reader the essay's conclusions in one sentence.
Application of Concepts	Includes details from more than one level of the system in each paragraph. Mis-identifies examples and the relevant concept.	Organizes each paragraph around a particular concept but mis-identifies examples of one or more of the concepts.	Organizes each paragraph around a particular concept and identifies appropriate examples of each.
Analysis	Describes one or two of the concepts, but does not explain how that influences the behavior of the group or individual being examined.	Describes all three of the concepts, but does not explain how all three influence the behavior of the group or individual being examined.	Describes all three of the concepts, and clearly explains how they influence the behavior of the group or individual being examined.
Conclusion	The conclusion simply restates what the author said earlier	The conclusion includes some general statements related to the thesis of the essay, but these are not directly linked to the prior analysis.	The conclusion includes predictions and/or recommendations that are clearly and logically tied to the analysis presented.