This course is an introduction to the sociological study of the criminal justice system. As the quote above indicates, crime can be seen as a violation of people and relationships—one person violates another. Understanding the nature of this violation is the first step toward achieving criminal justice. We will explore our criminal justice system by looking at its central components: law enforcement, courts, and corrections. We will examine current issues that vex the system, such as police brutality, wrongful conviction, and prisoner reentry. And we will explore innovative practices, such as community policing and restorative justice.

Course Learning Goals
By the end of the semester, you should have strengthened your knowledge and skills in:

- The nature of contemporary criminal justice practices and philosophies
- The impact of the criminal justice system on race, class, and gender
- Outcomes of criminal justice practices on offenders and victims
- Evaluating and conducting empirical sociological research
- Presenting research in writing and speech

Books:

Other readings are available on E-Reserve:
http://www2.skidmore.edu/library/reserves/index.cfm
Grades

- Student Engagement 15%
- Midterm (in class portion) 10%
- Midterm (take home portion) 15%
- Final 15%
- Service Project 15%
- Albany Restorative Justice Project 10%
- Term Paper 20%

Student Engagement
Your participation is crucial to the success of this class and to your own education. As one Skidmore student said, “As students, we put too much pressure on professors and expect them to awe us with their superb teaching methods and we fail to understand that we are the captains of our education and what we do with what the professors give us will determine the seas we travel.”

Much of this grade has to do with attendance. This is especially important since we meet only once per week for a total of fourteen sessions. To receive an A, you cannot miss any classes. Missing one will get you a B, missing two a C, three a D, four an F for this component of the class, and five will get you an F for the course. Participation level will affect this up or down. For most classes, there will be an assigned reading. Be sure to complete the exam questions for that reading before its discussion in class. This preparation is also a part of the class participation grade.

Service Projects
You will have a choice of what kind of project you would like to do. Each project requires a 2 hour/week commitment (not including commute time). Your decision about which project to participate in should be based on your (a) interest, (b) schedule, (c) transportation availability, and (d) capacity to contribute to the project. Each student will maintain a log of their service hours, signed by their agency supervisor and due at the end of the semester. An important component of service learning is ongoing reflection that critically analyses your field experience. Periodically, I will e-mail you a question to answer (300 word minimum).

We will learn from and lend a helping hand to the Saratoga Springs Police Department, Saratoga County Public Defender, Saratoga County District Attorney, Saratoga County Probation Department, Saratoga County Youth Court, Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility Transitional Services, and the Albany Community Prosecution Program.

Criminal Justice Popular Culture Project
In this project, we will analyze popular culture’s presentation of the criminal justice system in film and music. On the last day of class, bring either a song (on CD) or a video clip to share. Prepare to discuss how well the discourse or lyrics reflect the criminal justice system based on what we have learned in the course. If there is enough music, I’ll burn a commemorative CD for each of you!
Albany Restorative Justice Project

The Albany County District Attorney has asked us to conduct research on the effectiveness of their community prosecution project. Modeled on the Vermont Reparative Probation Program, the Albany Accountability Boards are composed of neighborhood volunteers who meet with offenders and negotiate the terms of their sentence. They rely on restorative justice as a guiding philosophy, and focus their sanctions on tasks that will repair the harm caused by the offense and strengthen the offender’s positive ties to the community. Our project will culminate in a report and presentation to the DA with findings and recommendations.

Exams

The midterm and final exams will be made up of questions based on the reading assignments. The exams will have ten “short-answer” (about a paragraph) questions. The exam will be a sample of these questions. The midterm will also have a take-home component in addition to the ten questions. The final will not.

A word to the wise: The discussions of the readings will not simply be a review session. That is, you cannot succeed in this class by skipping the readings and coming to class to get the answers to the questions. The questions will provide some basis for discussion, but the details necessary to fully answer them will have to come from your own intensive study of the reading materials. Because we meet only once per week, do not wait until the night before to start the readings—there is far too much for such a last-minute strategy.

Except for questions from Boyes-Watson’s textbook, which can be found in the book, the questions will be provided in a separate handout.

Term Paper

For this twelve-page paper, you will critically examine some part of our criminal justice system.

• On the Courses page of my website, follow the link to “Library Resources” for help with finding references.
• Your paper must have a cover page, page numbers, and a correct citation style. You will need to use the citation style accepted by the American Sociological Association. Details on this can be found in the “resources” section of the Skidmore Sociology Homepage as well as my own website. The sociology site also provides excellent general information about writing sociology papers.
• A paper proposal is due on March 22nd. It must include a thesis statement and a list of correctly formatted intended references. You should rely primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles.
• Optional First Draft Due Date: Wednesday, April 19th. If you turn in a first draft, I will grade your paper and return it to you with comments. You may revise your paper and turn it in by the final draft deadline if you are not content with your grade. Along with your revised paper, include the first draft and my comment sheet.
• Final Draft Due Date: Wednesday, May 3rd
First Week (1/25)
- Introduction to the Criminal Justice System
  - Topics: overview of course; selection of service projects; overview of the criminal justice system and juvenile justice system

PART I: POLICING
Week 2 (2/1)
- Introduction to Policing
- Community Policing, Chapters 1-3, and “The Ten Principles of Community Policing” (p.343)
- Crime and Justice, Case 8 and Chapter 8
- Video: “The Rodney King Incident” (HV8148.L552 R62 1998; 56 min)
- Topics: historical development of American policing; sociological studies of policing; race and policing

Week 3 (2/8)
- Social Science and Contemporary Policing
- Community Policing, Chapters 6, 7, and assigned case studies
- Guest speaker: Tom Mitchell, NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
- Topics: research-driven policing; crime mapping; case analysis
- Assignment: Identify a recent empirical study on policing published in a peer-reviewed journal. Submit the article by the next class.

PART II: THE CRIMINAL COURT
Week 4 (2/15)
- Introduction to the Criminal Court
- Crime and Justice, Chapters 5, 11, 12
- Videos: "The O.J. Verdict" and "Midtown Community Court"
- Topics: adversarial court; specialty courts (juvenile, community, drug, reentry, domestic violence); race and the court

Week 5 (2/22)
- Field Trip to Saratoga County Drug Court
- Life on the Outside, Part I
- Visit Criminal Court this week (Tues or Thur 9:30-11:30)
Week 6 (3/1)

- **Wrongful Conviction**
  - *Bloodsworth*
  - Video: “Frontline: Requiem for Frank Lee Smith” (hv8699.u5 r378 2002; 60 min)
  - Albany Accountability Board Project

Week 7 (3/8)

- **Sentencing Philosophy and Policy**
  - *Crime and Justice*, Chapter 13
  - *Prison Masculinities*, Mauer
  - Video: “Three Strikes and You’re Out”
  - Topics: incarceration rates; determinate sentencing; sentencing philosophy
  - Term Paper Topic Proposal Due

Week 8 (3/22)

- MIDTERM: in class 10 questions plus take home portion
  - Albany Accountability Board Project

PART III: IMPRISONMENT

Week 9 (3/29)

- **Incarceration**
  - *Crime and Justice*, Chapter 14
  - *Prison Masculinities*, Sabo, Kupers, and London; Sabo; Messerschmidt;
  - Video: “Doing Time, Doing Vipassana” (BQ5630.V5 D6 1997; 52 min)
  - Topics: prison types (jail, min to supermax, women’s, juvenile detention, military, cross-national); prison culture; masculinities; family impacts of incarceration; correctional programs; preparation for prison tour

Week 10 (4/5)

- **Prison Tour: Great Meadow and Mt. McGregor**
  - *Prison Masculinities*, Kupers; Donaldson; Abu-Jamal; Kupers
  - *Life on the Outside*, Part II
  - Video: “A Sentence of Their Own” (HV8886.U5 S46 2001; 64 min)
    - Watch this “on your own” before the tour
    - Send me a brief email reflection of the video to get credit
PART IV: COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS

Week 11 (4/12)

- **Offenders in the Community**
- *Crime and Justice*, Chapter 15
- *Life on the Outside*, Parts III and IV
- Video: “Widening the Circle” (HV6626.23.C3 W5 1998; 45 min) or “Family Voices” (HV699 .F36 2004; 18 min)
- Albany Accountability Board Project
- Topics: probation and parole; community-based treatment; domestic violence and sex offenders; Vermont reparative probation; Albany accountability boards

Week 12 (4/19)

- **Victims and Restorative Justice**
- *Crime and Justice*, Chapter 6
- Video: “Help, Hope, Healing”
- Topics: Impacts of crime on victims; victim needs for recovery; restorative justice; victim offender mediation in capital cases; accountability circles for sex offenders
- Term Paper Optional First Draft Deadline

Week 13 (4/26)

- **Prisoner Reentry**
- *My Soul Said to Me*
- Video: “Road to Return” (HV9261 .R62 1999; 57 min)
- Culture Project Presentations
- Service Log Due