

Hello and welcome to the on-line version of Violence in the Community (SOC 262 80)! I am Professor Sarah Murray, and I imagine many of you are taking this course because your schedules demand the flexibility of an on-line class; because you have the self-discipline to succeed in an on-line environment; and because you find the subject of American violence interesting and relevant to your life and future. With our post-9/11 involvement in the Middle East still on-going; and recent controversial Supreme Court decisions regarding the death penalty and gun ownership, violence is, indeed, a timely topic. The presidency of our first African American Commander in Chief, and the slow “recovery” from a cataclysmic down-turn in the US economy, serve as a fascinating backdrop for the study of violent crime and violence resolution.

Whether or not you are actually a sociology major, for the purposes of this course, we are all sociologists -- and **sociologists examine violence in a unique way**. Even though some of you are studying to become police officers, social services workers, or teachers, we will not look at violence exactly the same way that those professionals do, but rather from a distinctly sociological perspective. You will have the opportunity to hypothesize about the different ways violence is examined according to academic discipline and profession within our first few sessions.

What we will study: In our time together, you will learn about **1)** the definition, categories, and theories of violence and the different ways violence may be addressed; **2)** one sociologist’s experience as participant-observer in a naturalistic setting (in other words, his “up close and personal” view of an inner city street gang) **3)** the way the media and our own lives connect with and contribute to our academic conversation about violence. We will, very significantly, ask the question “**Does the American culture encourage violent behavior – and, if so, how?**” The specific answers to that query may amaze you.

What you’ll need: **1)** You will need two books for this course, both available at the WPU bookstore: *Violence: The Enduring Problem*, by Alex Alvarez and Ronet Bachman and *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*, by Sudhir Venkatesh **2)** You will also access, free, **NYTimes.com** (the on-line version of the *New York Times*). **3)** You will be required to have access all semester to Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine*, available through the WPU library, through various video rental outlets or purchased used at Amazon.com.

How you’ll be evaluated: We will have two **on-line exams** (all essay, open book, non-timed and completed within a one-week time frame); an **individual research project via Blog or Journal** on a subtopic of violence you choose; **weekly Discussion Board postings** on reading assignments and news articles and/or **periodic short writing assignments submitted through Journal**. As with a traditional course, plan to devote an average of about **three to five hours weekly** to this class, including instruction, reading, writing assignments, tests and special projects/discussions.

How to Access Blackboard:

To log on to Bb point your web browser to <http://bb.wpunj.edu> and click the Login button in the upper left. Then enter your username and password in the spaces provided and click login again -- you'll find your course Bb sites listed on the right.

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- You probably won't find all your courses listed; the only ones that will appear are those that have been activated by the professor teaching the course. Professors who don't use Blackboard will not activate their courses.
- Your username is comprised of your lastname and firstinitial, usually appended with a numeral. If you don't know your WPUNJ system username password you can use the Username lookup link at <http://bb.wpunj.edu> , or go to it directly at: <http://www.wpunj.edu/username/>
- If you are already logged in to the WPUNJ system through WPCConnect you won't have to re-enter your username and password -- just click the first login button.
- Find Blackboard Help at Bb Home, <http://bb.wpunj.edu>, before you access Bb, or on the Blackboard Support tab once you've logged in.
- You can always obtain Bb help by using the Problem Report form at <http://bb.wpunj.edu>, or by going to it directly at: <https://liberty.wpunj.edu/bb/support-center/> .
- Blackboard courses will use student email; third-party email addresses will not work on Bb

I'm sure we will all have a very stimulating semester in this on-line course!

Professor Sarah Murray