COURSE TITLE: JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SOCIAL WORK
COURSE NUMBER: SW 725
LOCATION & TIME: B760 SSWB, Wednesdays 2 – 5pm
INSTRUCTOR: Joe Ryan, MSW, Ph.D.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course critically examines juvenile delinquency and the juvenile justice system in the United States. Students will be exposed to the theories that help professionals understand the development of delinquency within the context of individuals, families and communities. Understanding the mechanisms that contribute to delinquency is important for social work professionals as this understanding should directly guide the policies and practices of the justice system. This course will focus on some of the most pressing issues that face the juvenile justice system and the social work professionals that work within this system. Such issues include adolescent brain development, poverty, child maltreatment, substance abuse, mental health, disproportionate minority contact (DMC), incarceration, peer relationships, the school to prison pipeline, evidence based interventions and the role of ideology in juvenile justice policy. The course is designed for social work students interested in working in juvenile justice settings (micro or macro) or students interested in working with youth populations that may experience contact with the justice system.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand how life events and social conditions (risk and protective) contribute to delinquency
- Understand the goals and objectives of the juvenile justice system
- Critically evaluate direct service interventions (screening, assessment, treatment) with juvenile populations
- Critically evaluate policy efforts as they related to juvenile populations
- Effectively communicate the challenges facing the juvenile justice system
- Effectively communicate possible solutions to the challenges facing the juvenile justice system
COURSE DESIGN

This course will make use of lectures, guest lectures, discussion, media and small group exercises. Students will demonstrate their knowledge acquisition by means of class participation, weekly responses to assigned readings, written assignments and a class presentation.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO FOUR CURRICULAR THEMES

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed by teaching students sensitivity, respect, and competence when working with clients where there are racial, cultural, ethnic, class, religious, gender, or nationality differences. Case examples will highlight how differences and being poor and involuntary affect clients’ responses to the juvenile justice system, the professional relationships we have with individual youth and families, and the success/failure of interventions.

- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed by teaching students that children, and especially poor children, are at a fundamental disadvantage in systems that are controlled by adults. The role of power and privilege will be a theme throughout the course. The juvenile justice system is not necessarily designed to address the needs of adolescents and families – and some may even argue that the system is more about control rather than rehabilitation. Moreover, the system does not respond in a similar fashion to all that come before the bench. Hopefully students will learn that an appropriate role for social workers in the juvenile justice system is often that of advocate.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation.* The course will cover a wide range of evidence based (and non-evidence based) interventions for disruptive and delinquent behaviors.

- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* that relates to juvenile offending will be at the center of the material taught in this course. Empirically based practice will be taught, which necessarily implies reliance on social science knowledge and research findings. You will not be required to conduct rigorous research, but you will be required to consume such materials. It is your ethical obligation as professional social workers.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE COURSE TO SOCIAL WORK ETHICS AND VALUES

Issues of values and ethics of a social work professional working in juvenile justice (and children’s services more generally), using guidelines such as NASW Code of Ethics, will be an inherent part of this course. Students will learn that the juvenile justice system requires social workers who will put issues of the adolescent first, even though such positions may be unpopular in the general policy discourse of juvenile crime.
PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY

One of the fundamental ethical values of social work is protecting client confidentiality. In this seminar, you will observe live hearings in the juvenile court. You may also be exposed to other conversations or environments that involve real individuals and real families. You will be expected to keep class materials/activities confidential.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you need an accommodation for a disability, contact the instructor as soon as possible. It is possible that aspects of the course can be modified to facilitate your learning process. There are resources available to help meet your needs including Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site and services offered by the Office of Student Services. Any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability (learning, physical, emotional) in order to complete course requirements, please contact me to confidentially discuss possible accommodations.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The ideas of others must be cited correctly and direct quotes must be shown with quotation marks and cited correctly. This is the University of Michigan. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and is grounds for expulsion from the School. Please consult with University Library web resources on academic integrity: http://www.lib.umich.edu/acadintegrity/

DISCOURSE

We will discuss controversies as they relate to juvenile justice. All of us come to this course with various experiences and values, as well as assumptions, prejudices, and stereotypes. Disagreements are expected and in fact welcomed as long as we respect diverse opinions and refrain from attacking one another personally. Remain open to evidence presented, which may conflict with your own viewpoints and perspectives. We seek to develop a culture and climate where people can freely explore and exchange ideas. *(Adapted from syllabi of Drs. M. Yoshihama and D. Saunders)*
Week 1 (1/4): Introduction to Juvenile Justice

Week 2: (1/11) First Court Observation, no class, SSWR meetings

Week 3 (1/18): Theories of Crime and Delinquency


Week 4 (1/25): Race, Economic Status and Delinquency


Week 5 (2/1): Female Adolescents and Juvenile Offending


Week 6 (2/8):  
**Brian Development and Juvenile Offending**  


Week 7 (2/15)  
**Trauma, Adverse Life Events and Juvenile Offending**  


Administrative Office of California Courts (2014) The Effects of Complex Trauma on Youth: Implications for School Discipline and Court Involved Youth

Week 8 (2/22)  
**Evidence Based Practice (Part I)**  


Week 9 (3/1)  
Spring Break, no class

Week 10 (3/8)  
Evidence Based Practice (Part II)


Week 11 (3/15): 
Education and the School to Prison Pipeline


Skiba, R. J. (2015) Interventions to address racial/ethnic disparities in school discipline: Can systems reform be race-neutral" In R. Bangs L.E. Davis (Eds.), Race and social problems: Restructuring inequality. New York: Springer

Week 12 (3/22): 
Adult Crime, Adult Time and the Birth of the Big House for Kids
Howell, J. (20123) Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency, Chapter 1, Superpredators and Other Myths about Juvenile Delinquency


Media: Juveniles in Adult Prisons
Guest: Kristen Staley, Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency
**Week 13 (3/29):**

**Testimony and Juvenile Justice Reform**
Applying a Developmental Framework to Juvenile Justice Sentencing, MacArthur Foundation, Models for Change


Guest: Professor Frank Vandervort, University of Michigan Law School

**Week 14 (4/5):**

**Understudied and Special Populations in Juvenile Justice, Student Presentations**

Hidden Injustice, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Juvenile Courts. MacArthur Foundation, Models for Change


**Week 15 (4/12):**

**Student Presentations**

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In this seminar there are five components to your final grade

(a) Attendance and Participation (25 points)
(b) 2 Court Observations and brief write up (20 points)
(c) 1 Current Event (5 points)
(d) Midterm paper (the problem) (25 points)
(e) Final Paper (the solution) and Class Presentation (25 points)

In this class, an “A+” = 100%; “A” = 95-99%; “A-” = 90-94%; “B+” = 87-89%; “B” = 84-86%; “B-” = 83-86 pts.; “C+” = 77-79%; & “C” = 73-76%. Anything lower – we should talk in person.
Attendance and Participation: Attendance is expected at each class and is extremely important because the discussions that occur in class cannot easily be replicated outside of the classroom from simply reading the assigned materials. Participation in class discussions, in class exercises, and small group discussions is expected and will contribute to your final grade. Participation means grounding your comments and analysis in the readings and other class materials – not just offering your general opinion on a topic. If you experience difficulties in participating in discussions for linguistic, cultural, or other reasons, please meet with me to explore ways in which you can become a more active participant in class. Participation is also graded in terms of a weekly response (no more than one half page) to the readings. This is not a summary of the reading (although you should be familiar with the main points/arguments). Rather what did you walk away with in terms of thoughts or connections or applications – perhaps to other readings – or current events – or policies or practices in the field? You should end your response with at least one discussion question for class. Post on canvas by midnight on the Tuesday before class.

Court Observations: This assignment requires students to attend and observe two juvenile court hearing (two different days spaced throughout the semester). During this observation, you should consider the following questions: What does it feel like to be in court? How might you feel if this was you – or this was your child? How does the Judge/Referee interact with the adolescent and his/her family? Are circumstances and proceedings easy to understand? Did everyone get an opportunity to talk? Did you notice any issues related to culture (e.g. social class, race, language, sexual orientation, age etc.)? Give your overall impression of the courtroom experience. Write a brief observation (1 page max) and be prepared to discuss.

Current Events: Stories related to juvenile justice are in the news nearly every day. At one point in the semester, you must identify a current news stories and post (on canvas) this story along with a brief description of how this story relates to the content of the course. You should also offer a personal reaction to the story. We will draw on these stories throughout the semester. This write up should be no longer than one page.

Midterm and Final Paper: Two brief papers are required. Each paper is no more than five double spaced pages. This assignment focuses on both a problem associated with juvenile offenders and the solution(s) to said problem. The problem could be located at the child level (e.g. negative peer group), the family level (e.g. poverty), the community level (e.g. low performing schools) or even the system level (e.g. disproportionate minority contact). Pick an area that is of interest to you – or perhaps of interest to your current/future placement. It is a two part (or two paper) assignment that requires students to demonstrate knowledge about a particular problem area and a practice or policy response to address the identified problem area. Using available evidence, the students will develop a paper focused on the solutions. You are required to articulate why the proposed practice or policy response is expected to achieve desirable outcomes. The why part of this assignment connects the theory with an evidence based orientation. Students will give a brief presentation on their topic of interest during the final two weeks of class. This is an individual project. No group collaborations. A detailed description of the papers will be distributed in week 3.