E59.1012
Crime, Violence and Media

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, the aesthetics of crime, moral panics and fears, crime and consumer culture, and the social construction of different kinds of crimes and criminals.

Required Texts
The reading material for this course is posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading
Assignment #1…………………………………………………………………………20%
Assignment #2…………………………………………………………………………30%
Final Exam……………………………………………………………………………..40%
Participation and online posts (minimum 3)………………………………………10%

Assignment #1 Due February 9
Identify a date in history by taking the day and month of your birthday and subtracting 25, 45 or 65 from your birth year. Using the Historical Newspaper Database as a starting point, find a crime story printed on that day. In a five-page paper, describe your chosen crime story and discuss it in terms of the crime/media relationships outlined in assigned course readings.

Assignment #2 Due March 4
Choose one contemporary media artifact having to do with crime. This can be a single episode of a television show, a film, a bestselling book, a photograph, a videogame, or a news report in any medium. Write an analysis in ten pages that addresses both aesthetic and structural content using course readings and secondary scholarly research.

Online Posts
Posts on the discussion board of the Blackboard site can comment on lectures, readings, or current media events related to course content.

Evaluation Standards and Policies
All submitted work must be typewritten on white, 8 ½ 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/ January 19-21 --- Introduction, Course structure, Theoretical Overview

Week 2/January 26-28 --- Understanding Crime Reporting
SAMPLE SYLLABUS – *This syllabus is provided as a sample. Some course content may vary.*

Chibnall, “The Production of Knowledge by Crime Reporters,”

Week 3/February 2-4 --- *Early Crime News and Photography*
Reel, “This Wicked World,”
Chibnall, “Chronicles of the Gallows,”
Cawelti, “The Myths of Violence”

Week 4/February 9-11 --- *Crime Aesthetics* (Assignment #1 Due)
Black, “Murder as (Fine) Art”
Black, “Mimesis and Murder”
Wallace, “Mapping City Crime”

Week 5/February 16-18 --- *Gangsterism*
Ruth, “Criminal Businessmen,”
Ruth, “Dressed to Kill: Consumption, Style and the Gangster,”
Jarvis, Serial Killers and Consumer Culture,”
~Selected screenings~

Week 6/February 23-25 --- *Film Noir*
Krutnik, “Film Noir and America in the 1940s,”
Christopher, “Night and the City,”
~Selected screenings~

Week 7/March 2-4 --- *Police Procedure and Journalists* (Assignment #2 Due)
Fishman, “Crime Waves as Ideology,”
~Selected screenings~

Week 8/March 9-11 --- *Moral Panics*
Cohen, “Deviance and Moral Panics,”
Hall et al., “The Social History of a ‘Moral Panic,’”
Goode and Ben-Yehuda, “Introduction to Moral Panics”

Week 9/March 16-18 --- *Spring Break*

Week 10/ March 23-25 --- *Crime, Fear and Geography*
Low, “Fear of Crime,” and “Fear of Others,”
Davis, “Beyond Blade Runner,”

Week 11/March 30-April 1 --- *Crime and Poverty*
Bullock et al. “Media Images of the Poor,”
Gilens, “The News Media and the Racialization of Poverty,”
Gilens, “Media Distortions”
SAMPLE SYLLABUS – This syllabus is provided as a sample. Some course content may vary.

Week 12/April 6-8 --- Constructing Criminals
    Stabile, “The Most Disgusting Objects of Both Sexes,”
    Reeves, “Re-covering Racism,”
    Reinarman and Duskin, “Dominant Ideology and Drugs in the Media,”

Week 13/April 13-15 --- Crime Solving on Television
    Bondebjerg, “Public Discourse/Private Fascination,”
    Doyle, “‘COPS’: Television Policing as Policing Reality”
    Donovan, “Armed with the Power of Television,”
    Sparks, “The Moral World of Television Crime Stories,”

Week 14/April 20-22 --- Crime Solving and Technology
    Gever, “The Spectacle of Crime, digitized: CSI”
    Sandywell, “Monsters in Cyberspace,”
    O’Neil, “Rebels for the System,”

Week 15/April 27-29 --- Review and Final Exam