

**Deviance and Conformity:
An Introduction to Sociology**
Sociology 138
Fall 2009

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Office hours: T, 2:45-4;
W, 2-3; and by
appointment

Course description

Why are some behaviors, differences, and people stigmatized and considered deviant while others are not? This introductory sociology course examines several theories of social deviance that offer different answers to this question. Rather than focus on characteristics that distinguish one form of deviance from another, we will consider the theoretical usefulness of identifying the common elements that these forms of deviance share. In conceiving of deviance as an interactive process in which people are engaged, we will consider the following:

- Why and under what conditions do people choose to deviate?
- How do family, friends, strangers and formal agents of social control respond to deviance?
- How do deviants cope with these responses? Why do some embrace and others reject the label of deviant?
- Is it possible to pass in and out of a deviant status?
- How do social statuses (such as gender or social class) affect the incidence and type of deviance?

Course objectives

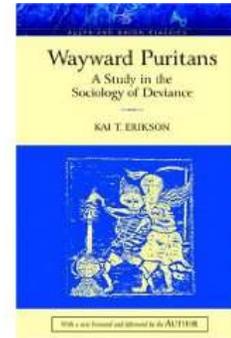
At the conclusion of this course, you should:

- Be familiar with the major sociological and social psychological theories of deviance and social control
- Understand the nature and operation of power (economic, political and cultural) in producing moral definitions of the world
- Be able to analyze the ways that social structure generates, organizes and transforms social deviance
- Understand the significance of race, class and gender as they relate to deviance
- Acquire an historical perspective on deviance in relation to social change and to current explanations of the causes of (and responses to) deviance



Books recommended for purchase

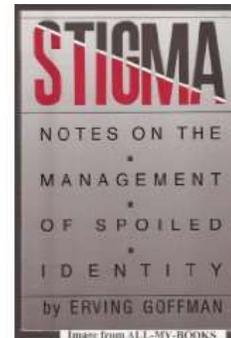
- Erikson, Kai T. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. 2005.
- Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Prentice-Hall, 1990.
- Kaysen, Susanna. *Girl, Interrupted*. Vintage, 1994.
- Wagner, David. *The New Temperance: The American Obsession with Sin and Vice*. Westview, 1997.



Course requirements

The syllabus describes in outline form the topics and assignments for this course. The actual dates for discussion of any topic may vary slightly from those shown on the syllabus; class discussion and interest may extend some topics and shorten others.

- Two take-home (timed) examinations: each 25% of course grade
- One short (6-8 pp.) paper comparing two websites that focuses on moral crusades (the creation or dissolution of social problems): 25% of course grade
- A take-home (no time limit) final examination: 25% of course grade



In addition to these graded assignments, you are expected to attend all classes and to complete all of the assigned reading in advance of coming to class. You should also read the class conference on a regular basis. Both this syllabus and an electronic reserves folder containing all of the articles you are asked to read for the course may be found on the class conference.



Course schedule

I. Definitional issues in the study of deviance (9/8)

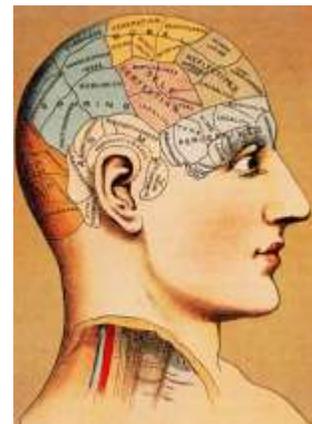
II. Theories of deviance

A. Pathological theories (9/11, 9/15, 9/18)

“Three generations of imbeciles is enough.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Buck v. Bell*, 1927

- Gould, “Measuring Bodies” in *The Mismeasure of Man*
<http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/> (essays on social origins, scientific origins, research methods, traits studied and one of the following: marriage laws, sterilization laws, immigration restriction)
- Conrad, “The Discovery of Hyperkinesis: Notes on the Medicalization of Deviant Behavior”



B. Structural theories (9/22, 9/25)

“Now don’t it feel like you’re a rider on a downbound train?”
Bruce Springsteen, *Downbound Train*

Sellin, “The Conflict of Culture Norms” in Kelly, *Deviant Behavior*
Kelling and Wilson, “Broken Windows”
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/198203/broken-windows>)
Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie”
Cloward and Ohlin, *Delinquency and Opportunity* (excerpt)



C. Functional theories (9/29, 10/2)

“Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crime, properly so-called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear venial to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness.”

Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*

Durkheim, “The Normal and the Pathological” in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (excerpt)

Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*



D. Labeling/Interactionist theories (10/6, 10/9, 10/13)

“But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer, -- so that both men and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time, -- was the SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Lemert, “Primary and Secondary Deviance” in Kelly, *Deviant Behavior*
Becker, “Deviant Careers” in *Outsiders* (excerpt)

Rosenhan, “Being Sane in Insane Places”

Pager, “The Mark of a Criminal Record”



**First take-home examination distributed Tuesday, October 13;
due in class on Friday, October 16**

III. Deviance as a process

A. Becoming deviant (10/16, 10/20)

“You want to know why I rob banks? It’s fun. I feel good, awful good. I feel good for sometimes days, for sometimes hours.”

J.L. Hunter “Red” Rountree, nation’s oldest known bank robber who robbed his first bank in 1998 at 86

Katz, “Sneaky Thrills” in *Seductions of Crime*
Best and Luckenbill, “The Social Organization of Deviants”



B. Managing the deviant identity (10/23, 10/27)

“I’m not crazy I’m just a little unwell/I know right now you can’t tell/But stay a while and maybe you’ll see a different side of me.”

Matchbox 20, *I’m Not Crazy*

Sykes and Matza, “Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency”
Scully and Marolla, “Convicted Rapists’ Vocabulary of Motives: Excuses and Justifications” in Kelly, *Deviant Behavior*
McCabe, “Influence of Situational Ethics on Cheating Among College Students” in Kelly, *Deviant Behavior*
Goffman, *Stigma*



C. Moral enterprise: creating deviance (10/30, 11/6)

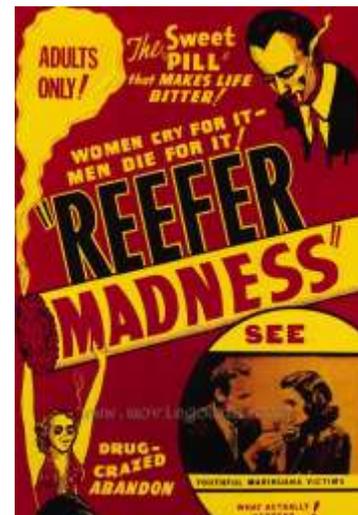
“The greatest instrument of political authority is the ability to give names and enforce definitions.”

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Becker, “Moral Entrepreneurs” in *Outsiders*
Wagner, *The New Temperance*

Tanner Conference (No class Tuesday, 11/3)

Second take-home examination distributed Friday, November 6; due in class on Tuesday, November 10



IV. Social control of deviance

A. Pre-modern and modern social control (11/10, 11/13, 11/17)

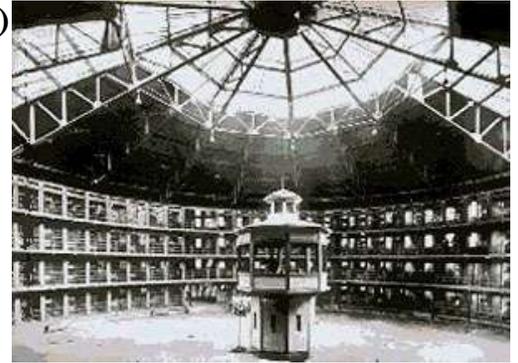
“Some men probably abstain from murder because they fear that if they committed murder they would be hanged. Hundreds of thousands abstain from it because they regard it with horror. One great reason they regard it with horror is that murderers are hanged.”

J.F. Stephens, *A History of the Criminal Law in England*

Emerson, “Holistic Effects in Social Control Decision-Making”

Sudnow, “Normal Crimes: Sociological Features of the Penal Code in a Public Defender’s Office”

The Pew Center on the States, *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*
(http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report_detail.aspx?id=35904)



Visit by Federal Medical Center Devens prisoners Friday, November 20

B. Post-modern social control (11/24, 12/1)

“Every breath you take, every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take, every single day, every word you say, every night you stay, every vow you break, every smile you fake, every claim you stake, I’ll be watching you.”

The Police, *Every Breath You Take*

Staples, “Small Acts of Cunning: Disciplinary Practices in Contemporary Life”

Beckett and Herbert, “Dealing with Disorder: Social Control in the Post-Industrial City”

Wacquant, “Deadly Symbiosis”



Thanksgiving Recess (No class Friday, 11/27)

V. Women and deviance: a case study (12/4, 12/8)

“The female criminal is monotonous and uniform compared with her male companion.”

Cesare Lombroso, *The Female Offender*

Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*



VI. Summing up: what the study of deviance teaches us about social life (12/11)

“The most fortunate of normals is likely to have his half-hidden failing, and for every little failing there is an occasion when it will loom large, creating a shameful gap between virtual and actual social identity. Therefore, the occasionally precarious and the constantly precarious form a single continuum, their situation in life analyzable by the same framework.”

Erving Goffman, *Stigma*

Take-home final examination questions distributed Friday, December 11

Take-home final examination due no later than 4:30 on Monday, December 21