

**Violent Crime and the Media**  
**FY67-T121-F01**  
**Fall 2013**  
**\*\*Service Learning Required\*\***

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Class meetings Tuesdays, Thursdays 11:00 to 12:15 to 3:15, 311 Mercy Hall  
Aug. 27 to Dec. 5 (final exam is Dec. 10)

**Course Description and Overview:**

A few days of media consumption would lead the average person to believe that violent crime is epidemic and that we are all “sitting ducks” waiting our turn to be the next serial murder victim. A disproportionate amount of news and entertainment media is focused on violent crime, particularly murder, which is the rarest of all violent crime. This course will compare media content across a variety of mediums to actual crime rates, dispelling common myths, easing media-driven fear of crime, and cultivating a healthy habit of critical thinking with regard to media consumption. Students will observe the effects of biased reporting of crime and strategize ways to combat these effects through responsible consumerism and in their interactions with others.

First-Year Seminars are an integral component to the common curriculum of Loyola University New Orleans. It is designed to foster the model of “thinking critically, acting justly,” as well as acclimating students to collegiate level work and culture. This is accomplished using a specific topic (in this case, media and crime), but the course will not be an intensive study into this discipline. Rather, media and crime will be the vehicle we use for accomplishing the goals of the FYS. This seminar-format course will involve an active learning approach with course discussion and reflective writing as the core classroom activity each meeting.

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of the seminar, students will:

1. Understand the impact of the media on societal and individual perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors
2. Understand the social construction of the news, entertainment, and infotainment media
3. Understand the common media myths regarding crime, and how these are created and perpetuated.
4. Cultivate the skills to critically analyze media content
5. Possess the skills to find the truth

6. Be more responsible, informed consumers of information of all types

**Textbook Requirement/Course Material:**

1. Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Imagines, Realities, and Policies, 3rd Ed. By Ray Surette. Thomson Wadsworth: ISBN: 0-534-55147-5

\*Additional readings and other course material will be posted on Blackboard. Be sure to check BB regularly for postings.

**Course Policies:**

**1. Attendance:** Attendance and punctuality are required for each class meeting and you are expected to attend the entire time for each class meeting to receive credit for attendance. **Each absence beyond three (3) will result in a 3-point reduction from your total point score for the course.** For example, 4 absences will result in a 3-point reduction, 6 points for 5 absences, and so on. Therefore, a student who has received 100% of the total points for the course, but has been absent 4 times will only receive 97% of the overall points otherwise earned.

As there is no distinction for excused or unexcused absences, be sure to adhere to the attendance requirement in order to avoid missed points in the event of an unavoidable absence. **Please note that any work assigned in class will result in a grade of zero if you are absent.** In other words, if you are absent on a day when an in-class writing assignment is completed, you will receive a zero for the assignment. Behaviors such as tardiness, texting, listening to music, unauthorized use of laptops, sleeping, or other unprofessional activities will result in an absence for the class meeting.

**2. Class Participation:** Course participation is key to a successful seminar, and adequate preparation by the professor and students is key to a successful discussion each meeting. Participation in this course involves the commitment of time outside of class for reading and preparation as well as regular contributions during each class discussion, both of which are crucial to your success in the course. An active learning approach will be utilized in this course. That is, we will conduct each class in a seminar format where you are expected to come to class each meeting having completed the assigned reading and spent a fair amount of time pondering the material to include questions, critical reactions, and other observations. While you are expected to take the initiative with your contributions, I will also call on students randomly from time to time and you will be expected to respond appropriately with opinions, reactions, answers, or other commentary to the questions asked or issues raised. While a certain degree of lecture is required on certain topics, the vast majority of the class each meeting will be devoted to stimulating discussion based on your reading and consideration of the material beforehand.

Examples of participating in class include: asking questions, suggesting directions for discussion, answering questions, responding to the comments of other students, offering your own observations and ideas about topics under consideration, raising objections to arguments and interpretations from me or your classmates, and asking for clarification about the course material.

**Poor attendance and/or participation will have a negative impact on your grade.** A student with perfect attendance who does not participate in class discussions will not receive full credit for the attendance/participation portion of the course grade.

**3. Student Disability Services:** If you have a disability and wish to receive accommodations, please contact Sarah Mead Smith, Director of Disability Services at 504- 855-2990. If you wish to receive test accommodations (e.g., extended test time), you will need to give the course instructor an official Accommodation Form from Disability Services. The Office of Disability Services is located in Marquette Hall 112.

**4. Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty of any sort is prohibited in this course and a zero-tolerance policy will be enforced. A student who violates this policy will receive an “F” for their final semester grade. For complete details on standards, penalties, and appeals procedures, see “Integrity of Scholarship and Grades,” Loyola University Undergraduate Bulletin.

**5. Make-up, Late, or Incomplete Work:** All assignments must be complete and submitted on time. Late or incomplete work will not be accepted and credit will not be earned for work not completed and submitted on time.

**6. Laptops/cell phones/other gadgets:** Laptops, cell phones, etc. will not be allowed in class for note taking or any other reasons. Please do not turn them on in class, except under certain circumstances, such as in group sessions, or during discussions when spontaneous research needs warrant the use of a laptop (I’ll decide when these are needed). Please turn off all cell phones and laptops prior to class. To be clear- the use of electronics are forbidden in this class and failure to adhere to this policy will result in an absence for the class meeting when the policy is violated.

**7. Office hours** are provided to give you the opportunity to address questions, concerns, and any issues you may wish to discuss about the course. Please do not hesitate to take advantage of this time, especially if you are experiencing a problem with the course or have other areas of concern for which you feel I may be able to help. The sooner we address a problem the more likely we are to resolve it favorably. If you are unable to meet during the office hours, please feel free to contact me to arrange an appointment.

**8. Course syllabus-** It is important for you to keep up with your syllabus and refer to it regularly to keep up with the course schedule and policies. If you lose your syllabus, e-mail me and I’ll send a copy to you via e-mail. Losing your syllabus does not constitute an excuse for missing assignments or noncompliance with course policies.

**9. Blackboard** will be utilized for communication concerning assignments, announcements, and feedback. Please be sure to check the class site regularly to stay informed and to stay on track with your assigned reading. In addition, check BB daily for readings, videos, etc. that will be posted and are to be completed by the next class period.

**10. Respect and sensitivity** – We will be discussing an array of interesting topics throughout this course, many of which may be considered controversial. Not everyone will have the same opinion on every topic, yet everyone’s opinions, thoughts and feelings will be equally valued. A central goal of mine is to create a mature, safe, stimulating environment in which everyone is encouraged to share their informed thoughts on the material. Students should feel free to participate without intimidation and should not be made to feel inferior because of their views. Anyone who is purposefully disrespectful to the professor or another student will be asked to leave the class and counted absent for that class meeting.

**11. Service learning required** – This is a designated Service Learning course. That means that, in addition to the coursework required, you will be serving for at least 15 hours in the community tutoring students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The nature of this service as it relates to violence and the media may not ostensibly be clear. However, we will discuss thoroughly the relationship between disadvantage, including poor education, and violence in our society. This assignment has been designed in conjunction with the Office of Service Learning to give students a unique and meaningful opportunity for community engagement and impact, as well as to provide a rare, first-hand look at some of the correlates between violence (and other crime), and social disadvantage, while also affording students the opportunity to be a part of the solution.

The Office of Service Learning, and more specifically, Director Kelly Brotzman, are equipped to help students achieve this objective and to overcome any challenges, including transportation and other logistics. There are students in need from all age and grade ranges (from preschool to adulthood), and therefore a place for each of you. Ms. Brotzman will be visiting class and also working with each of you individually to ensure your service learning goes smoothly.

**12. Evacuation Statement** - At times, ordinary university operations are interrupted as a result of tropical storms, hurricanes, or other emergencies that require evacuation or suspension of on-campus activities. To prepare for such emergencies, all students will do the following during the first week of classes:

1. Practice signing on for each course through Blackboard.
2. Provide regular and alternative e-mail address and phone contact information to each instructor.

In the event of an interruption to our course due emergency requiring an evacuation or suspension of campus activities, students will:

3. Pack textbooks, assignments, syllabi and any other needed materials for each course and bring during an evacuation/suspension.
4. Keep up with course work during the evacuation/suspension as specified on course syllabi and on-line Blackboard courses.

5. Complete any reading and/or writing assignments given by professors before emergency began.

Assuming a power source is available....

6. Log on to university Web site within 48 hours of an evacuation/suspension.
7. Monitor the main university site ([www.loyno.edu](http://www.loyno.edu)) for general information.
8. Log on to each course through Blackboard or e-mail within 48 hours of an evacuation/suspension to receive further information regarding contacting course instructors for assignments, etc.
9. Complete Blackboard and/or other online assignments posted by professors (students are required to turn in assignments on time during the evacuation/suspension period and once the university campus has reopened).
10. Contact professors during an evacuation/suspension (or as soon as classes resume on campus) to explain any emergency circumstances that may have prevented them from completing expected work.

Further information about student responsibilities in emergencies is available on the Academic Affairs web site: <http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/students-emergency-responsibilities>

## Assignments:

1. **Autobiography assignment**: Due Thursday, Sept. 5

This assignment will comprise 10% of your final grade for the course. A detailed discussion and guideline handout will be given in class the first week.

2. **Show and Tell**: Three times during the semester, you will complete an assignment based on an item you select from the media that depicts crime, criminal justice, or criminogenic characteristics, such as explicit or implicit racism, sexism, homophobia, or other hateful attitudes. These items can be most anything you come across in your daily activities, with the goal being to encourage more critical and analytic consumption of information generally. Examples can include television clips (from the news, entertainment, or infotainment media), movies, magazine or newspaper articles from print or the internet, clothing, books excerpts, music, poetry, or nearly any other source where you observe any of these concepts. For tangible items, bring the actual item in. For internet material, bring in the URL address where we can retrieve the material in class, and include it in your paper. For movie or television clips, you must provide an actual clip that is ready to show when you get to class (i.e. a dvd with the time noted for a particular scene, a disc with a song burned, or the YouTube link ready). You may have a YouTube video for one (not all) of your items, but the video should be meaningful (more details on this to be provided in class).

Note that the purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to pay more attention to the information you encounter generally, and to select three things from your environment as you naturally discover them, rather than searching for something to bring in the day before your assigned date.

Some of these items will inevitably be considered controversial or provocative. This is the nature of crime and hate, which cannot and should not be sugar coated. If you are concerned with the appropriateness of material you are considering bringing in, or if you are concerned about being subjected to potentially offensive material, please see me to discuss these concerns.

With each of these items, you will submit a one to two to page (maximum), typed and double-spaced reaction paper where you state what the item is, where you found it, and why you chose to submit it. In terms of the “why”- what about it makes it appropriate for this assignment? What was your reaction to it? How is the element of interest (the crime, criminal justice, or criminogenic characteristics, etc.) portrayed?

On the assigned due dates, you are to bring the paper, the item (or URL address, etc.) and are to be prepared to discuss these with the class.

**\*\*See course schedule guide for due dates\*\***

Each Show and Tell assignment will comprise 10% of your final grade for the course.

3. **Writing Assignments:** This course is designated as writing-intensive, and as such, you will complete a variety of regular (i.e. weekly, bi-weekly) writing assignments. These will include reaction papers, mini-critical analyses, “one-minute papers,” or other short written assignments completed in or out of class (both will be done), based on their assigned material (reading, videos, etc), guest speakers, etc. The first will be completed on the first day of class and will be “My thoughts as a first week, first year college student.” By the end of the semester, students will have a collection of these writings, and, as a final writing assignment, you will complete a reflective self analysis.

Deductions will be made and revisions may be requested by the professor based on need to elaborate, demonstration of preparation/quality, suggestions for further thought/material, etc. Further, deductions, to include zero credit, will be given for failure to keep writings in journaling notebook and not having it on hand to turn in upon request.

**Reflective Self Analysis-**you will take your written assignments completed over the course of the semester and will write a 3 to 5 page analysis of yourself based on your evolution of thought from day one to the near end of the semester. You will analyze how the material impacted you, how your critical analyses evolved, what skills you have obtained, and how you will apply these as you proceed through college and in life outside of academia.

The cumulative grade for these writings and the reflective self analysis is 25% of your overall course grade, though the reflective analysis will be weighed more heavily.

4. **Service Learning/Service Learning Report-** In addition to the actual on-site service hours, you are required to complete two assignments in conjunction with your service. One is a service log with an entry for each time you work. This log should include the following components: a. The date and times you worked; b. An overview of the tasks you completed, and c. a reflection on your work. Your reflection should include a written account of how you felt about the experience before, during, and after the service, and each entry should reflect on how your insights have changed (or not changed) from the time before. I strongly suggest designating a few pages in the back of your writing journal for this, or some other designated place where you will add to with each service experience in order to keep it together. Alternatively, you can keep an electronic log, but be sure to save it in multiple places, as lost work will result in a zero. You will turn in this log at the end of the semester, or the end of your service learning experience.

The second assignment in conjunction with your service learning is an overall reflection at the conclusion of the service. This should be a 4 to 6 page report of how the experience was for you from before, during, and after (relying on your notes from the log), how you feel the experience ties in with the theme of social disorganization and crime, what sort of impact you feel you had on those you served, and how you feel the service has impacted you. There will be more details on this assignment in class. The service, the service log, and the reflection writing assignment account for 20% of your overall course grade.

NOTE: STUDENTS WHO FAIL TO COMPLETE 15 HOURS OF SERVICE LEARNING WILL NOT PASS THIS CLASS.

5. **Attendance and participation**- 15% of your final course grade will depend on the degree to which you attend class and are actively engaged and participatory in class discussions.

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**Final grade composition:**

Autobiography – 10%

Show and Tell – 3@10% each = 30%

Weekly Writings – 25%

Service Learning – 20%

Attendance and Participation – 15%

The breakdown of the **final course grade** is as follows:

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79

C = 73-76

C- = 70-72

D+ = 67-69

D = 63-66

F = 59 or below



**Course Schedule guide:** Below is a schedule we will follow as closely as possible throughout the semester. Readings are to be completed before class on the day noted. Expect to have an in-class writing assignment on the assigned reading to demonstrate preparedness and evaluate your responses. There will inevitably be changes to accommodate needs for further discussion on topics, guest speakers, etc. I will notify you of changes as soon as possible. Thank you for your flexibility.

“MC&CJ” refers to *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice*, by Surette

Aug. 27, 29 – Course introduction: Getting to know each other and the media: What have we gotten ourselves into?

Service learning intro

Sept. 3 Media as a Social Institution, Social Networking

Reading: MC&J Ch. 1

Sept. 5 FYS testing- report to assigned location

Sept 10, 17 Social Constructionism

Reading: MC&J Ch. 2

\*\*Sept 12 – No class (Mass)

\*Sept. 19, 24 Show and Tell #1 (All papers and items due on Sept. 19, and presenters will be drawn at random each day)

Sept. 26 - Effects of the Media

Oct. 1, 3 Social Construction of Murder and Other Violent Crimes

Case Study: “Juvies:” The Making of Juvenile Superpredators

Reading: MC&J Ch. 3

Oct. 8, 10- Lethal, and Non-Lethal Domestic Violence

\*\*Oct. 15- Fall Holiday- no class

Oct. 17, 22 - Mass Murder (i.e. mass, spree, school shooting)

\*Oct. 24, 29 Show and Tell #2 (All papers and items due on Oct. 24, and presenters will be drawn at random each day)

Oct. 31, Nov. 5 – Serial Murder

Nov. 7, 12 – Crime and Reality TV

Nov. 14, 19 - Violence, Media, and the Criminal Justice System  
Reading: MC&J Ch. 4-7

Nov. 21 – No class: Professor Taylor at American Society of Criminology Conference

Nov. 26- Guest lecture

\*Nov. 28, Dec. 3 Show and Tell #3 (All papers and items due on Nov. 28, and presenters will be drawn at random each day)

\*Dec. 5 Course Wrap up and Reflection

Dec. 10 11:30 to 1:30: Final Exam Period: Reflective analyses to be completed in class