

Pns [REDACTED]

**[REDACTED]: Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice
Violence and the Media**

INSTRUCTOR: Ken Szymkowiak, Ph.D.
PHONE: 735-9959
TIME: As scheduled

OVERVIEW

There is a belief among some that violence is caused by the media. Is this the case? What do we mean by "violence" and what do we mean by "media"? The general public thinks it knows the answer to both questions. As professionals working in the field of criminal justice, "common knowledge" and "common sense" may not be adequate to understand these two important American institutions.

GOALS

Many of you will come into contact with media representatives during the course of your work. Understanding the phenomenon of violence, the media, the police and other institutions of the criminal justice system may improve your working relationship with all involved. So you will become familiar with what the media is and how it does what it does. You will have a deeper understanding of violence in America beyond official statistics and media reporting. You will become familiar with explanations for these institutions and learn how to analyze conditions regarding media-crime phenomena.

REQUIREMENTS

This course requires students to read and analyze written materials about violence and the media. The instructor will provide most of the materials for each class. There will be two essay exams. One tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 23 and the final exam scheduled for Friday, July 2. These are closed book exams. Your answers will be based on how well you use the class materials and ideas from discussions and films to build your argument and make your case.

In addition to the exams, students will be asked questions about the readings and given a plus or minus score indicating how well they absorbed the material. Anyone can be called upon at any time. Responses which show familiarity with the material receive a plus. Responses which show a lack of familiarity receive minus. At the end of the course, the student's overall performance will be evaluated and figured into the grade and will probably affect the total grade by a full level. (That is, performing at an A level on exams could result in a B through poor performance in class.) This ensures that everyone will keep up with the reading, become familiar with "on-the-go" analysis, and remain independent of the others in the class.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT I

On Friday, June 25, students will not come to class. Instead, they will engage in a three-hour content analysis of television programming at home. The remaining hour should be devoted to analyzing their findings. Proper content analysis methodology will be explained in the class. Students may wish to get together with other students to conduct this investigation or they may do it alone. The findings, analysis and conclusions will be presented the following day, Saturday June 26.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT II

On Monday June 28 and Wednesday June 30, students will present an analysis of crime and media representations of crime with a focus on a particular subject. Students will work in groups and the size and number of groups will depend upon total class enrollment. Students may draw upon any and all media for their discussions. Relevant topics and methodology will be suggested by the instructor but the final decision about the topic rests with the student group. Plan on a 45 to 60 minute presentation and a 30 minute discussion period in which findings may be challenged.

SCHEDULE

| June | Day | Topic |
|------|--------|--|
| 15 | Tue. | Violence in America |
| 17 | Thurs. | Explanations of Violence |
| 19 | Sat. | The Media and Crime |
| 21 | Mon. | Special Analysis: Drugs, Violence, the Media |
| 23 | Wed. | First Exam Content Analysis Planning, Preparation |
| 25 | Fri. | Content Analysis |
| 26 | Sat. | Presentation of CA Findings, Discussion |
| 28 | Mon. | Case study presentations |
| 30 | Wed. | Case study presentations |
| July | | |
| 2 | Fri. | Final Exam |
| | | |