

Working With Youth Gangs

The School of Social Work

The University of Texas at Austin

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Course Overview

Gangs are social groupings that have norms (codes of conduct) that violate the laws and social norms of the larger society. It is the content of the norms that distinguishes gangs from natural social groups. Gangs range in characteristics from youth associations that will appear among grade school youngsters and neighborhood youth to more tightly organized street gangs to security threat groups in prisons to social enterprises that may last for several generations. In some cultures gang-like entities serve as rites of passage to adulthood. Among the Plains Indians, for example, raiding parties of young men (sodalities) would prey on neighboring tribes, Mexican and Anglo settlements and much of the raiding was to demonstrate strength, bravery and cunning. Cultures of antiquity such as the Greek and the Roman used youth groups as preparation for entering into warrior societies as did the Normans of Scandinavia and western France.

Late in the 19th Century, popular writing depicted gangs in cities like New York and London preying on unwary citizens. Much of Charles Dickens' writings concerned young gangs in London. Both Japan and China are noted for gang structures such as Tongs of China and the Yakuza of Japan that last for generations. Males have been far more visible as gang members in the past but there is an increase in female members of gangs but exclusively female gangs are rare. No culture is without some example of gang activity.

Gang activity or visibility varies over the years. Substantial gang activity occurred after the Civil War, during the Great Depression, in the early 60's and the late 80's. Significant in the development of social work and sociology were efforts to understand and work with youth gangs in Chicago in the early years of the 20th Century. Jane Adams and the Settlement Home movement and the ecological sociology of Park and Burgess at the University of Chicago were professional and academic efforts to understand and deal with gangs as well as other dimensions of lack of social integration and poverty.

Visibility of gangs has increased in the last 5 years in most of the United States and Mexico is beset with powerful and violent gangs in recent years that are called cartels.

This course will approach gangs from the perspective of natural social groups and view gang activity from that orientation. It will include material on how to identify and work with gangs as well as reasons for gang membership. Four major types of gangs will receive attention.

- Social groups as they appear in middle, high schools and colleges will be one type.
- A second type is street gangs that are the most familiar for many people and receive frequent media attention (Crips, Bloods, Sureños, etc.).
- A third type will be adult criminal gangs such as motorcycle gangs (Hell's Angels, Banditos), prison gangs (security threat groups) or gangs engaged in large scale rackets (Mafia, Cosa Nostra) such as the distribution and sale of drugs, prostitution and protection.
- A fourth will be international gangs such as those of El Salvadorian refugees, Mexican drug cartels, Russian and eastern European groups as well as old line Italian and Sicilian Mafias and terrorist entities.

Course Objectives

1. Examine the relative incidence and history of gangs among youth and young adults
2. Examine the structure of youth gangs as social groups and extend those concepts to formal and informal adult organizations
3. Examine the relations between adolescent self-development, the role of peer groups and the influence of peer culture
4. Understand approaches being used by police, prosecutors, community groups and the schools to prevent the development of gangs
5. Provide information on the complex linkages among employment, education and gang recruitment
6. Overview conceptual material and direct contact with community programs to work with gangs and gang prevention
7. Review current research and policy issues in dealing with gang activity in Austin
8. Examine the role of youth in gang membership and terrorism

Course Texts

Shelden, Randall G., Tracy, Sharon K., and Brown, William B. (2014) *Youth Gangs in American Society*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Required readings will be posted at the class web site.

Additional readings as assigned. Assigned use of the Internet is a class requirement.

Student Responsibilities

1. This is an upper division class and mature work is expected. Some material is confidential and students will be expected to maintain any restricted information to themselves. Some material is very brutal and comes from both police records and public sites in Mexico. Attend class regularly. Attendance will be taken and counts toward final grade. Each missed day will deduct 2% from the final grade. Late and leaving early count as a miss.
2. During class time, no cell phones, pagers, computers or iPod devices or reading material other than text and notes. If you text in class, you will be asked to drop the class.
3. Hats and caps off during class.
4. No food or drink during class.
5. Check class Blackboard site weekly at <http://courses.utexas.edu>
6. Come prepared to class to participate. Instructor will ask questions about material including Blackboard postings and you will want to be prepared.
7. Dress appropriately. We will have guest speakers that you may see in other settings and that watch what we do and who we are at the University closely.

Basis for Grades and Dates of Exams and Papers

Participation	25%	Daily Attendance, Preparation, and Participation in class and at the web site
Midterm Class Exam June 18, 2015	35%	Scantron Scored
Class Final Thursday, July 9, 2015	40%	Scantron Scored (if enrolled for graduate credit, paper will account for 20% and exam for 20%).

Class Participation

This class will consist of lectures, presentations from area leaders concerned with gangs, and class exercises. Class attendance and participation is required.

The instructor will moderate a discussion group for the class and members are to participate in this Web-based group. You will be expected to post an item or reply on the DISCUSSION AREA each week. Friday will be the day that the week's discussion is due for completion. It is to be completed by 5:00 p. m or it will not count for credit. If you do not have home or work access to the web, many University facilities including at the School of Social Work are available.

This section pertains only to those enrolled for graduate credit.

Paper Topics for Persons Enrolled for Graduate Credit

You Must Propose a Topic to the Professor by Thursday, June 11

History of an Austin Gang

Aspects of College Life That Reflect Gang Characteristics

Gang Issues in Austin Neighborhoods

Middle Class Gangs
Gangs in Texas Prisons
Gangs and the Drug Trade in Texas
Gangs in Professional Sports
Gangs in Colleges
Girls and Gangs
Why Adolescents Become Involved in Gangs
Existing Successful Programs To Prevent Gang Involvement
Community Safety Programs
Terrorists and Gangs
Gangs and the Mexican Border
Immigration, Marginalization and Gangs

The Paper

Required Format

1. Introduction: Why I have chosen this topic and my personal experience with gang phenomena (group membership, norms of the group, roles in the group, status hierarchy in the group)
2. Characteristics of the Gang or Problem
3. Theories: What theories explain the situation?
4. Solutions: What might be done?

Your paper should be typed and approximately fifteen pages, double-spaced, exclusive of the bibliography. Use 1-inch margins on the four sides and Times Roman 12 point or a near facsimile. Total number of words will be between 2,500 and 3,000 exclusive of bibliography. Each citation must include a two to three sentence summary of the citation. Such page limitations mean that you will need to use economy of style in your writing and keep closely focused to the problem you have chosen. Make appropriate reference to theories but direct your narrative efforts to the Problem and how you have chosen to analyze it and develop a response. This is a style that does not use footnotes and simply enters the name of the author/s and the copyright date in the text. Full citations are at the end of the paper. Prepare your paper on a computer word processor and include an electronic version for submission. Use the American Psychological Association for paper style. For explanations of this style see <http://www.utexas.edu/ssw/apss/forms/resources/apa.html>

References may include interviews and html sites on the World Wide Web. The paper is due at the end of the class period (Thursday, July 2, 2015) and must be submitted as hard copy and electronic. Please keep a copy of your paper, as papers will not be returned.

Website

Uses University's Blackboard application. Instructor moderates website and it is restricted.

Class Schedule

Month	Day	Date	Topic	Readings
June	Thurs	4	Introduction to course, overview of text: Youth Gangs in American Society	Handouts
June	Mon	8	Mexico's Impact on Gang Activity in Texas-The Cartel Threat. Lt. Enrique Muniz The Criminal Justice System In America And Its Response To Gangs	First Guest Lecturer Shelden, et al: Chapter 1,
	Tues	9	Gang Properties And Characteristics: Who Belongs To Gangs, What Function Do They Serve For Individuals, How Are They Alike And Different From Other Youth Associations	Shelden, et al: Chapter 2
	Wed	10	History Of Youth Gangs	Shelden, et al: Chapter 3
	Thurs	11	Gang Cultures And Criminal Activities	Shelden, et al: Chapters 1-3,
	Mon	15	Gang Ties Why There are Gangs: Ties Between The Neighborhood, Larger Gang Entities	Shelden, et al: Chapter 4 and 5
	Tues	16	Gangs and the Correctional System-	Shelden, et al: Chapter 6
	Wed	17	Issues Such As The Drug Trade, Protection, And Prison Gangs In Austin	Shelden, et al: Chapter Review of Gang Properties and Theories
	Thurs	18	MidTerm Exam	
	Mon	22	Gangs In Context: Inequality In American Society Exam	Lectures, Assigned Readings, Ch.1-6
	Tues	23	Community Response Gang Interventions Gang Threat From A Police Perspective	Shelden: Chapter 7
	Wed	24	Current Approaches At Community Control	Shelden: Chapter 8
	Thurs	25	Legal Intervention Strategies	Shelden: Chapter 9
	Mon	29	County and School Response	Website
	Tues	30	Racial And Ethnicity Issues In Gangs	Website
	Wed	1	APD Police Response	Guest Speaker
	Thurs	2	Terrorism	Shelden: Chapter 10
July	Mon	6	Terrorism And Gangs Paper Due for Graduate Enrollment	Shelden: Chapter 11
	Tues	7	APD guest Lecture	
	Wed	8	Review	
	Thurs	9	Last Day Of Class and Final Exam	

UT Specific Items

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT IN CLASS. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. We will not, nor should we, always agree with one another. In this environment we should be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometime we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. However, the professor does require that students engage one another with respect and professionalism.

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and other forms of electronic communication (i.e. blogs, etc.) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including any information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in any way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>).

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS. By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS. Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time- sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

SAFETY. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL). If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

