

State University of New York



College at New Paltz  
New Paltz, New York 12561

October 13, 1976

Harold Weisberg  
Rt. 12  
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I've had the pleasure of meeting you already several years ago: I attended some of the seminars on the Kennedy assassination at San Francisco State College and exchanged ideas with several good people there. (I now can't be absolutely certain we met, but it does dimly seem that we did.)

First, I have already discussed your interest in ballistics testing procedures with an undergraduate student, Steve Alexander, and he seems highly responsible and well-motivated to dig up the kind of information you need. He will be writing to you very shortly. Second, I myself am not a "laboratory" man or a specialized criminologist in the usual sense; enclosed is an outline for the criminology course I have taught for many years so you can see what I might be able to help with (of a "non-technical" nature).

I am a follower of the fine work done by Mark Lane, Jim Garrison and, of course, your own major contributions to our knowledge of the realities behind the whitewash. I have studied under and worked with some very capable and prominent criminologists, but would not want to give you the impression that I'm the ideal man to provide you with the tangible and detailed information you want. But I would strongly encourage you to write to an organization that might well have several people with specific competence in ballistics matters and related concerns. I would most especially encourage you to write Dr. Herman Schwendinger, c/o the School of Criminology, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California; he was among the very capable and progressive faculty members purged last year when the School of Criminology (a sanctuary for radical scholars!) was dismantled by the university administration. In the same connection, I would suggest that you write

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to the journal that was founded by the Union of Radical Criminologists and explain what information or help you seek. Perhaps they can print a statement from you as a public notice, gratis, in the journal itself if you so requested:

Crime and Social Justice  
c/o School of Criminology  
101 Haviland Hall  
University of California at Berkeley  
Berkeley, California 94720

Another good journal reaching the kinds of people you may want or need is:

Issues in Criminology  
101 Haviland Hall  
University of California at Berkeley  
Berkeley, California 94720

I would also suggest a similar public request for assistance that you could put into another journal read by large numbers of progressive criminologists:

The Insurgent Sociologist  
Department of Sociology  
University of Oregon  
Eugene, Oregon

You could mention to the editors (e. g., to Al Szymanski, a friend and a courageous scholar) that I suggested you request they print such a solicitation. The Insurgent Sociologist has a readership of several thousand sociologists, and I am confident you will get good results therefrom.

I hope what I've said is of some value in your difficult work. I look forward to hearing from you further and to having other students and colleagues provide whatever new assistance might be possible. I could serve as an expert witness in a number of capacities regarding the news media aspects of the cover-up in each of the assassinations and the analysis of a

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drift toward neo-fascism arising from government-instigated terrorism and murder of controversial figures. And I do have lots of students, including some very bright and energetic ones, who can be called upon to help as well. (Mike Klein tells me that he has already been in touch with you in connection with his work on Cointelpro and his admiration for what you have been doing.)

With best wishes,

*Irwin Sperber*

Irwin Sperber, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology

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P.S. : We do not have any substantial graduate programs at this campus in the social sciences. I would also appreciate your letting me know from time to time about the degree of effort and helpfulness provided by Mr. Alexander; this feedback can be useful all around, and I can put more students on a "ballistics detail" if this seems called for.

-Irwin

STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
New Paltz, New York

Sociology of Crime  
Fall, 1976

Irwin Sperber  
Sociology Dept.

Although the macrosociological aspects of crime rather than the social-psychological aspects of the criminal are emphasized, a number of concepts dealing with the deviant and "mentally ill" social participant are also investigated. Reference will also be made to various therapeutic approaches used in the "rehabilitation of criminals" and the "recovery of mental patients" in total institutions.

The study of how laws are enacted, violated, enforced, legitimized and de-legitimized is approached in broad historical terms and not restricted to the here-and-now of "crime and punishment." Although the course readings are chosen to ensure that the student will become especially familiar with theoretical and empirical aspects of organized crime in American society, students wishing to undertake term papers on crime in other countries or other aspects of crime are encouraged to do so. Please confer with me as early in the semester as possible regarding your term paper topic. I greatly appreciate your cooperation regarding the request that there be no smoking in class.

Required Readings:

- Peter Maas, The Valachi Papers (New York: Bantam, 1971).  
Mike Royko, Boss Daley of Chicago (New York: New American Library, 1971).  
Alfred McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia (New York: Harper, 1971).  
Jessica Mitford, Kind and Usual Punishment (New York: Random House, 1975).  
Erving Goffman, Asylums (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964).

The texts will be covered in the sequence indicated, and have been ordered in paperback editions through the campus bookstore. Some of them can be read quickly, while others call for a diligent and unhurried examination. Used editions other than those designated above are satisfactory for purposes of this course.

Although thirteen broad topics are indicated below, some of them can be covered together in one week, while others might require several meetings for an adequate review. This will depend in part on the interests of those in this course.

Sequence of Topics

- (1) Toward a definition of criminology. The meaning of "crime" in the conventional wisdom of American culture. The study of the actor in a structural and historical context, and the problem of defining "violations of the law." The preoccupation with individual motives and psychological reductionism in attempts to explain the causes of crime. The Moynihan Report as an illustration of models which assume that the "pathology" of an individual or a culture is the cause of crime and social maladjustment.
- (2) Classification of types of crime: harm to individuals vs. harm to groups; harm to the oppressed vs. harm to the privileged; assault upon the social order as a crime vs. defense of the social order as a crime. The state as the de facto arbiter of crime and punishment. Although there are many logically conceivable ways to classify types of crime, they must all be evaluated on the basis of illumination they cast on the subject matter; some biological and psychological typologies, however sweeping they may seem to be, are misleading to the extent that the social context of crime is ignored or distorted. Emile Durkheim's distinction between criminal and civil law: mechanical and organic solidarity, and the ideological presuppositions in Durkheim's approach.
- (3) Psychoanalytic, functionalist, pluralist, and associational theories of crime: some insights and shortcomings in the explanations of Freud, Cloward, Albin, Merton, Sutherland and Clinard. The popularity of the "generation gap" doctrine, and Feuer's advocacy of it. The thesis of the "broken home" and the "criminal mind"; the "psychopath." The absence of a historical dimension, of any model of domination and oppression, of a clear recognition of human alienation in these schools of thought.
- (4) The structure of corporate enterprise and the institutionalization of inequality in the distribution of wealth, power and prestige. Inequality in the means of generating and reproducing economic, political and social influence. (Domhoff's The Higher Circles and Kolko's Wealth and Power in America are among the many source materials recommended for those wishing more detailed knowledge of the political and economic structure of American society than can be covered in this course.) Conflicting theories, methods of research and sources of evidence about the existence of the Mafia. A critical appraisal of the prevailing functionalist and pluralist paradigm in modern criminology, with special reference to the study of the Mafia.

Read: Maas, The Valachi Papers.

Recommended for supplementary reading:

- a. Joseph L. Albin, The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971). Albin's research is intended largely to refute Cressey's portrait of organized crime, although the validity of this effort is open to serious question. We will discuss Albin's arguments in class.
- b. Donald R. Cressey, Theft of the Nation (New York: Harper, 1969).

- (5) Organized crime and "machine politics," including the routinization of graft and corruption in the two-party system. The two-party system and the legislative, executive and judicial components of the state. Organized crime and the agonies of law enforcement. The necessity of a theory of corporate and political power for an understanding of organized crime.

Read: Royko, Boss Daley of Chicago.

- (6) Historical materialism as an explanation of organized crime. The data of The American Dream: immigration, acute corporate competition and failures, the rise of trade unions and the strike, the scarcity of liquid capital, the role of American foreign policy, the progressive relative deprivation of middle class and working class families, inequality of opportunity among ethnic groups, the prominence of the "Robber Barons" after the Civil War, the lawlessness of the West. The laundering of "blood money" (a) from one generation to the next, and (b) through banking transactions. The international character of organized crime and the multi-national corporation. How such data can be conceptualized for the purpose of a theory of crime.

Read: Maas, The Valachi Papers, and McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia.

Recommended: Ed Reid, The Grim Reapers (New York: Bantam, 1969).

- (7) Watergate: the dangers of muckraking as a substitute for informed analysis. Some of the important realities about the distinction between the "power elite" and the "ruling class" manifested by the leading figures in this saga. The exoneration of the F. B. I. and the C. I. A.; the testimony of Gray, Helms, Mitchell in this connection. The "character defect" theory of the break-in and cover-up advanced by the news media. The Cold War as a background for the break-in; the policy of suppressing dissent "by any means necessary." The

politics of "national security" and "executive privilege"; the important research of journalists, including Clark Mollenhoff during the Eisenhower years in this connection. The sources of campaign financing and the absence of significant reforms on the horizon. The role of U. S. foreign policy in the orchestration of internal affairs in the third world; the influence of the C. I. A. in Chile and Southeast Asia and its bearing on domestic politics.

(Don Fleming's The Cold War and Its Origins; Fred Cook, The Warfare State; Cook, The F. B. I. Nobody Knows; K. Sale, "The World Behind Watergate"; and other leading source materials are recommended for your attention. Some useful and short articles will be distributed to you in class when and if available.)

How major crises in American society are manifested in the confrontations between the President and Congress. The failure of congressional committees to enact legislation or even acknowledge the scope of American involvement in Southeast Asia's heroin traffic.

Review: McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia.

- (8) Social-psychological, cultural and political means of controlling and preventing crime; the conditions under which the "carrot" and the "stick" are employed. The role of mass media of communications, the police and the military in defining, stereotyping and mystifying crucial aspects of crime is examined here. Cooptation, repression and corporate liberalism.
- (9) Forms of punishment and treatment of the deviant; ideologies of rehabilitation. The realities of everyday life in a total institution and the development of counterworlds among inmates. The strengths and weaknesses of a descriptive social-psychological approach to the study of prisons and mental hospitals. The similarities and differences among such total institutions as the prison, the military, the convent, the boarding school, the rest home, the mental hospital, the concentration camp, The "medical model" and political power. The extent to which such organizations as the police and the Mafia have some of the features associated with the total institution. Society itself as a total institution. The radical and conservative implications of Goffman's methodological approach (participant-observation) and his theoretical perspective (symbolic interactionism) to the study of inmates and total institutions.

Read: Goffman, Asylums; Mitford, Kind and Usual Punishment.

- (10) Revolutionary movements and the political definition of crime. How assaults on the institution of private property are translated into acts of crime by agencies of social control. The evolution of the modern police force from the constabulary; the initial uses to which the constabulary was put in American cities. The rise of "terrorism" and "urban warfare"; the case of Saigon in the past decade. How a given act can be patriotic heroism from one standpoint and criminal terrorism from another standpoint: The Boston Tea Party and the work of Tom Paine as illustrations. Mass protests and revolutionary movements as a manifestation of a struggle for scarce resources.
- (11) The ideology of "law and order"; ordinary crime as an expression of alienation and inequality. Acts of violence and the role of the victim. Sexism and rape; the public policy toward offenders. How organized crime succeeds in passing off the risks of doing business to oppressed sectors of the urban community: the heroin traffic on a retail basis and violent crimes associated with it. How crime rates are exaggerated, understated or distorted by public officials. The police and public safety.
- Review: Mitford, Kind and Usual Punishment.
- (12) The problem of war crimes. The political and cultural implications of organized brutality. Carpet bombing and counter-insurgency. Imperialism, the Third World and the technology of genocide: alternative explanations and interpretations. The Camelot Project and American sociology in crisis. War movies, war toys, war heroes, war profits and the American economy. My Lai and patriotism: heroism, crime and the meaning of the "national interest." The problem of draft resisters and military deserters; President Ford's announcement of conditional amnesty.
- (13) A theory of crime is a special case of a general theory of deviance. The relationship between crime and law on the one hand and deviance and social control on the other hand. How this relationship, despite its logical appeal, can substantially distort the magnitude and complexity of crime in advanced industrial societies.
- (14) Review of material covered.



The final grade for the course is based on the quality of written work and class participation.

The term project consists of two parts: (1) The first part is the written report of whatever theoretical or applied study you carried out after discussing a topic (or proposal) with me. Although there is no absolute number of minimum or maximum pages expected, most research papers are between 5 and 20 pages long. Any standard form for the table of contents, footnoting, and bibliography are satisfactory; the paper should be typed and double-spaced. (2) The second part is a summary and critical evaluation of what you regard as the most important contributions or issues raised in the assigned readings. Each of the readings can be satisfactorily treated separately in just a few pages or they can be treated in one longer essay in which they are critically compared to one another. These short critical book reviews, if carefully done, can help to clarify aspects of the course material. They can also be useful in clarifying some ideas you might wish to incorporate into your original study. In addition to the term paper, there may be one or more essay examinations in class; if such examinations are held, you will be notified ahead of time as to the nature of the questions to be given. The degree to which students are keeping up with the course work will be taken into account in making a decision about the necessity of such examinations. This written work will count as two-thirds of your final grade. The remaining one-third of your final grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to class discussions and any oral reports you present in class on the basis of research or field work arranged with me on an individual basis. In addition to consultation with me, you are strongly advised to consult with the teaching assistant regarding your term paper topic and any other questions you may wish to discuss.

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Here are some possible term paper topics you might wish to consider:

Ideological Assumptions in Modern Criminology and their Implications for Social Policy  
 Crime Waves and Sociological Interpretations of Them  
 A Sociological History of Witch-Hunting  
 Sources and Consequences of Laws against "Sodomy" and Related Sexual Practices  
 Recidivism and its Causes in American Society  
 A Critical Comparison of Functionalist and Materialist Theories of Organized Crime  
 The Ideology of "Law and Order" in American Culture  
 A Content Analysis of Campaign Rhetoric about "Crime in the Streets"  
 Campaign Financing at Home and Abroad  
 The Structure of the Corrections System and the Class Structure of American Society

The Daniel Ellsberg Case: White Collar Criminal or Public Servant?  
 Crime and Prisons in the Soviet Union  
 Ideological Biases in Standard Criminology Textbooks  
 A Sociological History of the F. B. I.  
 Forms of Rehabilitation and Therapy in the American Penal System  
 The Authoritarian Personality and the Police State  
 Federal Regulatory Agencies and Their Enforcement Policies  
 The Advent of Commercialized Plagiarism: Term Papers for Sale  
 Recent Trends toward Radicalization of the Police and Military  
     with Special Reference to Unionization and GI Coffee Houses  
     and Black Officers Associations  
 Structural Determinants of Addiction to Hard Drugs  
 Structural Determinants of "Addiction" to Such Common Household  
     Substances as Tobacco, Alcohol, Coffee, Sugar and High  
     Carbohydrate Foods  
 The Politics of Rape  
 The Scope and Importance of White-Collar Crime  
 War Crimes: International Crimes and the United Nations  
 The Rise of Public and Private Surveillance Industries: Bugging,  
     Wiretapping, Commercial Spying, Data Banks, Lie Detectors  
 "Prison Riots" and the Radicalization of Prisoners: The Case of  
     George Jackson  
 J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Institution  
 The Advent of Radical Attorneys (e.g., Charles Garry, Faye  
     Stender, William Kunstler)  
 Political Trials: The Use of the Courts in Such Cases as the  
     Angela Davis and Wounded Knee Trials  
 Watergate and the Cover-Up  
 Assassination as an Increasingly Routinized Means of "Conflict  
     Resolution"  
 The Uses of the Executive Powers of Amnesty, Clemency and Pardon  
     of Criminals  
 Racism in American Prisons

Note: These topics only begin to illustrate the range of problem-  
 areas that students have in the past actually investigated,  
 often with excellent or at least satisfactory results.  
 Whatever topic you choose to pursue should be discussed  
 with me and, I would again very strongly recommend, with  
 the teaching assistant.

Any student who develops a definitive theory of addiction to  
 tobacco and a means by which to overcome it will receive an "A"  
 in this course and be assured of national eminence (or at least  
 notoriety, if the tobacco industry hears of it).