

## SOC 292: Sociology of Law Spring 2016

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**Office hours: Please check Blackboard in a couple of weeks**

**T, TH: 10:20-11:30 am PPHAC 335**

### Course Description

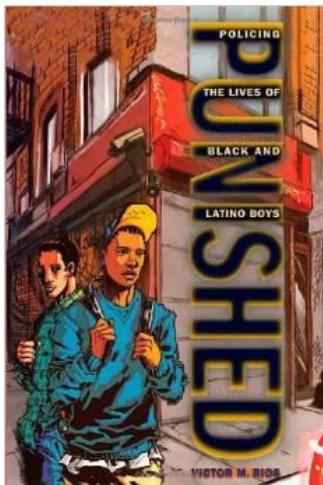
Sociologists study human organizations. Behavior in any human community is governed by a host of informal and formal "laws," codes of behavior and interaction. In this class, we will explore a variety of questions about the function and structure of law in human societies in general, and in American society. We will explore what law is, what law does, and how it does it. We will look at the distinction between folkways/mores and more formal legal structures, the influence of culture on law, the legitimization and codification of law, and how law frames social life. We will explore how conflicting and overlapping interests must be harmonized or adjusted by the legal order. How does law serve as a tool for social change while preserving solidarity and stability? We will also look at the professional organization of lawyers.

### Required Text:

There is no required text for this course. You will be reading a variety of articles and book chapters from a variety of sources.

There is one required book and that is:

**Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys** by Victor M. Rios.



The syllabus is subject to change. Updated versions will be posted on Blackboard.

### Goals of the course:

- To review the basic conceptual frameworks of the field of sociology
- To review the basic methods used by sociologists to study human societies
- To view the structure, function and structure of law in human societies through the disciplines conceptual frameworks and methods
- To develop and appreciation of the tension between concepts of human universals of “right and wrong” and the very fluid nature of the definition of legal and illegal, normative and deviant behavior, legitimate and illegitimate authority
- To practice sociological writing through a series of short reflection papers
- To gain some experience conducting short surveys/short interviews

### Assignments:

You will be keeping weekly academic journals for this class. The journals will be reflections/assignments on the readings, course lectures, course activities and class discussions. I will expect that all of you will conduct some independent extracurricular “research” as part of the journals, but I also want this to be an opportunity for you to incorporate some individual creativity in your academic work. I want you to “mix it up” from week to week so that you can avoid repetitive activities, or the same article reflections. Your journal can be a multimedia piece. You can, for example, submit video and/or audio recordings, collages, as well as more traditional academic assignments. I will also encourage people to work in groups some weeks. I will encourage people to submit work that demonstrates your familiarity with sociological methods. For example, you might want to submit the draft of a survey or the results of an observation assignment, social experiment, and/or focus group discussion. I will have a handout that enumerates a variety of possible activities for the class to help you brainstorm about your choices from week to week, but I will also entertain suggestions about other possible assignments.

**In-class Activities/Short Assignments:** We will have a number of **in-class activities** throughout the semester—this is another reason why regular class attendance is so important. These activities will help to solidify the concepts of the course. There will also be **sporadic short out-of-class activities**. These two kinds of assignments will constitute the short assignment grade. I expect people to keep up with the readings, otherwise you will not be able to successfully complete the in-class activities.

If I suspect that students are not keeping up with the readings (this suspicion arises when the professor asks a question about the reading and no one responds...), I have the habit of distributing **pop quizzes**. I do not think that pop quizzes are “unfair, unjust!” They are just one tool to help keep you on track and to help cement the concepts. I would like to treat you like college students (and not like high school students), so please make sure that you keep up with the work and I will not feel compelled to give pop quizzes.

**Final exam:** If the class as a collective works hard throughout the semester to cover and engage with the material, my intention at this point is NOT to have a final exam. If, however, I feel that students have not achieved the goals of the course and still need to have some concepts reinforced, I will assign a take home final exam.

### Grading:

Your weekly journal submissions will be graded on the following 0.0-4.0 scale:

4.0: A	2.0: C
3.7: A-	1.7: C-
3.3: B+	1.3: D+
3.0: B	1.0: D
2.7: B-	0.7: D-
2.3: C+	

Smaller assignments such as in-class quizzes or short out-of-class exercises will be graded with the following grades: V+, V, or V- . These grades roughly correspond to an A, B and C. The short assignments and quizzes will be weighted differently depending on the amount of time and effort it takes to complete the assignment. At the end of the semester, all of these points will be added together and you will get a corresponding letter grade for this accumulated short assignment work based on the total percentage of points earned. It is within an instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment and for the course.

### **Grade Distribution:**

20% class participation  
20% short assignments  
60% weekly journals

Given that I weigh class participation so high (20% of your grade), it will be very hard to pass this class if you do not attend. This is true not only because of the 20% weight, but also because if you are not here to review the materials, it will be hard for you to fully follow the arguments and write acceptable/passing or complete assignments.

**Class attendance/participation is mandatory.** If you are going to miss a class, I expect that you will contact me prior to class to let me know, either by phone or email. Although I understand that people might occasionally miss class due to illness or personal emergencies, patterned absences will result in a lowering of your class attendance/participation grade and I will contact your advisor/the dean's office. Regular attendance and minimal participation will yield a class attendance grade of a 3.0 (B). Regular and engaged participation will increase that grade upwards, and patterned absences will decrease that grade. Basically, everyone will start out with a B. What you do with that B is your responsibility. Unexcused absences will result in a

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lowering of the B. Active participation will be assessed on the basis of volunteering thoughtful answers on a regular basis, and passive participation as merely being there, taking notes, and looking attentive. And the “looking attentive” is key here—please do not fall asleep in my class. Even in a large class, it is very hard to hide and sleep. I understand that you might not be feeling well or had a very late night, but if you are sleepy before class, please grab a cup of coffee. Students who come to class but sleep do not get credit for class attendance—sleeping in class will earn you an unexcused absence.

Students who miss an in-class activity due to an excused absence will not get credit for the assignment but will not be penalized. Often, the in-class activities cannot be “made up” outside of class time, but you will be responsible for knowing what we did in class in case it is referenced in future classes. You will lose the designated points for the assignment which means that your other remaining assignments will count more towards your final grade. For example, if the total of all in-class activities ends up counting for a total of 200 points, but you missed an activity due to an excused absence that was worth 20 points, and your total points earned was 160 points, your final grade for class activities will be scored as 160/180 instead of 160/200. If you, however, miss an in-class activity due to an unexcused absence, you will earn a zero for that class activity and as noted above, you will not be able to “make up” the lost points.

**Students who miss a class are responsible for getting notes and copies of handouts from a fellow student.** I advise that every student find a partner(s) in the class that will share notes and collect handouts for them when they have an anticipated or unanticipated absence. I will not be responsible for collecting or keeping track of handouts for students who miss class, nor will every handout be scanned and posted on Blackboard. You must also collect the notes and review the material covered in class before you ask me “what did I miss the other day when I was not here.” I am not responsible for repeating one of my lectures in a private session with students who miss class. While I am happy to review material that students do not understand during office hours, you must review the material before you schedule a meeting. Do not wait until a couple of weeks have passed before you realize that you are missing certain key handouts necessary to complete an essay or assignment—trying to track down handouts a few weeks down the road can be a nightmare.

In addition to expecting regular class attendance, I also expect students to arrive to class “on time.” Patterned late arrivals will also be penalized. Being a commuter, I understand the challenges associated with traffic, accidents and other unanticipated delays, but it is your obligation to arrive to class on time. If you are commuting from the other end of campus, I understand that the shuttle system may be a nightmare, but you need to catch the earlier bus if there is a chance that the shuttle might be a few minutes late getting up to the other end of campus. Again, I understand that “stuff happens” and you may “every now and then” arrive late, but it cannot be a regular pattern. You would not regularly arrive late for a job (it would not be tolerated by your employer and you would eventually be fired). Think of your college career as one of your current jobs. If you are late, however, come into the classroom as soon as you do get to your designation. Do not wait outside the class for some optimum time to enter as all this will do is make you miss more of the class instruction. Quietly and unobtrusively enter the classroom and take a seat.

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**Cheating/plagiarizing:** If any student is caught plagiarizing, you will automatically fail the class. If there are any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please review drafts of your assignments with me. Please also see Moravian College's Academic Honesty policy (on the website) to review the institution's definitions of cheating and plagiarism. Plagiarism is easier to recognize than you might think—I have caught a number of students in the past.

**Due Dates and Formatting:**

I expect **assignments to be handed in on time**, on the day that they are due. Late assignments will be docked one full grade for each day that they are late. So an "A-quality" assignment that was due on Tuesday that is handed in on Wednesday will drop to a "B." If handed in on Thursday, the grade will drop to a "C." A "D-quality" assignment handed in late is an F. I know students occasionally run into computer/printer problems, and if you are in this situation, email me as soon as possible. If you are having a printer problem, you can send me your assignment as an attachment so that you can still get credit for handing the assignment in on time. I do not have much sympathy for students who wait until a few minutes before class begins to print up their assignment and then discover that they are having trouble. So try to make it part of your schedule that you will finish and print up your assignments at least the night before the assignment is due. This way, you will have time to either solve your problem or contact me.

I also expect assignments to follow whatever **formatting and page instructions** given when the assignment is assigned. For example, if I assign an essay question that I suspect will take at least two pages to answer, I expect a full two pages of writing will constitute your response. This is two pages, word processed, double-space, one inch margins, Calibri, 12-point font, without additional spaces between your name and date at the top of the page, and between the title of your essay. Assignments that fall short of the page requirement will automatically lose points.

**More details on classroom behavior:**

**Recording Devices:**

Students have my permission to use audio recording devices in class. I know some students like to use these devices in order to review lecture notes, so this statement serves as my "informed consent" to be taped.

**Cell phone, texting, email, web surfing:** I expect that students will NOT be using their cell phones, texting, sending emails or web surfing during class time. Students who are caught engaged in any of these activities will immediately lose **one full grade** of their class participation grade (i.e. a B will drop to a C). If you engage in this behavior multiple times, then getting caught a mere three times in the course of a semester will earn you an F for class participation. For students who take notes on laptops, I know the temptation to check your Facebook page, or answer a few emails during what you might think is a less interesting part of my lecture may be overwhelmingly tempting, but please resist the urge. You may think you are pretty good at hiding this activity from me, but it is actually fairly easy to tell when a student is

engaged in other activities (although I hear that students are getting very adept at texting when the phone is in your pocket!). Sometimes your neighbor actually gives you away, so why you are making sure to keep looking up at me, your neighbor might get very interested in looking at your newly posted profile picture. So best just not to do it, no matter how good you think you are at it. And even if you think you might be so good, I will not necessarily confront you in class if I catch you. I will merely dock your class participation grade and you will not be aware of the penalty until the end of the semester.

There are some circumstances under which I will allow students to take a phone call or surf the web during class.

**Phone calls:** I know some students occasionally have family, work and/or personal obligations that may need their immediate attention. For example, there may be students who have a sick child at home and need to be reachable during class time in case there is an emergency. If you find yourself in this kind of situation, please contact me before class via email or approach me at the beginning of class. I will expect your phone to be on vibrate, but I will allow you to leave the room to take the call.

**“Facilities” Break:** I have had the experience of students regularly leaving class for what I can only assume is a “bathroom” break, leaving class for a few minutes during basically every class period. Unless there is an underlying medical issue, I do think it is necessary for students to regularly leave the class for what is often only a one-hour ten-minute class period. If you do have some underlying medical condition that requires you to regularly leave class, then please make sure I get a note from disabilities support (see contact information below). If I do not get official notification from disabilities support, then the regular bathroom break will be considered a series of “unexcused” absences and will result in a lowering of your class attendance grade. I have absolutely no problem with an occasional bathroom visit, but please limit your visits.

**Web surfing:** Sometimes a class activity might actually involve searching the web for resource materials. In this case, I may ask students to help search for a piece of data or reference during class. But I will expect that students will be searching for the task assigned and not looking up newly posted videos.

**Professor/Student dialogue:** I highly value good communication between us, and I therefore encourage you to contact me at any time in the semester to talk about the class in general or your individual performance. Few things are as frustrating for me then to get to the end of the semester to find out someone struggled with some aspect of the course (for example, understanding the assignments!). If you do not understand some aspect of the course material, or my assignment instructions, then please send me an email, call, or stop by my office hours. I am more than willing to read and respond to drafts of your work, so please take me up on my offer to read work before final due dates. I typically ask for at least one week to turn work around.

**Blackboard and Email:** Moravian College recognizes email as a form of official communication between faculty and students and I will use both Blackboard and email as a communication device. I will occasionally send out a message for you to take a look at an article online, or check a new posting on Blackboard before the next class. Therefore it is your obligation to regularly check your email account for messages from me. You should check your email accounts at least once a day. Failure to complete an assignment/request because “I did not see your email—I did not check my account,” will not suffice as a legitimate excuse. You also need to make sure that your mailbox does not reach its limit as you will be unable to receive emails once it is full.

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center on the first floor of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

**Outline of Weekly Readings and Assignments:**

***Week 1: A review course requirements and of the basic conceptual frameworks of Sociology.***

Law in Our Lives, Chapter 1, Introduction (Blackboard)

Law 101: There are no secret books: You can understand the law (Blackboard)

***Week 2: Thinking about the law***

Law in Our Lives, Chapter 2, Law: It’s Meaning and Logic (Blackboard)

Note on the Sociology of Deviance, Kai Erikson, (Blackboard)

***Week 3: Criminology and the Sociology of Law***

Susan Silby, Criminology and the Sociology of Law (Blackboard)

Chapter 16: Crime, Deviance and Social Control, from The Sociology Project

***Week 4: The View of the Criminal***

Chapter 1: Law, Order and Sociology, from The Sociology of Law and Order, McDonald

For this week, I would like you to look at news articles and internet posts about crimes. I want you to assess how the criminal is presented and prepare some notes for our discussion. I will

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expect that you will have some links/visuals to share with the class. Think of the difference in the presentation of different types of “criminals”:

- white collar versus blue collar
- majority population versus minority population
- young versus old, etc.
- Think about how the culpability of the crime is expressed in the article.
- Think about whether the criminal is rational or irrational.
- Look for patterns—do not find the obscure exception to the rule. You are a social scientist.

This preparation of notes and reflections can be your journal entry for the week.

### ***Week 5: Snapshot of Crime***

This week we will be looking at a variety of sources of crime statistics. You will each be asked to report on the crime statistics of your hometown and compare them to national statistics.

<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/crimestats>

<http://www.bjs.gov/>

<http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/StatebyState.cfm>

<http://www.city-data.com/crime/>

### ***Week 5: The Legal Enforcers: Police***

What skills do you need to be a police officer? Look up the requirements and think about what these skills reflect about the perceived work of police officers.

Should police officers have to be drawn from the communities they serve? What are the pros and cons of this requirement? Think about this sociologically.

Critical Issues in Policing:

Chapter 1: The Foundation of the Police Role in Society

Chapter 2: The Development of the American Police

[https://www.ted.com/talks/melvin\\_russell\\_i\\_love\\_being\\_a\\_police\\_officer\\_but\\_we\\_need\\_reform#t-47133](https://www.ted.com/talks/melvin_russell_i_love_being_a_police_officer_but_we_need_reform#t-47133)

### ***Week 6: The Legal Profession: Lawyers***

Law in Our Lives, Chapter 7, The Legal Profession (Blackboard)

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We will explore some of the traits lawyers needs and look at the application and selection process.

### ***Week 7: Policing our Lives***

Read at least half of Rios' Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys.

### ***Week 8: Policing Our Lives continued***

Finish reading Punished.

Chapter 4: The Color of Law from Invitation to Law and Society: An Introduction to the Study of Real Law, Calavita

### ***Week 9: Legal Culture and Legal Behavior***

Law in Our Lives, Chapter 9, Legal Culture and Legal Behavior  
Chapter 4: Your Day in Court: The Litigation Process, in Law 101.

### ***Week 10: The War on Drugs***

Chapter 6: The Talk versus the Walk of Law from Invitation to Law and Society: An Introduction to the Study of Real Law, Calavita

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/house-i-live-in/film.html>

For the past 40 years, the war on drugs has resulted in more than 45 million arrests, \$1 trillion dollars in government spending, and America's role as the world's largest jailer. Yet for all that, drugs are cheaper, purer, and more available than ever. Filmed in more than twenty states, ***The House I Live In*** captures heart-wrenching stories of those on the front lines — from the dealer to the grieving mother, the narcotics officer to the senator, the inmate to the federal judge — and offers a penetrating look at the profound human rights implications of America's longest war.

### ***Week 11: Our Survey Results***

This week we will spend some time reviewing the results of our survey.

### ***Week 12: Jury Selection***

This week we will look closely at the process of jury selection in the US.

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George Zimmerman trial: Day 4 of jury selection in Trayvon Martin shooting

Jury of Whose Peers: Eliminating Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection Procedures, A; Weddell, Hilary

### ***Week 13: Variation***

Chapter 2: Types of Society, Types of Law from Invitation to Law and Society: An Introduction to the Study of Real Law, Calavita

### ***Week 14: Pulling the course together***

This week we will pull together any loose ends for the course and people can work on pulling together their final journal submissions.

#### **Journal Entries:**

Your journal entries can take any of these forms. You can also propose other forms.

- Book reviews/article reviews/movie reviews
- Essays
- Media analysis (for example, analysis of “cop” shows)
- Interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Videos
- Audio recordings
- Analysis of data
- Observation assignment
- Participant observation (as long as you are not justifying criminal behavior!)