

SOCI 3820
Communities and Crime
Fall Semester 2007

Professor: Dr. Tom McNulty
Office: Baldwin 312; 542-3194; tmcnulty@uga.edu
Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30 pm
Meeting Time: MWF 1:25-2:15 pm (period 6)
Meeting Place: Baldwin 311

Course overview: This course is organized around the reading of three books, which are summarized briefly below. We will spend 4-5 weeks on each book, highlighting and discussing the main arguments, after which you will be required to write a book report.

Required readings: The following are available at the University and Off-Campus Bookstores:

William J. Wilson. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. Random House.
Elijah Anderson. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. W.W. Norton & Co.
Bernard E. Harcourt. 2001. *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing*. Harvard University Press.

Course requirements: Your final grade will be based on three take-home examinations, one based on each book. These will require you to write five page (max) papers that summarize the problem the book addresses, the author's central argument and conclusions, and your analysis and critique of the book. You will be given one week to complete these papers. Each will contribute equally toward your final grade. If you have concerns about your writing skills, it is imperative that you bring this to my attention at the start of the course. It is expected that students will read required material prior to class and be prepared to engage in class discussions and debates about the readings. This will make the course more interesting for you as well as me.

Attendance policy: Attendance will be recorded. Students with good attendance (90% or better) will receive extra points toward their final course grade. It will be difficult to do well in this course without faithful attendance.

Course Outline:

Wilson, When Work Disappears: The first part of the course will focus on the broad social, economic, and political forces that shape local neighborhoods. Wilson examines how changes in the American economy since the 1970s have resulted in unprecedented levels of joblessness in minority neighborhoods. He describes how labor force attachment is a key factor in maintaining family structures, stable community institutions, and low crime rates.

Anderson, Code of the Street: This ethnographic study of urban life in Philadelphia examines how residents adapt to impoverished conditions, highlighting the social and cultural dynamics of the interpersonal violence that currently plagues many urban neighborhoods. A key issue is the development of an informal set of rules (code of the street) by which life is organized in disadvantaged social contexts.

Harcourt, Illusion of Order. The third section of the course will examine contemporary issues related to the policing of communities. This book critically evaluates the predominant law enforcement approach to serious crime in the U.S. (broken windows or order maintenance policing) on empirical, theoretical, and rhetorical grounds. He concludes that, despite its popularity, the broken windows approach is not supported by the statistical evidence and that the theory underlying it is fundamentally flawed.