

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
Women, Crime and Social Justice
077.379(3cr. hrs.) L01 (301 Tier Bldg.)
Fall, 2005**

Instructor: Professor Elizabeth Comack
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Office Hours: Tues and Thurs, 2:30 to 3:30 or by appointment
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[assignments will **not** be accepted by email]

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to explore recent work in the area of women and crime. In particular, the focus will be on attempts within criminology to develop a more women-centred approach. The course will include an examination of the critiques of existing approaches to explaining crime, the development of a feminist criminology, and relevant issues pertaining to women as both victims and offenders.

COURSE ORGANIZATION:

The course will be divided into four main areas:

- I. Explaining Women's Involvement in Crime
- II. Criminalized Women
- III. Women and Violence
- IV. The Prisoning of Women

A more detailed outline of the specific topics covered within each area can be found in the Course Outline and Reading List. Lectures will be given on most of these topics, and videos and guest speakers will be used where appropriate. **Students will be expected to attend class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.**

REQUIRED READING:

The following book is available for purchase in the University Bookstore:

Elizabeth Comack 1996. *Women in Trouble: Connecting Women's Law Violations to Their Histories of Abuse* Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

In addition, readings have been placed on reserve in the Dafoe Library.

GRADING AND EVALUATION:

Evaluation of students will be based on the following:

In-class test	to be held on Thursday, October 13th	worth 30%
In-class test	to be held on Tuesday, November 8th	worth 30%
In-class test	to be held on Tuesday, December 6th	worth 20%
Writing assignment	due during class time on Thursday, December 1st	worth 20%

In-class tests will consist of essay-type questions. Students are expected to write the tests during class time on the dates indicated. Those missing a test due to illness will be required to provide a doctor's note.

Students are expected to submit their paper by the date specified above. Anyone encountering difficulties meeting this date for *legitimate* reasons should contact the professor as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. *Assignments that are submitted after the due date without good reason will be penalized **one mark** for each overdue day.* Further information on the writing assignment can be found later in this document.

In assigning letter grades for the course, the following scale will be used:

A+	90% and over
A	80-89
B+	75-79
B	70-74
C+	65-69
C	60-64
D	50-59
F	less than 50%

Every effort will be made to provide students with sufficient feedback on their course work. Students who are encountering difficulties with the course material or assignments are encouraged to consult with the professor.

Students should acquaint themselves with the University policy on "examinations; personations" (page 26) and "plagiarism and cheating" (pages 27-28) found in the *University of Manitoba 2005-2006 Undergraduate Calendar*.

I. Explaining Women's Involvement in Crime

- the male-centeredness of traditional criminology and the need to make women more visible;
- the nature and extent of women's involvement in crime;
- three main approaches to theorizing women's involvement in crime:
 1. **conservative approach:** the early approaches (Lombroso and Ferrero, W. I. Thomas, Otto Pollak); PMS as an explanation for women's crime
 2. **liberal approach:** role theory and the women's liberation thesis
 3. **feminist approach:** socialist feminist theory/standpoint feminism

II. Criminalized Women

- **class:** women, poverty, and homelessness
- **race:** Aboriginal women's over-representation in the criminal justice system
- **gender:** women and the sex trade

[in-class test here]

III. Women and Violence

- nature and extent of violence against women
- women's experiences of violence
- connecting women's abuse histories to their law violations
- girls and violence
- are women "men's equals" in violence?
- making sense of Karla Homolka

[in-class test here]

IV. The Prisoning of Women

- women's experiences of incarceration
- provincial conditions
- *Creating Choices* – the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women
- the P4W Inquiry
- risk management and women offenders
- alternatives to women's imprisonment

[in-class test here]

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WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Part of your grade for the course (20%) will be based on a writing assignment. This assignment is due **during class time** on **Thursday, December 1st**. The following are possible topics or questions to be used in constructing your paper.

Note: Students may choose to write on a topic or question not listed below, but must obtain the prior consent of the professor.

1. To what extent are there blurred boundaries between 'women as victims' and 'women as offenders'?
2. Should prostitution be considered a form of work?
3. Why is violence against women so widespread?
4. Is violence by girls increasing?
5. Are women 'men's equals' in violence?
6. Is Karla Homolka an anomaly?
7. What are the major difficulties encountered by Aboriginal women who are caught up in the criminal justice system?
8. How successful have been the efforts to reform federal women's imprisonment in Canada?
9. Are the needs of women who are in conflict with the law any different from those of men?

Some points to keep in mind:

- It is expected that **at least three sources** (in addition to class materials) will be used in constructing your analysis. *No web pages please!*
- Papers should be no more than **1500 words** in length (we're after quality and not quantity!)
- Please use a 12 point font and make sure to insert page numbers.
- Your paper should have an **Introduction** (which states your main purpose and indicates the nature of the discussion to follow) as well as a **Conclusion** (which offers a conclusion based on your discussion). Your paper should be well organized.
- Take care to ensure that your work conforms to proper use of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
- Any direct quotations must be indicated by the use of quotation marks. Any paraphrasing must cite the source of the ideas being conveyed.
- Referencing of sources should follow an accepted format used in Sociology - eg. - Author's last name, year of publication: page number – (Comack, 1996:48).
- A **bibliography** should be attached to the paper citing (in an accepted format) all of the sources used in constructing the paper.

- All students must sign a **nominal roll** when submitting their assignments. For students submitting late assignments, a nominal roll will be left in the Sociology Office (318 Isbister Building).