

**San José State University**  
**College of Social Sciences / Department of Justice Studies**  
**JS 156-01, Gangs, Criminal Syndicates & Justice, Spring 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Natalie Birthelmer
<b>Office Location:</b>	HB 125
<b>Telephone:</b>	(408) 924-2753 x42753 – email is the best way to reach me!
<b>Email:</b>	natalie.birthelmer@sjsu.edu
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tuesday 9:30-11:30, email for Zoom appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	M/W 12:00PM-1:15PM
<b>Classroom:</b>	Canvas / Zoom
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	Upper Division Standing

**Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses**

This course adopts a synchronous online delivery format, with a M/W meeting pattern. **You must have access to a webcam during scheduled class times.** Students are required to have an electronic device (laptop, desktop or tablet) with a camera and built-in microphone. SJSU has a free [equipment loan program](#) available for students. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have access to reliable Wi-Fi during tests. If students are unable to have reliable Wi-Fi, they must inform the instructor, as soon as possible or at the latest one week before the test date to determine an alternative. See [Learn Anywhere website](#) for current Wi-Fi options on campus. All course work will take place on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. See [University Policy F13-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-2.pdf> for more details.

**Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through [MySJSU](#) on [Spartan App Portal](#) <http://one.sjsu.edu> to learn of any updates.

## Course Description

A socio/historical examination of the emergence, evolution, persistence, activities and social structure of gangs and mobs, the effects of social factors, e.g., politics, law, technology and the economy, and consequences for communities and social institutions.

Pre-Co-requisite: Any 100W

Note: Must achieve a grade of "C" or better to fulfill Justice Studies major requirements.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Confidently discuss the historical context of and contemporary issues with gangs and criminal syndicates. (CLO1)
2. Understand and explain theories of gang formation. (CLO2)
3. Make critical assessments of and draw logical conclusions about the influence of socioeconomic factors and political climate on gangs and criminal syndicates. (CLO3)
4. Students should read, write, and contribute to discussion at a skilled and capable level. (CLO4)

## Required Texts

Howell, J.C. & Griffiths, E. (2019). *Gangs in Americas Communities (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.  
(ISBN: 9781544300221)

## Other Readings

Additional readings will be posted on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>.

Consider investing in an APA style guide, there are many different formats including a pocket size one, that are very affordable (e.g. ISBN: 9781433805608)

## Library Liaison

Silke Higgins, [silke.higgins@sjsu.edu](mailto:silke.higgins@sjsu.edu)

## Course Requirements and Assignments

1. Late work will not be accepted. Missing, late, or plagiarized work will receive a grade of zero points.
2. Assignment will be submitted to Canvas unless otherwise directed.
3. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted. Assignments will be submitted to Canvas unless otherwise directed. If you have issues uploading to Canvas, it is your responsibility to contact the IT department and resolve the issue. I will not accept technical issues as an excuse for late or missing assignments.
4. Assignments must include proper APA citation. Students must reference their journal articles in APA-style formatting. Students should refer to an APA style guide or the Online Writing Lab (OWL) from Purdue University at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/> if unclear about APA guidelines on in-text citations and reference pages.
5. To ensure compliance with academic integrity policies, all work in this class must be turned in through Turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service with which San José State University contracts. Students

are responsible for ensuring their work is accepted and evaluated by Turnitin.com. Inability to do so will lead to an incomplete grade for affected assignments.

### **Participation (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4)**

This class should be engaging for everyone, and therefore relies on student participation. All students will be expected to have read all assigned readings and completed any assignments before class, to be able to successfully participate in class discussions. Come to class ready to engage, debate, and discuss! Your participation grade will not be based on simply being present in the classroom but on meaningful participation.

### **Reading Responses (CLO1, CLO 2, CLO3, CLO4)**

Students will write weekly reading responses to the required readings. You will choose one of the discussion questions listed at the end of one of the chapters assigned for the week the assignment is due (not on readings assigned in a past week) to reflect on the reading.

Reading responses are due on Mondays as listed on the Course Schedule (below) at 12:00PM on Canvas. Late work will not be accepted. Reading responses should be no less than one (1) page and no more than two (2) pages long, and must be written in formal English, in Times New Roman, 12pt. font, and double-spaced. You must cite the chapter at least one (1) time in your reading response and show that you have read and understood the material through informed discussion. All citations and references must be in APA-style formatting.

Please make sure to write the question you chose at the top of the page (this reciting of the question does not count as part of your page requirement) and do not put your name or the class information on the paper.

### **Midterm (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4)**

The midterm will cover weeks 1-8 and include multiple choice, short and long answer questions. The midterm will cover materials from the textbook, assigned readings, and class activities. The midterm will be taken on Canvas.

### **Presentation (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4)**

In groups of up to 4, you will sign up to present a topic related to gangs, criminal syndicates & justice by completing a series of tasks, including: (1) summarizing the issue (2) discussing past approaches/attempts to resolve the issue, (3) presenting ideas of policy changes to resolve the issues presented and (4) generating discussion questions. Each member of the group will present one task, but your presentation must be cohesive. As a group, you will create a power point to guide your presentation. Your discussion of the material should be thoughtful and analytical, and invite participation by all students. For grading, you will receive both individual and group grades. Further instructions and expectations will be discussed.

### **Final Examination or Evaluation (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4)**

The final exam will cover weeks 9-16 and include multiple choice, short, and long answer questions. The midterm will cover materials from the textbook, assigned readings, and class activities. The final exam will be taken at the time of the scheduled in-class final on Canvas.

### **Technical difficulties during exams**

- Internet connection issues:

Canvas autosaves responses a few times per minute as long as there is an internet connection.

If your internet connection is lost, Canvas will warn you but allow you to continue working on your exam. A brief loss of internet connection is unlikely to cause you to lose your work.

However, a longer loss of connectivity or weak/unstable connection may jeopardize your exam.

- Other technical difficulties:

Immediately email the instructor a current copy of the state of your exam and explain the problem you are facing. Your instructor may not be able to respond immediately or provide technical support. However, the copy of your exam and email will provide a record of the situation. Additionally, you must contact IT services immediately and include a case number in your email to the instructor.

- Contact the SJSU technical support for Canvas:

Technical Support for Canvas

Email: [ecampus@sjsu.edu](mailto:ecampus@sjsu.edu)

Phone: (408) 924-2337

<https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/support/>

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practice. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

## Grading Information

Department of Justice Studies Course Grade Determination

Total Points	Grade	Total Points	Grade	Total Points	Grade
98.0 to 100	A plus	84.0 to 87.99	B	71.0 to 73.99	C minus
94.0 to 97.99	A	81.0 to 83.99	B minus	68.0 to 70.99	D plus
91.0 to 93.99	A minus	78.0 to 80.99	C plus	64.0 to 67.99	D
88.0 to 90.99	B plus	74.0 to 77.99	C	61.0 to 63.99	D minus

## Determination of Grades

Presentation	100 pts / 20%
Midterm	100 pts / 20%
Participation	100 pts / 20%
Reading Responses	100 pts / 20%
Final	100 pts / 20%
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Total	500 pts / 100%

## Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to:

1. Come to class prepared and participate
2. Have a webcam installed and be able to use it during scheduled class times
3. Complete all readings and assignments as scheduled on the syllabus
4. Check canvas and mysjsu regularly and be aware of any changes in the class schedule
5. Be respectful to their classmates in discussions and debates
6. Turn off their cell phones while class is in session

Late work will not be accepted. Assignments will be submitted to Canvas unless otherwise directed. E-mailed assignments will not be accepted. If you have issues uploading to Canvas, it is your responsibility to contact the IT department and resolve the issue. I will not accept technical issues as an excuse for late or missing assignments.

General questions (format, deadlines, etc.) can be posted use the course Q&A Board on Canvas.

### **Zoom Classroom Etiquette**

1. **Mute Your Microphone:** To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
2. **Be Mindful of Background Noise and Distractions:** Find a quiet place to attend class, to the greatest extent possible.
3. **Avoid video setups** where people may be walking behind you, people talking/making noise, etc.
4. **Avoid activities** that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers, listening to music in the background, etc.
5. **Limit Your Distractions/Avoid Multitasking:** You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and putting your smartphone away (unless you are using it to access Zoom).
6. **Use Appropriate Virtual Backgrounds:** If using a virtual background, it should be appropriate and professional and should NOT suggest or include content that is objectively offensive or demeaning.

### **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>.

### **Academic Integrity / Plagiarism**

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 \[pdf\]](#) requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#) website for more information.

- **Plagiarism:** San José State University defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one's own without giving appropriate credit, regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism includes:
  - 1.2.1 Knowingly or unknowingly incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts of, or the specific substance of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work;
  - 1.2.2 Representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawing, sculptures, or similar works as one's own.
- **Sanctions:** There shall be two major classifications of sanctions that may be imposed for violations of this policy: Academic and Administrative. Academic sanctions are actions related to the coursework or grades determined by the faculty member. Administrative sanctions are actions that address a student's status on campus and are determined by the Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development. Academic sanctions and Administrative sanctions may be imposed simultaneously.

*To ensure compliance with academic integrity policies, all work in this class must be turned in through Turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service with which San José State University contracts. Students are responsible for ensuring their work is accepted and evaluated by Turnitin.com. Inability to do so will lead to an incomplete grade for affected assignments. In case plagiarism is detected once, the plagiarized assignment will*

*receive a failing grade. If plagiarism is detected multiple times, students will receive a failing grade for the course.*

### **Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately by emailing me or by making an appointment with me as soon as possible. [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](#) (AEC) to establish a record of their disability.

### **Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material**

[University Policy S12-7](#), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor’s permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
  - In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

### **Department of Justice Studies Reading and Writing Philosophy**

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

## JS 156-01 / Gangs, Criminal Syndicates & Justice, Spring 2021, M/W 12:00PM -1:15PM

The following schedule is subject to change; advance notice of any changes will be posted as early as possible on Canvas.

### Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	M – 1/27	Introduction & Review of Syllabus
2	M – 2/1	<b>Reading Response 1</b> Chapter 1: History of Gangs in the US
	W – 2/3	Chapter 3: Defining Gangs and Gang Members Canvas: Armaline, W.T., Vera Sanchez, C.G. & Correia, M. (2014). ‘The biggest gang in Oakland’: re-thinking police legitimacy.
3	M – 2/8	<b>Reading Response 2</b> Chapter 4: General Macro Level Theories and Modern-Day Applications
	W – 2/10	Canvas: Patton, D.U., et al. (2017). Gang violence on the digital street: Case study of a South Side Chicago gang member’s Twitter communication
4	M – 2/15	<b>Reading Response 3</b> Chapter 5: Micro-Level Theories: Developmental Life-Course Pathways and Other Micro-Level Explanations for Gang Involvement
	W – 2/17	Harris, M.G. (1994). Cholas, Mexican American Girls, and Gangs.
5	M – 2/22	<b>Reading Response 4</b> Canvas: Blakely, G.R. (1967). Organized Crime in the United States <i>Inside the American Mob</i>
	W – 2/24	Canvas: Britz, M.T. (2008). A New Paradigm of Organized Crime in the United States: Criminal Syndicates, Cybergangs, and the Worldwide Web.
6	M – 3/1	<b>Reading Response 5</b> Chapter 8: Urban Gangs and Violence
	W – 3/3	Cureton, S.R. (2009). Something Wicked This Way Comes <i>Crips and Bloods: Made in America</i>
7	M – 3/8	Zatz, M.S. & Portillos, E.L. (2000). Voices from the Barrio: Chicano/a gangs, families, and communities.
	W – 3/10	<i>The Gang Crackdown (Frontline S36 E5)</i>
	M – 3/15	Midterm Review

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines</b>
8	W – 3/17	<b>Midterm</b>
9	M – 3/22	<b>Reading Response 6</b> Canvas: Joyce, K.L. (2016). Stars, Dragons, and the Letter “M”: Consequential Symbols in California Prison Gang Policy.
	W – 3/24	Canvas: Winterdyk, J. & Ruddell, R. (2010). Managing prison gangs: Results from a survey of U.S. prison systems.
10	M – 3/29	Spring Break
	W – 3/31	Spring Break
11	M – 4/5	<b>Reading Response 7</b> Chapter 6: Girls and Gangs
	W – 4/7	Canvas: Peterson, R.D. & Howell, J.C. (2013). Program Approaches for Girls in Gangs: Female Specific or Gender Neutral?
12	M – 4/12	<b>Reading Response 8</b> Chapter 7: National Gang Problem Trends: 1996 to 2012
	W – 4/14	Canvas: Pyrooz, D.C. & Decker, S.H. (2011). Motives and methods for leaving the gang: Understanding the process of gang desistance. <i>I was a MS-13 member (TedTalk)</i>
13	M – 4/19	<b>Reading Response 9</b> Chapter 9: What Works: Prevention
	W – 4/21	<i>The Interrupters</i>
14	M – 4/26	<b>Reading Response 10</b> Chapter 10: What Works: Intervention and Suppression
	W – 4/28	Presentations
15	M – 5/3	Presentations
	W – 5/5	Presentations
16	M – 5/10	Presentations
	W – 5/12	Presentations
17	M – 5/17	Final Review
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>T – 5/20</b>	<b>On Canvas</b>