



## **CJ 497 (01.E): STREET CRIMES & The UNDERCLASS**

Spring 2026

1/12/2026 through 5/9/2026

**Tu/Th 2:00pm-3:15 in SS 143**

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Instructor:	Mike Tapia, Ph.D.
Office Location:	Ferguson 231
Office Hours:	Tu/Th 4:00pm – 6:00pm
Main Office Phone:	903-886-5332 (Messages Only)
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:michael.tapia@tamuc.edu">michael.tapia@tamuc.edu</a>
Preferred Form of Communication:	email
Communication Response Time:	Normally within 24-48 hours

### **COURSE INFORMATION**

#### **Readings**

\*\*\*\*\*All readings for this course are obtained by students in Online Library Searches\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*Per the instructions in the “*Summaries of Readings*” section/requirement below\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Course Description**

This seminar examines various topics on the street subcultures and groups that emerge in impoverished areas.

We consider:

- 1) individual, small group, community, institutional, and societal-level theories of these subcultures and group formations,
- 2) the definition and meaning of the “underclass”, “gangs” and other street-oriented subcultures;
- 3) the role of demographic characteristics in the development of such groups;
- 4) the personal and social characteristics of individuals who become members of such groups, and
- 5) law enforcement and correctional responses to such groups.

We discuss intersections between various social categories in the context of these topics. Special topics like gangs & organized crime, federal crimes, and white-collar crime are also addressed.

## Student Learning Objectives & Outcomes

Students will:

- 1) apply theories on criminal subculture and poverty
- 2) read and summarize the classical and contemporary literature on street gang formation
- 3) evaluate police statistics on gang membership and gang-related crime in the U.S.
- 4) evaluate the research that uses self-reported gang membership in survey data
- 5) measure the prevalence of gang membership in jail and prison
- 6) seek and summarize literature on topics of interest within this subfield for your term paper
- 7.) design a research proposal to include in your term paper.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

1. **Participation:** This course is conducted as a seminar, where theories, concepts, issues, and ideas are presented then debated and developed. Therefore, coming to class and discussing the readings, student summaries, presentations, and lecture materials is essential. Class participation includes asking questions, providing answers, and entering into discussions where you feel you can contribute insights. The quality of your Class Participation constitutes 10% of your course grade.

\*\*\*\*\*To earn your Weeks 1 & 2 Participation Grade\*\*\*\*\*:

- a. Examine the topics in our sample reading list & note the types of readings listed
  - b. Conduct your own search for more recent studies in those areas
  - c. Identify & locate two readings using the instructions provided under item 2. below, and email them to me with the full citation (in APA format).
  - d. I will place them on a reading schedule, place your name below the reading, and update that list throughout the first few weeks of class, as I receive your reading selections.
  - e. Review the updated reading schedule on D2L and mark your calendar for the dates of your 2 readings
2. **Summaries of Readings:** To facilitate weekly discussion of course materials, and to develop your skills in analyzing published research for your term paper, you are required to search, select and summarize two (2) readings according to specific guidelines provided.

Your reading selections should be used in your Presentation & Term Paper. Write-ups are due the week following the date they are discussed in class. Each summary is worth 10% of your course grade.

**A guide with bulleted points for you to address in these reading summaries is on D2L.**

Peer Reviewed Academic Journal Articles are located by students using the TAMUC Library Homepage or Google/Google Scholar online. To access them, use the "One Search" feature of the TAMUC Library homepage at: <https://inside.tamuc.edu/library/index.php> and type in a journal title from our reading list that sounds interesting. This is the part of the citation that is *italicized* e.g. *Journal of Gang Research*, or *Trends in Organized Crime* or *Race & Justice*. Sign in with student credentials and it will take you to the journal link. Click "Submit" and browse the results. When you pick your articles, download the full text in .pdf. If it is not available, use the Inter-Library Loan (ILL)

link on the left of the page to enter the reading's citation info and you will receive a copy electronically as an email attachment within a few hours up to a few days (depending on librarians' availability and how difficult it is to find the reading).

For a library workshop on how to search for peer reviewed academic journal articles, see: [how to search for peer reviewed academic journal articles](#)

You must conduct your own broader searches for readings using key terms related to underclass & streetcrime or gangs in a library search engine, and select "peer reviewed" and "full text" options in your search parameters. If you have questions about if one is suitable for this class, send me a copy of the article or reading that you select for my approval.

Often, one will have luck finding readings using Google Scholar or using a simple Google search. If still having trouble locating readings, consult with a reference librarian using the library's chat feature, send an email, or place a phone call or visit their hours listed for availability.

Once you obtain a .pdf copy of the reading, email it as an attachment to your instructor for approval and for sharing with the rest of the class. BE SURE to include the full citation using APA format. Finally, if still having too much trouble finding a desired reading using all of these steps, consult with me.

3. ***Presentation & Write Up:*** To get you thinking critically about issues related to gangs, the underclass, and street crime in the U.S., you will make a brief class presentation on a related topic of your choice. During weeks 3, 4 & 5, students will present themes of their choice from the readings they've chosen, or other course materials and/or outside sources they've found on the internet. Browse the entirety of the syllabus, reading list, slides, etc., search the internet, and look to your prior courses to get ideas for topics. This project (presentation & brief writeup) accounts for 20% of your course grade. (See the *Presentation guidelines on D2L for details*).
4. ***Term Paper Updates:*** At two points in the semester (2/26/26 and 3/31/26), I will gauge your progress on the final project, assign a grade ranging from 0 to 3.33, and provide feedback.

For the first draft, include:

- 1) a general statement of your work/topic and how it is progressing to date;
- 2) key concepts in your topic
- 3) summaries of published research on the topic you've found so far
- 4) identify other key resources for examining the topic
- 5) a crime theory from the slides or from other CJ courses, describe it, and how it relates to your topic
- 6) problems that you have encountered, or expect to encounter, and
- 7) a works cited/references page.

These write-ups are due on the dates listed above and the written feedback I provide throughout the term should be reflected in your final project. Staple the graded first draft to the back of your 2<sup>nd</sup> draft and so-on. These progress updates and a final reflection on the process of writing the paper constitute 10% of your final grade.

5. **Term Paper:** Your primary assignment for the course is to develop a term paper (6-8 pp., double-spaced, PLUS Cover Page and Reference Page(s)). This should be a *literature review* on a relevant topic in street crime, using the information contained in the Presentation and Reading Summaries assignments. Do not format your literature review as an annotated bibliography, but rather as a well-integrated academic discussion that cites various works in a series of individual sections or paragraphs. Google the phrase “annotated biblio” to know what it is and know to avoid it. We will then discuss in class.

You may choose from among a wide variety of topics covered in class to write your paper on but if you are unsure of the appropriateness of the topic, ask the instructor. Final papers should culminate in a research design with proposed data and methodology sections. A preliminary description of the paper idea (2 pages), plus a list of references collected to date is due on Tues 2/26/25 and your second, much lengthier draft is due Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. Your term paper counts as 40% of your course grade.

**To summarize, course requirements are weighted as follows:**

Attendance & Participation in Weekly Discussions	10%
Journal Article Summaries	20%
Presentation & Write Up	20%
Term Paper Progress Updates, Drafts, & Final Reflection	10%
Term Paper	<u>40%</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

Final grades are determined as follows:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

**Minimal Technical Skills Needed:**

1. Ability to use Microsoft Word
2. Ability to navigate the D2L Learning System
3. Ability to navigate TAMUC Library Resources per item 2. above.
4. Ability to navigate the internet

**Instructional Methods**

There are no exams or quizzes in this course. It is an in-person, student-driven, seminar course with the occasional lecture from your instructor, information from other forms of media, and guest speakers. Most of the instructional content is based on weekly assignments and class discussion

over each student presentation or reading summary. Any relevant slides are made available in a clearly labeled module on D2L.

## Student Responsibilities and Tips for Success in the Course

1. Read this syllabus with great care and pay attention to its details. Mark due dates for summary assignments (different dates for everyone) and other important notes in your personal calendar. Revisit the syllabus periodically and ask questions if you have them.
2. Students should attend each class or as often as possible, **but especially when they are scheduled to deliver a presentation or lead the discussion on a reading they have selected and summarized for a grade.**
3. Before each class, students should skim readings scheduled for coverage in class per the weekly schedule (below).
4. **The class is designed for you to use your assignments to build towards your final project,** so please start reviewing the sample reading list, slides, etc., and brainstorming ideas for your projects a.s.a.p. I am always willing to discuss your ideas and answer questions.
5. The sample reading list contains a list of topics & citations to inform your own search for recent readings to use on the summaries assignment. In turn, use those two readings in your Presentation Project and in turn, on your Term Paper Drafts. While you will learn about many topics in the study of Street Crime, you should keep the same topic across all your assignments (choose that early, which means, spending time with course materials early in the term).
6. Avail yourself of resources at the TAMUC Writing Center for proofreading and advice: [TAMUC Writing Center. i.e.](#) Please take your paper drafts and a copy of the writing assignment to the writing center for help.
7. Do not plagiarize, do not use Artificial Intelligence applications like Chat GPT, or purchase term papers off of the internet to present as your own work. This never ends well for the student or the instructor, as undergoing the academic misconduct process with the university is not a pleasant experience, and it takes valuable time out of everyone's busy schedule. Please see the info on Academic Dishonesty / Integrity on p. 6 below.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

### LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

## ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

**Note:** Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Students should have access to a Device or PC at home or work, the library, TAMUC campus computer labs, etc. Back up your files to avoid losing your work. This might include the use of a jumpdrive, a google drive, etc.

## COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

### Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

### Contacting the Instructor

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please speak to your Instructor before, during, or after class. Also use ETAMU email or D2L's messaging program for a more careful and complete discussion over questions or issues.

## COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

### Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, hybrid modifications etc., may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced.

### University Specific Procedures

#### Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

#### TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

## **Academic Integrity & Misconduct**

Students at East Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

## **Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

### **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

## **Nondiscrimination Notice**

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

## **Campus Concealed Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

## East TX A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.tamuc.edu/counsel](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

## COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

### Course Schedule (Subject to Changes)

**Week 1:** **Thoroughly Read Through all Material on the Course D2L Page: Assignments, Slides, Sample Reading List, etc. Search & Select your Readings.**  
1/12-1/14

Intros and Review the Course Structure

**Week 2:** **Discuss Reading Searches and Selections**  
1/20 – 1/22  
Underclass Concepts & Streetcrime

View Library Instruction Workshop: [Library Workshop: How to Start a Research Project](#)

**Week 3:** STUDENT PRESENTATIONS  
1/27 (Tues) **Presentations 1 & 2** Students may volunteer to present  
1/29 (Thurs) **Presentations 3 & 4** or go alphabetically by last name.

**Week 4:** STUDENT PRESENTATIONS  
2/3 (Tues) **Presentations 5 & 6** Students may volunteer to present  
2/5 (Thurs) **Presentations 7 & 8** or go alphabetically by last name.

**Week 5:** STUDENT PRESENTATIONS &  
2/10 (Tues) **Presentations 9 & 10** Students may volunteer to present  
2/12 (Thurs) **Presentations 11 & 12** or go alphabetically by last name.

Online Library Workshop: [Mastering the Art of Research](#)

**Week 6:**  
2/17 (Tues) **Presentations 13 & 14**  
2/19 (Thurs) Discuss First Draft guidelines

**Week 7** \*\*\*\*\***TERM PAPER FIRST DRAFT Due: 2/26/26**\*\*\*\*\*  
2/24 – 2/26 Library Instructional Workshop: [Creating a Research Log](#)

**Week 8**  
3/3 - 3/5  
In-Class Discussion on FIRST DRAFT  
READING SUMMARIES Begin

**Week 9**  
3/10 – 3/12  
\*\*\*\*\***SPRING BREAK**\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 10**  
3/17 – 3/19  
Library Workshop:  
[Developing Your Research Question](#)

-Write up a summary of what you learned and how you will apply it to your project for Extra Credit.

**Week 11**  
**3/24 – 3/26**  
Student Reading Summaries  
Work on Term Paper 2<sup>nd</sup> Drafts

**Week 12**  
3/31 – 4/2  
TERM PAPER 2<sup>nd</sup> DRAFT Due: Tuesday, 3/31/26  
Attach your graded first draft to it.

**Week 13**  
4/7 – 4/9  
2<sup>nd</sup> **Term Paper** DRAFT Discussion

**Week 14**  
4/14 – 4/16  
**Individual reading summaries**  
Black Street Gangs & Public Order  
Latino Street Gangs & Prison Gangs

**Week 15**  
4/21 – 4/23  
**Individual reading summaries**  
Prison Gangs and Race/Ethnicity  
Gang Migration,  
Transnationalism & Mexican Drug Cartels  
Globalism and Crime

**Week 16**  
4/28 - 4/30  
**Course Wrap Up**  
**Final Term Paper Due this week:** Printed Out, Bring to Class  
Attach your graded second draft to it.

**Week 17**  
5/5  
**Final “Exam”:** Printed Copy, in-class: Tuesday May 5 at 1:15pm.  
The final “exam” is a brief reflection regarding

1) your final project and 2) the class as a whole.

Also answer these additional Qs:

- 3) What did you learn from writing the paper,
- 4) any regrets,
- 5) different approaches you would’ve taken,
- 6) what would be the next steps in continuing on with your research?,

There is no page requirement for this reflection. It will constitute the last portion of your grade for the Term Paper Progress Updates. Each entry is worth 3.33 points total x 3 ~ 10 pts.