



THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Sociology
SOCI0067 Crime and the Media
2008-2009 Second Semester

Instructor

Dr. L. Cho, PhD

Email: Lifcho@hku.hk

Office: KK Leung 1116

Phone: 2859-2810

Course Blog: <http://soci0067.wordpress.com/>

Lecture Venue

Room: Knowles Building 223

Time: Tuesdays, 2:00 - 3:50 p.m.

Teaching Assistants

Yujing Fun: funy@hku.hk

Allison Tsui: tsuiheungling@gmail.com

Course Description: The media plays a particularly influential role on the public's conceptions of crime and order. This course is designed to look at the ways in which the media shapes our ideas and responses to crime. The course examines representations of crime in different media forms and theoretical explanations for why crime is portrayed in particular ways. The course will also look at the representation of crime in popular culture and the entertainment industry.

Aims: The overall objective is to provide students with a better understanding of the ways in which crime is constructed in the news and popular culture. It is also designed to facilitate a critical and questioning stance as to why crime and crime control are constructed in particular ways in different media like television, newspapers, tabloids, and film.

Course Requirements:

This class uses a variety of teaching methods from traditional lecturing to group activities where students discuss and debate using films, newspapers, and magazines. Students are expected to attend and participate in class and tutorial discussions, which are essential to preparing your individual and group coursework assignments. The course assessment is based on 40% examination and 60% course work. The course work includes an individual portfolio (25%), and a group project (35%).

1) *Individual Portfolio (25%)*. Students are required to write about the topics covered in the class in a journal. The weekly entry should integrate the student's thoughts and ideas in relation to the class lectures, discussions and readings. Journal questions are provided as a guide. Students should write in a personal and informal style. Each entry should be 2 pages, double spaced typed, 12 point font, Times New Roman or Arial. The journal will be turned in for review and comment on Friday, 27 February, 5:00 pm and will be returned to you after reading week. This is intended to provide you with mid-semester feedback. The completed journal is due Friday, 24 April, 5:00 pm. Journals turned in late may be subject to penalties.

2) *Group project (35%)*.

The objective of the group project is to critically analyze the media (in its many forms) in relation to what you are learning in class and through your readings. The ten tutorials for this course are organized in topics and require students to engage in research. Students will be divided into teams. Each week, your group will have time to discuss, analyze, debate on various issues related to the media and crime as outlined below. After each topic, each team will write up their findings from their research and debate in the tutorial. Each write-up should be 3 pages. A final entry should summarize what the group has learned over the course of the semester. Total number of pages should be around 15. The end product will be to produce a portfolio which reflects critically on the media. The mark for the portfolio will be based on overall group effort. The completed group project is due on the last day of lecture on 21 April.

Course Outline

Week	Date	Lecture	Topic
1	Jan 13	Introduction	Role of the media in crime and the criminal justice system
2	Jan 20	Making the News: If It Bleeds, It Leads	Theories about Media and Crime
	Jan 27	CHINESE NEW YEAR	NO CLASS
3	Feb 3	Social Construction of Reality: News Media and the Making of Crime Images	Understand how news reflect organizational priorities and ideological power
4	Feb 10	Copycat Suicide and Media in HK	Review the history of imitative suicide in HK via evidence and case studies
5	Feb 17	The Fear Factor	Analyze how popular media shape people's fears and anxieties about crime
6	Feb 24	Violence and Men	Examine masculine images of crime that are perpetuated in the media
	Mar 3	READING WEEK	NO CLASS
7	Mar 10	Good Girls Bad Girls: Violence and the Paradox of Femininity	Analyze violence by and against Women
8	Mar 17	Media and the Criminal Justice System	Explore the symbiotic relationship between the media and criminal justice system
9	Mar 24	Young People and Moral Panic	Review the history, meaning and power of the concept of moral panic
10	Mar 31	Crime and the Media in China	Analyze the cooperative and adversarial relationship between the news media and law enforcement agencies in China
11	Apr 7	Hong Kong Hollywood Gangsters: Triads and Cops	Myth creation of gangsters and cops
12	Apr 14	Failed Constructions: Addressing White Collar Crime in the Media	See how media constructions shape the public perception of white-collar crimes
13	Apr 21	Myths and Realities of Crime and Its Control	Conclusion

**SOCI0067 Readings
Spring 2009**

Readings

The course schedule for lecture topics lists the required readings for this course. A packet of readings has been prepared, and students are responsible for obtaining a copy from the student copy centre in Meng Wah Complex (next to Park n Shop.)

Week 1 Introduction

Overview of course: What is the role of the media in crime and the criminal justice system?

Readings:

- Katz, J. (1987). What Makes Crime "News"? *Media, Culture and Society*. 9:47-75.
- Sacco, V. (1995). Media Constructions of Crime. *AAPSS*, 539: 141-154.

Journal Question:

- Introduce yourself and explain why you are taking this course and what you hope to learn in the class.

Week 2 Making the News: If It Bleeds, It Leads

What is the relationship between media and crime? Do the media play an important role in defining and constructing our understanding about crime and the criminal justice system? How do the media affect people? Do the media "cause" crime?

Readings:

- Surette, R. (1998). Chapter 1: Media and the Construction of Crime and Criminal Justice and Chapter 5: The Social Construction of Crime and Violence: Media as Cause. In *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Journal Question:

- Claims-Making: Find some articles on the issue of sex related crimes appearing in the media within the last six months. Discuss the process and stakeholders involved in making claims and counterclaims about the "issue." Who has taken control of the issue? With what effect? Are there any differences between the English and Chinese press? In light of Katz's views, what makes this issue news? Does it have a Durkheimian function?

Week 3 Social Construction of Reality: News Media and the Making of Crime Images

How is the news assembled? What is considered newsworthy? What are the various interests and issues at stake? Does the news reflect organizational priorities and/or reflect ideological power of dominant groups in society?

Readings:

- Chermak, S. (1995). Chapter 2: Constructing Crime News and Chapter 3: News Images of Crime, Victims and Defendants. In *Victims in the News*. Boulder: Westview Press. Pp. 13-83.
- Welch, M., Fenwick, M. and Roberts, M. (1998). State Managers, Intellectuals, and the Media: A Content Analysis of Ideology in Experts' Quotes in Feature Newspaper Articles on Crime. *Justice Quarterly*. 15(2): 219-241.

Journal Question:

- Assembling the News: for one day this week, select a local newspaper (English or Chinese), and cut out all the stories you can find about crime. Organize each piece (according to where it appears in the paper, how big or small the article is, etc.) Based on the readings and class discussion, describe how the crime stories are covered. How are the stories constructed? Are there any patterns across the stories? What is the source of the information? (e.g., experts, police, claims-makers, owners of the problem, etc.) How are the crime events constructed? (Reference to specific individuals, crime patterns, what type of crime, etc.) What images and messages are being conveyed? Visuals?

Weeks 4 Copycat Suicide and Media in HK

Readings:

- Zahl, D. and K. Hawton (2004). Media Influences on Suicidal Behaviour: an Interview Study of Young People. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 32: 189-198.

Journal Question:

- Based on the guest lecture, describe the relationship between media and suicidal behaviour.

Week 5 The Fear Factor

What role do the popular press, television and film play in shaping people's fears and anxieties about crime?

Readings:

- Altheide, D. (2002). The Lens of Fear. In C. Critcher (ed). *Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media*. Berkshire, England: Open University. P. 240-249.
- Ditton, J. et al. (2004). From Imitation to Intimidation: A Note on the Curious and Changing Relationship between the Media, Crime and Fear of Crime. *British Journal of Criminology*. 44(4): 595-610.
- Banks, M. (2005). Spaces of (In)Security: Media and Fear of Crime in a Local Context. *Crime, Media, Culture*. 1(2): 169-187.

Journal Question:

- Have you ever feared being a victim of a crime? Why or why not? Has this been influenced by your viewing of television or reading the news? How does your experience compare with the findings of this week's readings? Is there a difference? What would you attribute this to?

Week 6 Violence and Men

To what extent does the media perpetuate masculine images of crime? Does it perpetuate patriarchal ideology?

Readings:

- Websdale, N. and A. Alvarez. (1998). Forensic Journalism as Patriarchal Ideology: The Newspaper Construction of Homicide-Suicide. In *Popular Culture, Crime and Justice*, (Eds.) F. Bailey and D. Hale. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Pp. 123-141.
- Naylor, B. (2001). Reporting Violence in the British Print Media: Gendered Stories. *The Howard Journal*. 40(2): 180-194.

Journal Question:

- Hong Kong has witnessed a number of murder suicides over the last several

years. Review the assigned reading on forensic journalism and apply to the series of murder suicide attempts over the last several years in Hong Kong. Is the portrayal of murder suicides in Hong Kong's press similar to that described by Websdale and Alvarez? Does the media representation of this issue reinforce patriarchal ideology? Why or why not?

Week 7 **Good Girls Bad Girls: Violence and the Paradox of Femininity**

If the media perpetuates the masculine nature of crime, how are women who engage in crime defined by the press? What is meant by the paradox of femininity?

Readings:

- Berrington, E. and P. Honkatukia. (2002). An Evil Monster and a Poor Thing: Female Violence in the Media. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*. 3:50-72.

Journal Question:

- Locate news stories in English (locally or internationally) about women as offenders and as victims. How are they portrayed? See if you can find any other images in the Chinese press. Are there any differences? How do the portrayals of women compare with the findings in other countries (as described in the readings?)

Week 8 **Media and the Criminal Justice System**

What is the relationship between the media and the criminal justice system? Do they have a "symbiotic" relationship?

Readings:

- Chermak, S. (1998). Police, Courts and Corrections in the Media. In *Popular Culture, Crime and Justice*, (Eds.) F. Bailey and D. Hale. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Pp. 87-99.
- Innes, M. (1999). The Media as an Investigative Resource in Murder Enquiries. *British Journal of Criminology*. 39(2): 269-286.

Journal Question:

- Based on what you learn from the guest speaker, discuss how crime is reported in the organization the guest speaker work in? How does it compare with coverage by newspapers such as *Apple Daily* or *Oriental Daily*? How would you describe the speaker's working relationship with the criminal justice system?

Week 9 **Young People and Moral Panic**

What is the meaning of moral panic? What are the differences between the British model (e.g., Cohen, Hall, etc.) and the American model (e.g., Goode and Ben-Yehuda)?

Readings:

- Cohen, S. (1973). Mods and Rockers: The Inventory As Manufactured News. In *The Manufacture of News*, (Eds.) S. Cohen and J. Young. Beverley Hills: Sage. Pp. 263-279.
- Killingbeck, D. (2001). The Role of Television News in the Construction of School Violence as "Moral Panic." *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*. 8(3):186-202.
- Brownstein, H. (1995). The Media and the Construction of Random Drug Violence. In *Cultural Criminology*. (Eds.) J. Ferrell and C. Sanders. Northeastern University Press: Boston.

Optional Readings:

Excerpts from original, appearing in Critcher, C. (ed.) (2006). *Critical Readings: Moral Panics and the Media*. Berkshire, England: Open University, Pp. 29-65.

- Chapter 2: Cohen, S. (1973). Deviance and Panics.
- Chapter 3: Hall, S. et al. (1978). The Changing Shape of 'Panics'
- Chapter 4: Goode, E. and N. Ben-Yehuda (1994). Moral Panics: An Introduction.
- Chapter 5: Thompson (1998). The History and Meaning of the Concept

Journal Question:

- Review the newspaper and identify an issue in which you think exemplifies a moral panic? (e.g., school bullying, drugs, sex work, etc.) Discuss how the article(s) facilitate the image of a panic. Why do you think the issue appears at this time? In other words, why is it a panic now?

Week 10 Crime and the Media in China

What are the dominant ideologies in the reporting of crime in China and what are the possibilities beyond these dominant frames? How does the government both promote as well as stifle crime reporting?

Readings:

- Li Xiao and Polunbaum, J. (2006). News and Ideological Exegesis in Chinese Online Media: A Case Study of Crime Coverage and Reader Discussion on Two Commercial Portals. *Asian Journal of Communication*. 16(1): 40-58.
- Zhou(sic)[Zhao], Y. (2000). Watchdog on Party Leashes? Context and Implications of Investigative Journalism in Post-Deng China. *Journalism Studies* 1(2):577-97.

Journal Question:

- Describe the cooperative as well as adversarial relationships between the mainland Chinese news media and the criminal justice system. In what ways do you think these relationships help or hinder crime fighting?

Week 11 Hong Kong Hollywood Gangsters: Triads and Cops

What role does popular culture/entertainment industry/Hollywood play in the creation of the myths associated with particular types of criminals like the gangster?

Readings:

- Surette, R. (1998). The Entertainment Media and the Social Construction of Crime and Justice. In *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice: Images and Realities*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Chapter 2. p. 24-51.

From: Silver, A. and Ursini, J. (2007). *Gangster Film Reader*. New Jersey: Limelight Editions.

- Williams, T. (2007). The Hong Kong Gangster Movie.
- Walker, I. (2007). Family Values and Feudal Codes: The Social Politics of America's Fin-de-Siecle Gangsters.
- Larke, G. (2003). Organized Crime: Mafia Myths in Film and Television. In *Criminal Visions: Media Representations of Crime and Justice*. (Ed.) P. Mason. Devon: Willan Publishing. Pp. 116-132.

Journal Question:

- Watch a Hong Kong and American movie (if you've seen it before, you need to see it again). Compare the portrayal of gangsters and violence OR cops/gangsters

in these two films. Write up your findings in your portfolio in light of the readings.

Week 12 **Failed Constructions: Addressing White-Collar Crime in the Media**

What role do the media play in inspiring and sustaining the public interest on the topic of white-collar crime?

Readings:

- Passas, N. and N. Goodwin. (2004). A Crime By Any Other Name. In N. Passas & N. Goodwin. *It's Legal but It Ain't Right: Harmful Social Consequences of Legal Industries*. Ann Arbor; University of Michigan Press. Pp. 1–27.
- Schollosser, E. ([2001] 2005). Fast Food Nation. In *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. (Ed.) J. Pilger. London: Vintage. Pp. 482-500.

Journal Question:

- What are your conceptions of white-collar crime? And, more importantly, try to think of how you came to those conclusions about the nature of white collar crime and whether the media had any role to play in the understanding. Do you think the media plays a significant role in framing the public discussion of white-collar crime and whether that role influences interest in the topic?

Week 13 **Myths and Realities of Crime and Its Control**

Readings:

- Surette, R. (1998). Chapter 7: The Media and the Social Construction of Crime and Justice Attitudes and Policies. In *Media, Crime and Criminal Justice*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Pp. 195-239.

Journal Question:

- Policing and the Social Control/Order Image: watch the HK Police Report this week. It can be viewed on the English station on Saturday nights at 7:20 or Sunday nights at 6:55 (see http://www.rthk.org.hk/rthk/tv/police_report/). What is the "crime(s) of the week? What messages and images of the police and of crime are they trying to convey? Given what you have learned in class and the readings, do you think police anti-crime campaigns are effective in changing people's attitudes and behavior towards crime and towards the police? Are the images of the police in these television campaigns similar to the images conveyed in the local newspapers?
-