This course explores the modern urban street gang. It looks at the long sociological tradition of theory and research on such gangs, much of it conducted right here in Chicago. It looks at the structure and activities of gangs and the response of local community institutions including local community organizations, schools, the police, and the media. It also looks at local and national urban and criminal justice policy with respect to street gangs. Some of the questions explored will include: Why do people join gangs? How are gangs similar to or different from other youth groups like sports teams, or fraternities/sororities? What are the neighborhood contexts that foster street gangs? What is the nature of their deviance including guns and drugs? How do class, race, ethnicity, and gender enter into an understanding of gangs? What are the “myths” and “stereotypes” of street gangs, how do these differ from the “reality” reported in research, and why do these myths exist? Each class meeting will begin with a short framing lecture by me and then proceed to discussion of readings followed by presentations and Q&A.

Writing assignments will include reading responses of 1 page for each of 15 class meetings (1/7 thru 2/25). These will be handed in at class and used to facilitate discussion. Each student will write a 4 page report on an outside book/article about gangs, and present an oral report and lead class discussion on the book/article, along with a 1 page summary to hand-out to fellow students. Toward the end of the course you will individually write a 3-4 page critique of the book by Venkatesh, Gangleader for a Day comparing it with Jankowski’s book and we will discuss these in class. Finally, each student will write a final paper of 8 pages on a theme selected in consultation with me. There is no final exam. Students should submit both hardcopy and e-copy versions of writing assignments and backup copies.

Grades:

- Reading response/participation/2 pop quizzes 35% (15+10+10)
- In class report of article/book 15%
- Critique of Gangleader/Jankowski 15%
- Final paper 35%

Books:


Plus additional articles and books.
Week 1 – “So What’s a Gang?” Or “Define Your Terms” And “What do you know? And How?”

1/5 Tue: Personal Experience

1/7 Thur: Jankowski – Introduction
Hagedorn: Introduction: Why Are Gangs Everywhere?

Week 2 - Theories of Gangs

1/12 Tue: Jankowski – Chapter 1 – A Theory of Gang Behavior

1/14 Thur: Hagedorn: Chapter 3: The Problem With Definitions
Chapter 5: No Way Out: Demoralization, Racism, and Resistance Identity

Week 3 – Gang Activities
1/19-21 *** PAPER TOPICS DUE

Tue: Jankowski – Chapter 2 – Gang Involvement
Hagedorn: Chapter 7. Reconsidering Culture: Race, Rap, and Resistance

Thur: Jankowski - Chapter 4 – Gang Business
Hagedorn: Chapter 6: A Tale of Two Gangs: Hamburgs & Vice Lords
Venkatesh, S. A., & Levitt, S. D.. (2000). "Are We a Family or a Business?"
Ben Austen."Public Enemies: Social Media Fueling Gang Wars

Week 4 – Violence and Social Control
1/26-28

Tue: Jankowski – Chapter 5 – The Anatomy of Gang Violence
Hagedorn: Chapter 8: Street Wars and the Rise of Gangsta Culture

Thur: Jankowski - Chapter 8 – Gangs, Criminal Justice, and Public Order
Chris Melde, Finn-Aage Esbensen. Gangs and Violence

Week 5 – Structure of Gangs
2/2-4 *** QUIZ 1 2/2

Tue: Jankowski – Chapter 3 – In the Organization

Thur: Hagedorn: Chapter 4: From Chicago to Mumbai: Touring the World of Gangs
Andrew V. Papachristos, D.M. Hureau and A. A. Braga (2013) The Corner and the Crew
Week 6 – The Community Context  
2/9-11  
Tue: Jankowski – Chapter – 6 – The Gang and the Community  

Thur: Hagedorn: Chapter 1. Ghetto, Favela, and Township: The World Gangs Live In  
Deschenes, E. P., & Esbensen, F.-A.. Violence and Gangs: Gender Differences  
Pih, K. et al., Different Strokes for Different Gangs? An Analysis of  
Capital Among Latino and Asian Gang Members

Week 7 – Institutional Relationships and Response – schools, media, politics, etc.  
2/16-18  
Tue: Jankowski – Chapter 9 – The Media and Gangs  
Chapter 7 – Gangs and Governments

Thur: Hagedorn: Chapter 2 – Street Institutions: Why Some Gangs Won’t Go Away  

Week 8 – Local and National Policy, Gangs, and Terror and the Future  
2/23-25  
Tue: Jankowski - Conclusion  
Neighborhoods and Violent Crime Trends

Thur: Hagedorn: Chapter 9 Contested Cities: Gentrification & The Ghetto  
Conclusion: A Rose in the Cracks of Concrete  
Decker, Scott and Pyrooz, David. “Gangs, Terrorism, and Radicalization

Week 9 – Capstone - Critiquing a Personal Case Study – Venkatesh (ALL)  
3/1-3 *** QUIZ 2 3/1  
Tue: Compare Venkatesh to Jankowski

Thur: *** -DUE: Critique of Venkatesh/Jankowski

Week 10 – Reading Week  
3/8-10 I am available for individual meetings during regular class hours

Week 11 – **FINAL PAPER DUE**  
3/14 MONDAY OF EXAM WEEK BY 5 PM