SYLLABUS

Spring 2012

SOCIAL DEVIANCE (SYG 3320)
Class Number: 17456; Section: U01

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, 12-12:50, Ryder Business Bldg., Room 120
January 9-April 27, 2012

Dr. Abe Lavender, Professor (best contact is lavender@fiu.edu)
Office hours will be announced in class.

Office: SIPA Building, Room 334
Phone: 305-348-3672

Graduate Assistant: Parvaneh “Patty” Julian

COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1: Introduction to definitions, concepts, statistics, and theories of deviance.
Part 2: Functions and dysfunctions of deviance; ways of being stigmatized, and ways of responding to stigmatization.
Part 3: Discussion of a diversity of specific topics (e.g., white-collar crimes, drugs, sexuality).
Part 4: Discussion of reincarnation, UFOs, and other related topics, in order to examine our thinking processes as to whether specific things are deviant or not.

READINGS

(1) THE MYTHOLOGY OF CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, by Victor Kappeler and Gary W. Potter, 4th Edition. This book takes a number of hot topics related to deviance and crime, and corrects some common myths, exaggerations, and false claims. Chapters will be assigned at various times throughout the semester, mostly before the first test.

(2) A RENEGADE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES, by Thaddeus Russell. “A bold, controversial, original view of American history that will amuse, inspire, outrage, and most of all instruct readers...sheds new light on ideas, institutions, and people...Russell demonstrates that it was those on the fringes of society whose subversive ways of life helped legitimize the taboo and made America the land of the free.” Chapters will be assigned during the semester, especially during the first half of the course.

(3) THROUGH TIME INTO HEALING, by Brian L. Weiss. One purpose of this book is to study a belief (reincarnation) which is considered deviant by the "powers" of western society, but which actually is believed in by many millions of people. Read all of this book during the second
part of the course.

(4) THE PARANORMAL: WHO BELIEVES, WHY THEY BELIEVE, AND WHY IT MATTERS, by Erich Goode (well-known sociologist). “To many people, the term paranormal bears a negative connotation…kooky, weird, far-out, spooky, strange, bizarre…The beliefs discussed in this book are deviant: espousing assertions that scientists regard as contrary to the laws of nature tends to provoke a negative reaction among certain parties or social actors, in certain social circles or institutions. I am a sociologist and hence am interested in sociological questions…what does expressing such beliefs mean for the lives of those who do so?…I regard holding paranormal beliefs as a form of deviance…[but] People who hold paranormal beliefs are as psychologically normal as people who don’t…” Assignments will be made from this book, mostly, but not entirely, during the second part of the course.

TESTS

There will be a midterm test shortly below the middle of the semester, and a second test shortly before the end of the semester. Tentative dates for the two tests are Monday, February 20, for Test 1, and Monday, April 9, for Test 2. About half of the questions will be from readings and about half will be from class lectures and discussions. However, it is very important to note that the class will continue until Friday, April 20, and attendance will be taken with absences (see Attendance below) counting extra for those five class meetings: April 11, 13, 16, 18, and 20. In other words, it is very important to understand that just because the tests have been completed, that the class is not over, but continues in a very serious mode. The highest grade, whichever it is, will count 2/3s, and the lowest grade will count 1/3.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required, and will be taken frequently on a random basis. The professor reserves the right to lower grades for excessive absences. This course is not structured to be an online class or a correspondence course. Class discussions and interactions, with the professor and with other students, are also important to the learning process of this class.

CLASS FORMAT

Class will be a combination of lecture and class discussion; some topics (e.g., theories) mostly will be presented in lectures, but frequently there will be class discussions.