

The University of Western Ontario
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Sociology 4437G 001 Advanced Sociology of Deviance: Mass Murderers



Professor: Kim Ashby
Phone: 661-2111 ext. 87177
Office: 5417 SSC
E-Mail: kim.ashby@uwo.ca
Class Times: Wednesdays - 9:30am - 12:30pm
Class Room: 5428 SSC
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 pm. or by appointment.
Web Site: <https://owl.uwo.ca>

Course Description:

Given the general confusion about the different forms of multicide, this course will critically analyze the phenomenon of mass murder as a unique form of multicide. The goal of the course is to examine the causes, characteristics and consequences of mass murder which is relatively rare, but also extremely consequential. An historical and contemporary analysis of mass murder will be undertaken, along with an assessment of the impact of the media on public perceptions of mass murders, in order to extend our understanding of the structural causes of this form of multicide, in contemporary society.

Prerequisite(s):

Enrollment in fourth year of one of the Honours Specializations or Honours Double Majors in Sociology. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Objectives of the Course:

This course will undertake to familiarize students with the facts versus the myths of serial murder, to understand serial murder from a sociological framework, to critically analyze media views of serial murder, to evaluate serial killing within a criminological framework, and to contextualize serial murder as a reaction to broader societal fears and concerns.

- Describe and discuss the various components of massacres, mass murderers and their relationship to each other
- Discuss theory of mass murder
- Appreciate the psycho-social, cultural, and individual diversity relevant to mass murderers.

Learning Outcomes:

The successful student will be able to:

- Identify the similarities and differences in the three forms of multicide.
- Identify, explain and assess the controversies surrounding mass murder.
- Explain the psycho-social, cultural and individual diversity relevant to mass murder.
- Analyze in writing, the typologies, motivations and factors contributing to mass murder as they apply to a given case study.
- Review the media coverage of a given case and assess the accuracy of the coverage and explain ways in which the media reports fuel moral panics.
- Synthesize select readings presenting key arguments and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of given perspectives.

Required text:

(available at the UWO bookstore)

Ramsland, Katherine M. (2005). "Inside the Minds of Mass Murderers: Why They Kill". Praeger Publishing.

Required readings:

(access Readings on OWL homepage)

Method of Evaluation

Participation	10%
One page Summation	5%
Reading synopsis	10%
Case Leaders	25%
Multiple Choice Questions	5%
Article & Synopsis	15%
Test (mx choice)	30%

COURSE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

With the exception of legitimate medical/personal excuses (documentation required to be submitted) students are expected to attend at least 80% of the class meetings for this course. A passing grade in the course cannot be obtained without meeting this attendance requirement. This class will be a community of learners, so everyone must be present to learn and to help others learn. Punctual and regular attendance at classes is expected.

Participation

Because this class is run as a seminar, it is essential that students come prepared to participate. Before-class preparation involves carefully reading and considering the assigned readings. Once in class, participation involves questioning and discussing the readings. Your participation grade will be calculated on both the frequency and cogency of your comments. You will find that your grade for this course will be adversely affected if you are absent or habitually unprepared to participate meaningfully in class discussions.

Synopsis of Weekly Readings

Students will write a **one** page synopsis of the weekly articles covered in each lecture's readings. The synopsis of the articles will be turned in at the beginning of the class– it will address a key point, perspective or concept taken by the readings and important to the discussion of mass killers.

Case Study Discussion Leaders

Each week, two students, working as a team, will be prepared to present a case of a mass murderer who is an example of the type of killer being discussed.

The case analysis will examine, **at a minimum**, the following factors:

Motivation	Predisposers
Precipitants	Facilitators
Anticipated gain	Victim selectivity
Victim relationship	Spatial mobility
Victim traits	

Article & Synopsis

Leaders will also undertake to describe, synthesize and analyze an extra article which they find, related to the week's discussion focus. The article will enhance, support, or challenge the understandings being examined in the week's assigned readings. The leader(s) will be expected to give a presentation (2 hours) that will examine the case, and based on their articles and the week's readings, highlight key issues, raise concerns and challenge theoretical positions. The articles will be uploaded to the class OWL site: "Student Readings" under Course Content. Student leaders will prepare a two page synopsis of their article.

Multiple Choice Questions

Leaders will turn in three (3) multiple choice questions drawn from the readings in a given lecture. These questions will be e-mailed to Prof. Luton before the given class.

How to Contact Me

Please feel free to come by during my office hours to discuss any questions you have regarding the course or simply to chat about some issue raised in class. If you e-mail me, I will reply to you within 24-48 hours if you use your UWO account. However, I do not read e-mails on the weekends.

Plagiarism

Students must write their synopses in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations.

Plagiarism Checking

The two page article synopses by the leaders will be uploaded to the assignment page on the class web site before 9:30am on the Wednesday class leaders are presenting. These papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Policy on Laptops in Class

The use of laptops is not permitted in class unless such use has been authorized by Professor Ashby.

Missed Exam and Late Assignments

A make-up exam will be granted with approved documentation only. If you have a conflict with the exam date, it is your responsibility to discuss it with the Academic Counseling office at least one week before the regularly scheduled exam and provide documentation of the conflict. If approved, you will be allowed to schedule a make-up exam. If you miss an exam date or the due date for an assignment due to illness or for any other unforeseen reason, you must provide notification of and documentation for the reasons for your circumstances to your Academic Counselor within 48 hours. If your problem is medical in nature, you should be seen by your doctor on the date of the exam or on the date the assignment is due. If your Academic Counselor agrees that your reasons are legitimate and are supported by your medical doctor's documentation, you will be allowed to write a makeup exam or hand in your assignment at a later date.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Course Outline

Jan. 4: Introduction to the Course

Questions to be addressed:

- What do you know?
- What will be the class focus?
- How will the class be conducted?

Jan. 11: Historical & Cultural Understandings

Questions to be addressed:

- What is the historical and cultural understanding?
- What is the distinction between the three forms of multicide?
- What is the relationship of mass murder to modernity?
- What is the 'Herostratos' Syndrome?
- How has the media influenced a moral panic?
- What theories and classifications explain mass murder types?

Reading assignments: MMM: Intro & Ch. 1- to page 4

Patterns and Prevalence of Mass Murder in 20th. Century America: Duwe. (OWL Readings - OR)

Ethical Problems of Mass Murder Coverage in the Mass Media: Cramer. (OR)

Jan. 18: What Are Mass Murders?

Questions to be addressed:

- What are the facts surrounding mass killers?
- What is the definition of mass murder?
- What is the incidence of mass murder?
- What types of 'Bifurcation' are there and why might it happen?
- What are the typologies?
- What is the most accepted typology?
- What are the issues with the typologies?
- What are some cross-national differences?
- What are the research issues?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 1- page 4 on

Shooting for Accuracy: Huff-Corzine et al. (OR)

The Routine of Mass Murder in China: Hilal et al. (OR)

Jan. 25: The Psychogenetics of Mass Killers

Questions to be addressed:

- What does it mean to say someone is insane?
- Are mass murderers insane?
- What is Autogenic Massacre?
- What are the motivations of mass murders?
- What are the contributing factors?
- What is murder by proxy?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 2

The Nature of Mass Murder & Autogenic Massacre: Bowers et al.
(OR)

The Autogenic (Self-Generated) Massacre: Mullen (OR)

Feb. 1: The Family Annihilator

Questions to be addressed:

- What are the traits of a family annihilator?
- What are the motivations of a family annihilator?
- What gains are expected from the murder?
- Who are the victims?
- What role does sexual gratification or humiliation of the victim play in the act?
- Are the motivations of females different than males?
- What role does alcohol or mental illness play?
- What are the predisposing &/ precipitating factors?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 6

Patterns of Multiple Family Homicide: Liem et al. (OR)

The Female Family Annihilator: Scott et al. (OR)

Feb. 8: The Disgruntled Employee

Questions to be addressed:

- What is the history of the term 'Going Postal'?
- What are the three forms of workplace violence?
- What are the characteristics of a workplace avenger?
- What is the impact of frustration and isolation?
- What are the three levels of personal violence in the workplace?
- Why is it important to be aware of this typology?
- What is an 'innovative perpetrator'?
- What is a 'psychological abstract'?
- What is the 'copycat' effect?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 7

Ragenomics (Part III) Going Postal: Ames. (OR)

Firing Back: Fox et al. (OR)

A Cross-Cultural Review of SMASHI: Hempel et al. (OR)

Feb. 15: The Ideological Mass Killer & The Set-and-Run Mass Killer

Questions to be addressed:

- How does the Ideological mass killer justify killing innocent people?
- What is the motivation for most ideological mass killers?
- What effect are they hoping to realize?
- What is the philosophy of this type of mass murderer?
- What is the role of 'hate' in these crimes?
- Define hate crimes – who do they target?
- What are key differences in set and run mass murderer compared to others?
- What is the primary motivation of set and run killers?
- What are the traits possessed by set and run killers that are not possessed by any other mass murderer?
- How is the target, anticipated victim, or innocent victim determined by the set and run killer?
- Of the three, which is most important to this killer?
- What is a sub-category of this type of killer?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 8

Mass Murder – an Analysis of Extreme Violence: Fox et al. (OR)

Tylenol Murders of 1982 PBS (OR)

The Solo Crusader: DeSa et al. (OR)

Feb. 22: No classes – Reading Week

Feb. 29: The Disciple Mass Killer

Questions to be addressed:

- What are the traits of a Disciple Mass Killer?
- What are the psychological characteristics of disciples?
- What is the power of the cult?
- What is the relationship of the killer to the leader?
- How are cult members controlled?
- What are the similarities between ideological and disciple killers?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 9
Charles Manson and the Family: Atchison et al. (OR)

Mar. 8: The Disgruntled Citizen Mass Killer

Questions to be addressed:

- Who are they?
- What are they rebelling against?
- What do they gain by killing their victims?
- What role does anger, revenge and violence play in the events?
- What is the major difference between the disgruntled employee and the disgruntled citizen?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 3
Race and Mass Murder in the US: Lankford (OR)
Debunking the Stereotype: Petee et al. (OR)
The Pseudocommando Mass Murderer: Knoll (OR)

Mar. 15: Youthful Killers – School Shooters

Questions to be addressed:

- What are some of the traits of school shooters?
- What are some of the dynamics involved in school shootings that make them different from other forms of mass killings?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 5
Animal Abuse as a Warning Sign of School Massacres: Arluke et al. (OR)
Psychological Profiles of School Shooters: Ferguson et al. (OR)
Campus Violence – Lessons From the Cases: Layden (OR)
Comparative Analysis of North American Adolescent and Adult Mass Murderers: Meloy et al. (OR)

Mar. 22: **In-Class Test**

Mar. 29: **Psychotic Killers, Gun Control, Mental Illness ...And What About the Victims?**

Questions to be addressed:

 What are the myths of Mass Murder?

 What are the similarities and differences between different types of mass killers?

Reading assignments: MMM: Ch. 4, 11

Mass Shootings in America: Fox et al. (OR)

Comparative Analysis of Suicide Terrorists, Rampage, Workplace and School Shooters: Lankford (OR)

Apr. 5: **Loose Ends.... &**

 In-class, one page summation of a question to be posed....