

**UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**

**Department of Sociology**

**Sociology 4437G 001 Advanced Sociology of Deviance: Mass Murderers**



Professor: Kim Ashby  
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Class Times: Thursdays - 1:30 - 4:30pm  
Class Room: 5235 SSC  
Office Hours: Mondays 11:30 – 12:30 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 theories 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%
Reading synopses	10%
Case Leaders	25%
Multiple Choice Questions	5%
Article & Synopsis	15%
Final exam (mx choice)	35%

## 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.

## 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 and insert "**Soc 4437**" in subject line of e-mail. However, I do not read e-mails on the weekends.

## Plagiarism

Students must write their article 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. The two page article synopses by each of the leaders will be uploaded to the appropriate 'Student Articles' date in the 'Forum' tab on the class web site before 9:30am on the Wednesday before the Thursday when the class leaders present.

## 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.

## **Grade Distribution**

### **Sociology courses at the 4400-level**

Means in the range of 78-82%

## **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](http://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](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](http://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](http://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](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.