

The University of Western Ontario
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Sociology 4437F 200: Mass Murderers

FALL 2021



Professor: Kim Ashby

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Class: **Zoom Synchronous** on Tuesdays at 1:30pm

Office Hours: By appointment

OWL: <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 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 mass murder, to understand mass murder from a sociological framework, to critically analyze media views of mass murder, to evaluate mass killing within a criminological framework, and to contextualize mass 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.

https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2021A&courses%5B0%5D=200_UW/SOC4437F

External ebook link: https://www.amazon.ca/Inside-Minds-Mass-Murderers-They-ebook/dp/B004NSUVI6/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=inside+the+minds+of+mass+murderers&qid=1627310142&sr=8-1

Required readings: (access Readings on OWL homepage)

No exams....

Method of Evaluation

Class Participation	30%
PP Presentation	40%
Case Analyses (10)	50%

COURSE PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS:

Students must have access to a stable internet connection and a laptop or computer. Classes will be held via Zoom on Tuesdays at 1:30pm. Please post an introductory comment about yourself in the 'Introductory' Forum between September 8th and 14th.

Weekly Class Participation (40%)

Students will be expected to attend Zoom lectures, having read the assigned materials. They will be prepared to answer questions posed during power point presentations, as well as contribute ideas, in a given discussion.

Students will *not* be assessed on the Introductory class or the Guest lecture class. Attendance will be taken in all classes.

Power Point Presentations (30%)

One or two students will be randomly assigned to a given lecture and be expected to develop a two-hour power point covering the key concepts, theories and ideas from all the readings. The power point must be set-up to ask many questions that class members can answer. The power point presentation is not to give all the ideas (lots of writing on each pp), but through questions, exercises and cases, elicit responses from class members.

Case Analysis of an Example of a Type of Mass Murderer (30%)

In the final project, students will choose a mass murderer and develop a comprehensive analysis of the killer.

At a minimum, the case analyses will examine the chosen killer in relation to:

1. Predisposers
2. Precipitants
3. Facilitators

Also....

4. Traits Graph (specific MM trait graphs listed in Course Content)
 Motivation
 Anticipated gain

Spatial mobility
Victim selectivity
Victim relationship
Victim traits

5. Cumulative Strain Theory (CST)

Apply the 5 stages of CST to the killer (for a given killer, not all stages may be known, but one can hypothesize)

6. Incorporation of all *relevant readings and concepts* to the analysis. **** Important!

The case analysis will be uploaded to the designated Assignment folder by 5pm on Wednesday, December 8th.

Important Editing Note: Failure to edit for grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, tense alignment, noun/verb agreement will result in a *significant loss of marks*.

How To Contact Me

Please email/ message (OWL) me to discuss any questions you have regarding the course or if you need to speak with me, then we can set-up an appointment. 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 assignments 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.

Late Assignments

If you miss a 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 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 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:

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/academic_consideration.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.