

## AMH 3931 - History of Delinquency

fall 2025, 3 credits (course number 28348)

Tuesdays, pd. 7 (1:55-2:45 pm), Thursdays pd. 7-8 (1:55-3:50 pm)

Little Hall, LIT 0339

Instructor: Marcus Chatfield, [mchatfield@ufl.edu](mailto:mchatfield@ufl.edu)



The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "Policeman and young boy arguing, surrounded by a crowd of onlookers, New York City, 1914" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed August 8, 2025. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c223d760-c55e-012f-e9eb-58d385a7bc34>.

### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course introduces the history of delinquency as a legal construct in the United States since 1825. Broadly defined as the adult conception of criminal and problematic youth behavior, we will examine what delinquency meant during the past 200 years. This course also introduces the historical responses to delinquency. We will examine the antidelinquency efforts deployed by families, social workers, police departments, judges, clinicians, politicians, and legislators. They tried out a range of credos, practices, policies, theories, programs, and laws. Their ideas about morality, gender, race, citizenship, and human development informed their attempts to define, understand, and solve the social problem of unwanted youth behavior. The meaning of delinquency changed along with cultural tides, politics, and the social and psychological sciences. This course introduces the legal and institutional strategies that evolved in response to changing patterns of criminal and problematic youth behavior.

### **The Legal History Certificate and History Major**

This course counts toward Group A for students who are pursuing the Legal History Certificate. It counts as an AMH course for History majors and minors.

### **Prerequisites**

Three History credits.

### **Required Reading Materials**

On average, we will read and discuss two chapters each week. Our reading list includes primary and secondary sources. All materials will be provided free of charge on Canvas or may be accessed through Library West. In addition to several journal articles listed below in the course schedule, we will read selected chapters from the following books:

Tera Eva Agyepong, *The Criminalization of Black Children: Race, Gender, and Delinquency in Chicago's Juvenile Justice System, 1899-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

Albert Deutsch, *Our Rejected Children* (Little, Brown & Company, 1950).

Barry C. Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Kathleen Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Robert M. Mennel, *Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquency in the United States, 1825-1940* (Hanover: The University Press of New England, 1973).

Geoff K. Ward, *The Black Child Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)

Kenneth Wooden, *Weeping in the Playtime of Others: America's Incarcerated Children* (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976)

### **Instructional Methods**

Classes will consist of reading discussions with occasional presentations by the instructor for context. For our discussions to work, students must complete the assigned readings before class. Please bring your reading notes and questions for discussion. Please be ready to participate with at least one comment or question each time we meet.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Grades will be based on your participation each week and on a total of seven assignments:

- Reading Response Papers (4)
- Newspaper Article Presentations (2)
- One Lived Experience Project (1)

**Reading Response Papers** – (Four altogether, four to five pages each, 15% each, 60% of total)

Every three or four weeks, take-home essays will (a) compare and contrast each of the assigned authors' perspectives. Your essays will (b) identify key historical developments, (c) evaluate the authors' explanations, and (d) analyze what is missing or left unanswered.

PLEASE NOTE: All work included in the Reading Response Papers must be completed in the assigned Google Docs portal in Canvas.

- (1) Sep. 15, essay due on Weeks 2-4; (2) Oct. 6, essay on Weeks 5-7;
- (3) Nov. 3, essay on Weeks 8-11; (4) Dec. 3, essay on Weeks 12-15.

**Newspaper Article Presentations** – (2 presentations, 2.5% each, 5% of total)

This is a search for great newspaper articles. Each student will present two articles of their choice. It's a chance to share stories that illuminate contemporary discourse on delinquency and antidelinquency. For each presentation, select one article written during that week's time period. Articles should relate to a topic from the readings and provide helpful or missing context. Come to class ready to explain the story and how it fits with course readings. Please choose from any of the Thursdays listed in our sign-up sheet (anytime other than Week 1, 2, 8, 13, or 15).

**Lived Experience Project** – (Due December 8, 15% of total)

Use at least one primary source that reveals the lived experience of at least one person. The goal is to tell a story while demonstrating your understanding of key elements of the course. The purpose of this project is to bring historical changes to life by featuring first-hand accounts about the human experience of delinquency and antidelinquency. This can be a multimedia project, but it must include a written textual analysis that utilizes course materials in a way that demonstrates a firm grasp of their content.

**Participation** – (20% of total)

Participation means showing up with knowledge of the day's reading assignment, ready and willing to share your thoughts and questions with the class. If you are afraid to talk in class, we will figure out a way to make it work. Participation will be graded with in-class assignments. Participation also includes a written introduction post on Canvas followed by a reflection assignment on the last day.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1 – Introduction** [Aug. 21]

Thursday

Syllabus

Week One Introduction posts on Canvas

### **Week 2 – Foundations** [Aug 26 & 28]

Tuesday

Congressional Research Service, “Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Background and Current Issues,” 1992.

Thursday

Barry C. Feld, ch. 1 “The Social Construction of Childhood and Adolescence,” (p. 17-45) in *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

### **Week 3 – Before the Juvenile Courts, 1825 to 1899** [Sep. 2 & 4]

Tuesday

Robert M. Mennel, “Introduction,” and Chapter 1, “Houses of Refuge, 1825-1860,” in *Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquency in the United States, 1825-1940* (Hanover: The University Press of New England, 1973).

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Mennel, Chapter 2, “Preventive Agencies and Reform Schools, 1850-1890”

### **Week 4 - Establishing the Juvenile Court** [Sep. 9 & 11]

Tuesday

Feld, ch. 2 (p. 46-78) “The Juvenile Court and the Rehabilitative Ideal”

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Kathleen Jones, Intro (1-15) and Ch. 1 (16-37) “Constructing the Troublesome Child, in *Taming the Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

**Week 5 - Racialized Rehabilitative Ideal, 1890s to 1920s** [Sep. 16 & 18]

Monday, Sep. 15, essay on Weeks 2-4 due by 9:00 AM

Tuesday

Geoff K. Ward, ch 3, “Birth of a Juvenile Court,” in *The Black Child Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Tera Eva Agyepong, Introduction and ch. 1, 1-37 in “Race-ing Innocence,” in *The Criminalization of Black Children: Race, Gender, and Delinquency in Chicago’s Juvenile Justice System, 1899-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

**Week 6 - Uplift and Guide, 1900 to 1930** [Sep. 23 & 25]

Tuesday

Jones, ch. 4, Popularizing Child Guidance, (91-119) 1920s to 1930s

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Ward ch. 5, “Uplifting Black Citizens Delinquent: The Vanguard Movement, 1900-1930.”

**Week 7 - Constructing Black Delinquents, 1930s** [Sep. 30 & Oct. 2]

Tuesday

Agyepong, ch. 3, “Constructing a Black Female Delinquent”

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Agyepong, ch. 4, “Flight, Fright, and Freedom” & Epilogue

**Week 8 Postwar Reformers, 1942 to 1959** [Oct 7 & 9]

Monday, Oct. 6, essay on Weeks 5-7 due by 9:00 AM.

Tuesday

Albert Deutsch, chapters 1-4, and 17 in *Our Rejected Children* (Little, Brown & Company, 1950).



Thursday

Albert Elias, "Highfields: A New Slant in the Treatment of Youthful Offenders," *Crime & Delinquency* 2, no. 2 (1956): 163-167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001112875600200208>

[video documentary] "The Delinquents, Part One: A Boy Named Bob," aired January 18, 1959, (25:20), and "The Delinquents, Part Two: The Highfields Story," aired January 25, 1959, (25:20), *The Twentieth Century* [Walter Cronkite television program].

**Week 9 Ford Foundation, 1959-1966** [Oct. 14 & 16]

Tuesday

[booklet] Walter E. Ashley, *The Society of the Streets* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1962).

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

LaMar T. Empey, and Jerome Rabow, "The Provo Experiment in Delinquency Rehabilitation." *American Sociological Review* 26, no. 5 (1961): 679-96, <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/2090198>.

[Two letters to the editor] Whitney H. Gordon, LaMar T. Empey, and Jerome Rabow, "Communist Rectification Programs and Delinquency Rehabilitation Programs: A Parallel?" *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 2 (1962), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2089683>.

**Week 10 1960s and 1970s Reforming Juvenile Court Process** [Oct. 28 & 30]

Tuesday

Elizabeth Hinton, "Creating Crime: The Rise and Impact of National Juvenile Delinquency Programs in Black Urban Neighborhoods," *Journal of Urban History* 41, no. 5 (2015): 808-824, DOI: 10.1177/0096144215589946.

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Feld, ch. 3, 79-108, "The Constitutional Domestication of the Juvenile Court"

**Week 11 1960s and 1970s War on Drugs** [Oct. 21 & 23]

Tuesday

Matthew D. Lassiter, "Impossible Criminals: The Suburban Imperatives of America's War on Drugs," *The Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (June 2015): 126-140, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jav243>.

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Feld ch. 5, p. 166-188 “Social Control and Noncriminal Status Offenders”

**Week 12 1970s Privatization** [Nov. 4 & 6]

Monday, Nov. 3, essay on Weeks 8-11 due by 9:00 AM.

Tuesday

Preface (iii-v), Introduction (1-2), “Behavior Modification and the Courts: The Legal Background” (3-10), “Behavior Modification Technology” (11-17), and “The Seed” (182-200), in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Individual Rights and the Federal Role in Behavior Modification: A Study Prepared by the Staff of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED103726.pdf>.

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Kenneth Wooden, chapters 8, 9, and 18 (p. 95-117, 232-248) in *Weeping in the Playtime of Others: America’s Incarcerated Children* (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976)

**Week 13 1980s to 1990s War on Drugs, War on Violence** [Nov. 13]

Tuesday

Barry L. Beyerstein, "Treatment, Thought Reform, and the Road to Hell," 245-251, in Arnold. S. Trebach and Kevin. B. Zeese (eds.), *Strategies for Change: New Directions in Drug Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Drug Policy Foundation, 1992).

Thursday

Feld, ch. 6, 189-244 “Delinquent or Criminal?”

**Week 14 Twenty-First Century Delinquency** [Nov. 18 & 20]

Tuesday

Leslie Paik, Preface, ch. 2 & 3, in *Discretionary Justice: Looking Inside a Juvenile Drug Court* (Rutgers University Press, 2011)

Thursday

Newspaper Article Presentations

Alexandra Cox, Introduction and ch. 4, “The Responsibility Trap,” in *Trapped in a Vice: The Consequences of Confinement for Young People* (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

**THANKSGIVING BREAK (Nov. 24-28)**

**Week 15 Delinquency Today [Dec. 2]**

Tuesday (LAST DAY OF CLASS)

Daniel L. Hatcher, “Commodified Inequality: Racialized Harm to Children and Families in the Injustice Enterprise” *Family Court Review* 61 (no. 2): 341-358,  
<https://doi.org/10.1111%2Ffcrr.12709>.

Final Projects optional show-n-tell for feedback from class.

Wednesday, Dec. 3, essay on Weeks 12-15 due by 9:00 AM.

**Week 16 – No class**

Monday, Dec. 8, Lived Experience Project due by 9:00 AM.

Final reflection—follow up on Day-One Introduction post

**This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).**