

SOC 1001.01 Guns: An American Obsession

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M 4:00-5:30pm (one 45-min. session: 1/9; eight weekly 90-min. sessions: 1/23-3/20)

Course Description

Americans own more guns than in any other Western nation. Where does this want/need for guns originate? Why are many Americans attached to their deadly weapons and why are citizens in many states demanding the right to walk about with guns; on the streets, in schools and in our parks? This seminar looks at how guns became a part of American culture and examines some of the facts and myths that are attached to gun ownership, paying particular attention to the part that media play in our perception of risk. Should we be afraid?

Students will be asked to explore the various gun laws in different states and the impact that those laws have on police, criminals and ordinary citizens. We will also discuss the issue of guns and suicide and the controversial topic of guns on college campuses. For the final project, students will conduct interviews about attitudes toward guns and prepare a presentation for the class.

Evaluation

Research on chosen state gun laws/stand your ground laws (20%)

Weekly response papers (4 x 10% each = 40%)

Final project on gun incident of choice (20%)

Attendance/Participation (20%)

Required Texts

Readings will be posted on Blackboard or distributed as handouts