

CJ 325: CRIMINAL JUSTICE THEORY

REACTION ESSAY #1

DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 28th BY 5:00 P.M.

NORM VIOLATION ASSIGNMENT

PURPOSE:

Norms are instructions for accepted or expected behaviors. When we violate the unwritten rules for appropriate social behavior, we quickly learn the surprising power of even relatively minor and usually invisible social norms. The purpose of this assignment is to explore the power of social norms and make you conscious of how these subtle norms shape our everyday behavior and the consequences of violating norms.

Please choose TWO norm violations to complete this assignment.

EXAMPLES OF NORM VIOLATIONS:

- 1) Position yourself six inches from an **acquaintance's (not a stranger's!)** nose during a conversation.
- 2) Stand on your chair in a restaurant and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3) Continuously jump up and down while waiting in a checkout line at a grocery store.
- 4) Get into an elevator that is crowded with strangers, and after the doors close, introduce yourself to the entire group.
- 5) Ask someone you don't know for his/her seat in a public place (e.g. at the union or the library). Stay in the seat for at least 2 minutes.
- 6) Wear unusual clothing to a restaurant or another public place (e.g. wear your hooded sweatshirt & jeans backwards like Kris Kross).
- 7) Go into an elevator (elevator should have at least 1 stranger in it) and face the wall of the elevator rather than the front for the entire ride.
- 8) Eat an entire meal at a restaurant or the union that usually requires using utensils with your hands (e.g. eat mashed potatoes and gravy or spaghetti with your fingers).
- 9) Talk to yourself in public.
- 10) Dress like a member of the opposite sex for an entire day.
- 11) Tie a stuffed animal on a leash and drag it through a public place.
- 12) Listen to music using headphones and sing very loudly in public.
- 13) Walk around a public area holding hands with a person of the same sex (for at least ten minutes).

***You may also violate any other norm you choose, as long as you DO NOT risk harming yourself or others. DO NOT do anything that involves breaking the law, disrupting class or a public event, sexual behavior or sexually explicit speech, taking something that is not yours, insulting someone, using illegal substances, or saying something that is threatening or hurtful to others! If you do any of these, you will automatically receive a failing grade for the assignment ***

WRITING YOUR PAPER:

In a minimum of three double-spaced typed pages (1 inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman Font) please include **ALL of the following:**

- In detail, describe what 2 social norms you violated and how you went about doing so (exactly what you did, where you violated the norms, the types of people present).
- Describe what factors made it easy or difficult for you to violate the norms.
- Describe what your own **AND** others' reactions **BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER** each violation.
 - E.g. Did anyone say anything to you, were you stared at, were you ignored?
- What did the experience of violating norms teach you about the power of the situation?
 - E.g. If you did this act in another setting, would you have received the same reaction or If you did this act around a different group of people, would the reactions have been different?
- What did the experience of violating norms teach you about the experiences of people who don't "fit in?"
- In **YOUR OWN WORDS**, define "norms."
- Identify three examples of prison norms from the book *Life in Prison*.
- How are the norms in prison (from the ones in the book *Life in Prison*) different from the norms in society?
 - Make sure you provide specific examples **AND WHY THEY ARE DIFFERENT!**
- How could the understanding of norms and the differences between norms in society and in prison help criminal justice agents change the policies/programs that are currently in prison?
 - PLEASE BE SPECIFIC AND THOROUGHLY EXPLAIN YOUR ARGUMENT!

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The best papers will include vivid descriptions of the situations and reactions.

- Are format requirements met?
 - Paper is typed, double-spaced, few mechanical or grammatical errors
- Are 2 norms violated?
- Are all questions/content requirements addressed in a thoughtful and insightful way?
- Do you have your last name & page number on each page?
- Does your Heading look like this & be single-spaced:
 - Your First & Last Name
 - Dr. Wendi Goodlin
 - CJ 325: Criminal Justice Theory
 - August 28, 2009
 - Paper #1 Social Norms

***This paper is due on Friday, August 28th by 5:00 p.m. For every day late (includes weekends) your grade on the paper will drop one letter-grade. ***