

**CRIJ 4300 – Communities and Crime**  
**CRN 15848**  
**Fall 2023**

**PROFESSOR:**

**Hernandez, Alma Angelica**  
Department of Criminal Justice  
E-mail: aahernandez4@utep.edu

**CLASS DATES:**

August 8, 2023 - October 16, 2023  
Final Due on October 15, 2023

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Virtual Office Hours are by appointment. You may contact me via UTEP email and can meet with students via phone and zoom. Please allow 24 hours to respond on weekdays and 48 hours over the weekend.

\*\*\*\*\*

**CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will provide a detailed overview of communities and crime by examining the connection between crime and various aspects of community context. The central question our course study seeks to answer is: “Why do neighborhoods vary in rates of crime and punishment?”. In addressing this question, we will study existing criminological theories focusing on ecological, social-structural, and cultural aspects of community/neighborhood life. Thus, we will pay attention to the intersections of deviant behavior and the criminal justice system within the structures of class, race, gender, and power inequalities. Topics explored include social disorganization, collective efficacy, the concentration of poverty, racial profiling, juvenile delinquency, policing, the war on drugs, and mass incarceration. As a class, we will critically analyze existing empirical research.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Describe and synthesize the dominant theories and conceptual models in criminology most applied to the study of communities and crime.
- Identify factors that lead to high crime levels in neighborhoods/communities.
- Assess, synthesize, and critique the major theoretical debates in this field.
- Develop objective, critical thinking skills and the ability to discuss pressing issues related to neighborhood crime (i.e., high crime rates, segregation, policing of marginalized communities).
  - In doing so, challenge your beliefs and the social context from which these beliefs occur.
- Evaluate, apply, and critique theoretical and empirical research regarding communities.

**COURSE TEXT AND READINGS:**

This CRIJ 4300 course does not require students to purchase textbooks, as we will use materials available through the UTEP Library. Given our current economy, I worked hard to select materials at no additional cost to you while maintaining high academic standards. The reading material comes from books you are likely to find on the shelf of a respectable criminologist [and affordable in print if you wish to purchase a physical copy]. Thus, you will access all materials through Blackboard. Each weekly class module will include the reading material for the week. You must access these materials for the course on Blackboard, so ensure you have access today.

- Wilcox, Pamela, Francis T. Cullen, & Ben Feldmeyer. 2017. *Communities and Crime: An Enduring American Challenge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. ISBN-10: 1592139736

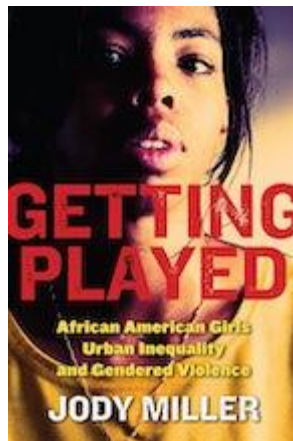
**Note:** This book is also available in an audiobook format if you wish to purchase that option on Amazon

[https://www.amazon.com/Communities-Crime-Enduring-Challenge-Landscape/dp/B0B4F2VQ1K/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=2LNFG4JJL0YJU&keywords=communities+and+crime&qid=1692677209&srefix=communities+and+crim%2Caps%2C152&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Communities-Crime-Enduring-Challenge-Landscape/dp/B0B4F2VQ1K/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2LNFG4JJL0YJU&keywords=communities+and+crime&qid=1692677209&srefix=communities+and+crim%2Caps%2C152&sr=8-1)

- FRANCIS, T. C. (2021). *Criminological Theory: Past to Present*. OXFORD University Press US.

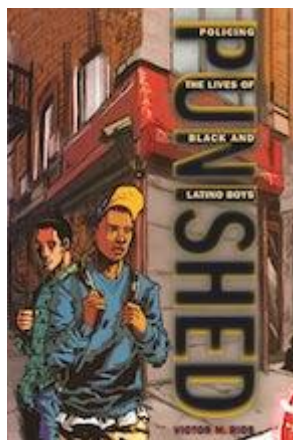
**AND your choice of ONE of the following books for the class final in which you will review a criminological ethnography.**

- Miller, J. (2008). *Getting played: African American girls, urban inequality, and gendered violence* (Vol. 9). NYU Press. (You can access the full e-book through UTEP's library resources <https://www.utep.edu/library/research/library-search.html>).



- Rios, V. M. (2011). *Punished: Policing the lives of Black and Latino boys*. NYU Press. (You can access the full e-book through UTEP's library resources <https://www.utep.edu/library/research/library-search.html>).

**Note:** This option is also available in an audiobook format if you wish to purchase that option on Amazon. [https://www.amazon.com/Punished-Victor-M-Rios-audiobook/dp/B07192MTSY/ref=tmm\\_aud\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Punished-Victor-M-Rios-audiobook/dp/B07192MTSY/ref=tmm_aud_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)



## **GRADING:**

**Your grading will be based on the following point criteria:**

Syllabus Quiz	(10 pts)	10 Points*
Weekly Discussions	(40 pts X 10)	400 Points
Quizzes	(100 pts X 3)	300 Points
Final Proposal	(100 pts)	100 Points
Final Book Review	(200 pts)	200 Points

## **GRADING SCALE: 1000 possible points**

- A** = 900-1000
- B** = 800-899
- C** = 700-799
- D** = 600-699
- F** = 599-below

**NOTE: Grades are assigned according to the total points earned.**

**\* Extra credit points**

**Refer to Blackboard for more information regarding the grading criteria for each assignment**

The letter grade for the class is determined by the number of points you accumulate during the semester, so every point will count. Your points will be recorded in the “My grades” section of Blackboard. Every assignment a grade will be recorded by the point values—not percentages.

## **DETAILS OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **I. Final PAPER:**

You will complete a book review for the book of choice from the list above and make progress on it throughout the semester. I am looking for you to illustrate your learning and understanding of the concepts we cover throughout the semester; therefore, the more concepts and ideas identified from the text and class discussions there are, the better your paper will be. The Final

Paper is due on **Sunday, 10/15/23**. *Refer to Blackboard for more detailed instructions and the grading rubric.*

## **II. Final Paper Proposal**

You are expected to devote time to completing the book review paper for the class final throughout the class. An initial rough draft is due on **Sunday, 09/24/23**, in which you will identify the ethnography you choose from the two options provided. The objective is to get you started on your final early instead of leaving all the work for the last week of class. *Refer to Blackboard for more detailed instructions and the grading rubric.*

## **III. Discussion Participation**

A significant amount of your grade will come from weekly discussions in which you will want to carefully address all parts of the question and connect it to the class material. The class schedule lists ten discussions that serve as the online classroom's participation and active engagement components. Your participation in our discussion forum should be scholarly and thorough.

Regarding expectations, you **must address all parts of the main discussion topic and reply to two students'/peers' discussion posts** in a manner that provokes thought. You must respond with more than "Good job" or "I agree." Your response to your peers during discussion posts should provide evidence that you read and reflected on the class material. In addition, discussions for this class should not focus solely on opinions. They are about arguments that are informed by the reading materials that have been assigned. Thus, I encourage you to guide your discussion based on Bloom's Taxonomy of higher-order thinking and keep in mind that the point of discussions is not to reach definitive answers but to keep the conversation going (please see the guide and figure below and the section on strategies for critical thinking at the end of the syllabus).

### **ONLINE ETIQUETTE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:**

You must maintain an academic attitude and uphold UTEP policies. Being disrespectful, using profanity or unprofessional behavior will not be tolerated. All your online communications must be composed with fairness, honesty, and tact.

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

**Language:** Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

**Respect:** A Web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

**Be Forgiving:** If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best

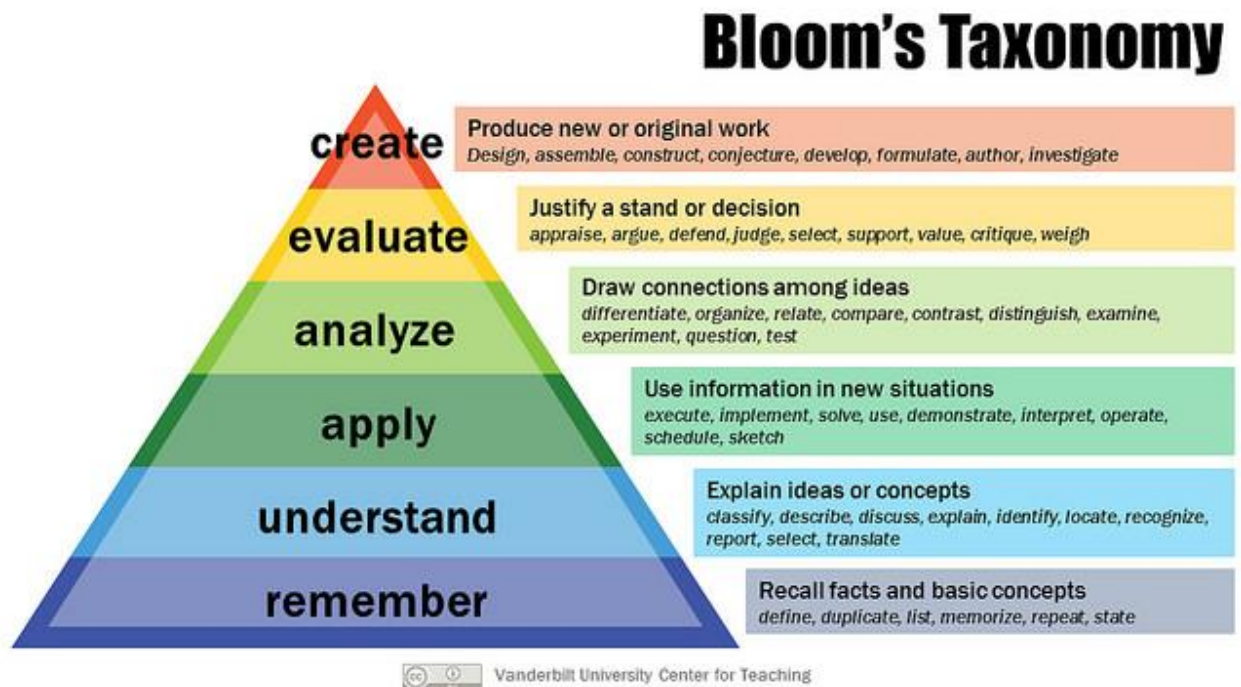
be cleared up by the professor.

**This is Permanent:** Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent to the group, there is no taking it back. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

**Edit Your Work:** The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word processor before posting them.

**Test for Clarity:** Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

**Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point:** Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear point, and you need to stick to the subject. Do not waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.



### LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Due dates specified in this syllabus. Plan accordingly. You can submit all assignments early. Weekly Modules will be made available every Sunday and you will be able to access them at any time. Late assignments will be deducted 10% for each day the assignment is late. Assignments submitted more than 2 days late, will not be accepted.

IV. **QUIZZES:** There will be three quizzes, worth 100 points each (**See our class schedule for quiz dates**)

- **Quizzes** will consist of a combination of Multiple choice, True/False, and/or Essay questions.
- **Quizzes must be submitted in Blackboard by the due date listed on our class schedule.**

#### **MAKE-UP QUIZ POLICY:**

- Each student is expected to take the quizzes as scheduled.
- **To make-up a quiz, students MUST email me (aahernandez4@utep.edu) prior to taking it late to confirm new submission deadline and ensure it is graded after the due date. Student must have a verifiable excuse and it is the instructor's discretion as to what is a valid excuse.**
- Students are allowed one make-up quiz for the entire semester.

#### **EMAIL PROTOCOL**

When e-mailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name that you are registered under. This will help me locate you and get you an answer in a timely manner.

#### **V. Important University Policies**

##### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on an exam, turning in someone else's assignment from a previous class, or plagiarism: "(1) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with citations or biographical reference; (2) unacknowledged use of work/materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; (3) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators."

I take cases of alleged academic dishonesty seriously. For students who are found to have allegedly engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, the case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR). While the case is being investigated by OSCCR, an "I" (Incomplete) will be assigned until the case is resolved. If the student is found by



OSCCR to have engaged in misconduct, sanctions may include a failing grade on the assignment or exam in question, a failing grade in the course, suspension, or dismissal from the University. See <http://www.utep.edu/dos>

### **UTEP DROP POLICY:**

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of “W” before the course drop deadline and with a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email.

OR

I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

### **TECHNOLOGY POLICIES & TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS**

For all technological, hardware, software problems, lost files, and/or questions with Blackboard, as well as difficulties you are having during an exam, contact Technology Support Help Desk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tech support is set up to specifically address technical questions and problems about Blackboard. Professors are not technical support staff.

**Phone:** 915.747.4357 or toll free: 1-877-382-0491

**E-mail:** [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu)

**Website:** <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=74092>

In Person: UTEP Library, Room 300

### **CHECK YOUR TECHNOLOGY**

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP’s Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP Help Desk as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

**Phone:** 915.747.4357 or toll free: 1-877-382-0491

**E-mail:** [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu)

**Website:** <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=74092>

In Person: UTEP Library, Room 300

## **VI. Class Schedule**

Every Monday, a new module will open in Blackboard with a power point and reading materials for you to download and review (except for the last week of class because that week is about giving you time to complete the class final).



MODULE	REQUIRED READINGS	GRADED ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION DEADLINES	NOTES
<b>Week 1</b>  <i>Introduction: What is a neighborhood and why should we care?</i>  08/28/23 to 09/03/23	A brief Overview of <a href="https://www.opengeography.org/ch-9-urban-geography.html">Urban Geography</a> (see <a href="https://www.opengeography.org/ch-9-urban-geography.html">https://www.opengeography.org/ch-9-urban-geography.html</a> )  Wilcox et al.: Chapter 1	Complete Syllabus Quiz by Sunday 09/03/23 (11:59 pm)  Discussion #1: Introduce yourself to class and answer the discussion question.	DQ #1 Initial response to instructor's post due by Thursday 08/31/23 (11:59 pm)  Respond to another student's response by Sunday 09/2/23 (11:59 pm)	Refer to Blackboard for class module, course readings, discussion guidelines, Final paper instructions, and class modules
<b>Week 2</b>  <i>The Chicago School Perspective</i>  09/04/23 to 09/10/23	Wilcox et al.: Chapter 2  Cullen, F. T., & Agnew, R. (2018). The Chicago School: The city, social disorganization, and crime...	Discussion #2	DQ #2 Initial response due by Thursday 09/07/23 (11:59 pm)  Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 09/10/23 (11:59 pm)	Refer to Blackboard to view class module & readings
<b>Week 3</b>  <i>Social Disorganization and Poverty</i>  09/11/23 to 09/17/23	Wilcox et al.: Chapter 3 & 4	Discussion #3  <b><u>Quiz 1 due by Sunday 09/17/23 (11:59 pm)</u></b>	DQ #3 Initial response due by Thursday 09/14/23 (11:59 pm)  Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 09/17/23 (11:59 pm)	Refer to Blackboard to view class module & readings
<b>Week 4</b>  <i>Culture &amp; The Code of the Street</i>  09/18/23 to 09/24/23	Wilcox et al.: Chapter 5  Anderson, E. (1994). The code of the streets. Atlantic monthly, 273(5), 81-94.	Discussion #4  <b><u>Paper Proposal due by Sunday 09/24/23 (11:59 pm)</u></b>	DQ #4 Initial response due by Thursday 09/21/23 (11:59 pm)  Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 09/24/23 (11:59 pm)	Refer to Blackboard to view class module & readings
<b>Week 5</b>	Wilcox et al.: Chapter 8	Discussion #5	DQ #5 Initial response due by Thursday	Refer to Blackboard to view class module, readings & Quiz 2 instructions

<p><i>The Role of Collective Efficacy</i></p> <p>09/25/23 to 10/01/23</p>		<p><b><u>Quiz 2 - due by Sunday 10/01/23 (11:59 pm)</u></b></p>	<p>09/28/23 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 10/01/23 (11:59 pm)</p>	
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p><i>Current topics: What about race and crime in neighborhoods?</i></p> <p>10/02/23 to 10/08/23</p>	<p>Wilcox et al.: Chapter 9</p> <p>Hernandez, A. A., Vélez, M. B., &amp; Lyons, C. J. (2016). The Racial Invariance Thesis and Neighborhood Crime: Beyond the Black–White Divide. <i>Race and Justice</i>.</p>	<p>Discussion #6</p> <p><b><u>Quiz 3 is available and due by 10/08/23 (11:59 pm)</u></b></p>	<p>DQ #6 Initial response due by Thursday 10/05/23 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 10/08/23 (11:59 pm)</p>	<p>Refer to Blackboard to view class module &amp; readings</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p><i>Finals Week: Lessons Learned/What can we do today?</i></p> <p>10/09/23 to 10/15/23</p>	<p>Read ethnography of choice for final paper</p>	<p>Discussion #7</p> <p><b><u>Final paper due by Sunday 10/15/23 (11:59 pm)</u></b></p>	<p>DQ #7 Initial response due by Thursday 10/12/23 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 10/15/23 (11:59 pm)</p>	<p>Refer to Blackboard to view class module &amp; readings</p>

**\*I reserve the right to add assignments if necessary and amend the schedule to suit the needs of the class.**

**VII. Resources, References, Etc.**

[Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics](#)

[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

**STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING CRITICAL THINKING**

- **Cultivate a Healthy Skepticism.**

- Critical thinkers do not take information at face value or trust their gut reaction. They ask questions and investigate claims to determine if there is sufficient evidence.
- **Be Open-Minded and Humble.**
  - If you find information that undermines your values, you may be reluctant to give it credence. However, critical thinkers understand that they do not have all the answers. They seek out other perspectives and do not immediately discount information that contradicts their assumptions.
- **Keep a Reflective Journal.**
  - Critical thinkers are honest with themselves. They are quick to point out their own biases and understand how they may be influenced by their past experiences or feelings. To facilitate this honest reflection, keep a journal where you record your thoughts, values, and beliefs, and how they change as you encounter different people and situations.
- **Follow the Critical Thinking Process.**
  - When faced with a problem or question, work through the steps of the critical thinking process (described below). Once you have done so repeatedly, it will start to become second nature. For the first few times, you may want to write out the steps and your responses to the reflective questions for each step.

### **The Critical Thinking Process\***

1) **Select the problem or question you want to answer.**

2) **Identify assumptions.** An assumption—meaning something that you automatically accept as true, based on your upbringing, values, or beliefs—can be immediately apparent to you or hidden. To determine what these assumptions are, talk to others, view video programs, read texts, and free write in a journal on the problem or question. How you respond reveals your assumptions.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What do I assume to be true about the problem?
  - What do I assume to be true about the people affected by the problem?
  - What do I assume to be the correct solution?
  - Why?

3) **Check accuracy and validity.** At this stage in the process, conduct research to see if your assumptions are correct. The type of research depends on the type of problem you want to solve.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What research can I do to test my assumptions?
  - Is this research credible?
  - How does the research support or refute my assumptions?

4) **Find alternative perspectives.** This step is an extension of Step 3. Part of critical thinking is discovering perspectives that contradict or clash with your own. These perspectives can show

how your original thinking was flawed or incomplete. To discover a true solution, it is important to investigate many different viewpoints during the research phase.

- **Reflective question for this step:**

- In what way(s) do I need to adjust my thinking?

5) **Take informed action.** The next step in the process is to decide or pursue a solution, based on the thorough research you conducted.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**

- What is the best course of action for this problem?
- Why?

6) **Analyze the action.** After any decision or solution has been applied, it is a good idea to analyze that action to determine if it had the desired effect.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**

- What were the results of the action?
- Were those results intended? If not, what were the flaws in my reasoning that may have led to an inappropriate action?
- What about my thinking process do I need to change for next time?

\*Adapted from Brookfield, S. (2007). Developing critical thinkers. Retrieved from <https://www.mnsu.edu/grants/ipesl/Stephen%20Brookfield%20Mankato%20Pkt.pdf>