

CRJU 741 CRIMINOLOGY

Spring 2008

Tuesday 5:00-7:30 pm

Instructor: Dr. Abby Fagan

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5 pm, or by appointment

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OVERVIEW

This course will familiarize students with the major theories proposed to explain involvement in criminal activities. We will review both classical and contemporary theoretical explanations, concentrating on the latter. There will be an emphasis on developing critical thinking skills when evaluating theories and research related to crime. This means going beyond memorizing facts, to evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of criminological research during discussions, written assignments, and exams. The course will also emphasize the application of criminological theory to preventing criminal behavior.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Summarize the types of crimes that occur most frequently in the United States and typical characteristics of offenders.
- Evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the major theoretical explanations for criminal involvement.
- Identify and explain successful strategies for preventing offending behaviors and how these strategies are related to criminological theory.
- State your own position regarding the theory(ies) that best explain why individuals commit crimes.

GROUND RULES FOR BEHAVIOR DURING CLASS

During our discussions and written assignments, we will all agree to:

- 1) Acknowledge that we all have different experiences based on race, class, sex, age and sexuality. Be aware that there are students in the class who have been involved in the criminal justice system as either victims or offenders. Please be respectful of others' experiences, do not judge your peers, and be mindful of the impact these experiences have had on people's lives.
- 2) Make our classroom a place where no one is made to feel embarrassed or ashamed. We will respect others and will NOT: interrupt, yell at, or insult others. We do not have to agree with one another, but we must be able to discuss our differences in a respectful manner.
- 3) Refrain from rude behavior, including arriving late or leaving early, sleeping, reading outside materials, or having private conversations with others. **WE WILL ALL TURN OFF CELL PHONES WHILE CLASS IS IN SESSION.**
- 4) Bring your best self forward to class and be an active participant. This class is a seminar. As such, my role is to share information, but also to act as a facilitator of student discussion. Your role is to collaborate as scholars and colleagues, share what you are learning with one another, and exchange your ideas and reactions to the course materials. Every class, I expect that you will be paying attention, thinking critically, and fully present and engaged.

COURSE POLICIES

- Attendance. Part of your grade is based on your participation in class. Also, realize that I will sometimes cover material in class in addition to required readings and this information will be included on exams. You are responsible for obtaining information missed if you are absent.
- Late Assignments/Missed Exams. Readings and assignments should be completed by the beginning of class on their due date. Late work is penalized 5 points per day. Make-up exams will be given only in the event of a documented family or medical emergency. They will consist entirely of essay questions and will require the full class period to complete. *Request for make-ups must be made in advance of the scheduled exam date.*
- Plagiarism/Cheating. You do not have to cheat to pass this course. Don't cheat. **If you cheat, you will receive an F for the course** and a possible referral to the University, as outlined in the Carolina Creed, USC Student Handbook and Policy Guidelines.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require USC to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustments or accommodations must self-identify with the instructor and with the Office of Student Disability Services prior to requesting an accommodation.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Francis T. Cullen and Robert Agnew. 2006. *Criminological Theory Past to Present: Essential Readings* (Third Edition). New York, Oxford University Press.
- Articles on Blackboard

GRADING

- Exams: (260 points, 130 each). Two exams will be given and will test knowledge learned in the first and second halves of the class. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Essay questions will be assigned the week prior to the exam and are due the day of the exam.
- In-Class Participation and Presentations: (130 points: 30 points for regular class participation and 50 points, each, for the formal presentations). Regular participation is expected, given that this is a small, seminar-style class. Students are expected to complete all the readings in advance of classes, discuss their reactions to them during class, and prepare at least one question about the readings for the class to discuss. Participation will be graded according to how well students fulfill these expectations.
 - In addition to being active participants in every class, students will lead class discussions twice during the semester, beginning in Week 3 (see the last page of the syllabus for more detail). The two classroom presentations will be graded according to the student's ability to clearly, fully, and succinctly explain and critically evaluate the assigned topic, as well as her/his ability to engage the class in the material. I will provide students with a rating sheet I will use to assess the quality of delivery of the information.
- Written Assignments: (130 points). Students will submit two written papers on which their formal, in-class presentations will be based. See the last page for further instruction.

Final grades will be assigned based on the following points:

- A = 477-520
- B+ = 462-476
- B = 422-461
- C+ = 407-421
- C = 367-406
- D+ = 351-366
- D = 311-350
- F = Below 310

COURSE SCHEDULE, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

(All assignments are to be read at the BEGINNING of each week unless otherwise noted).

Topic	Assignment
Week 1: January 15 The Nature and Extent of Criminal Behavior in the United States	Blackboard Readings: 1) Elliott, 1994, "Serious Violence Offenders....the 1993 ASC Presidential Address" 2) Steffensmeier et al., 2005, "An Assessment of Recent Trends in Girls' Violence"
Week 2: January 22 Introduction to Theoretical Explanations: -Theory Development and Testing -Classical Criminology	C & A: Introduction, Chapters 1-2 Blackboard Readings: 1) Agnew, 2002, "An Exploratory Study on Physical Victimization and Delinquency"
Week 3: January 29 Individual & Psychological Theories: Biological, Rational Choice, Deterrence	C & A: Chapters 3-6, 37-38 Blackboard Readings: 1) Caspi et al., 2002, "Role of Genotype in the Cycle of Violence of Maltreated Children" 2) Kovandzic et al., 2004, "Striking Out as Crime Reduction Policy"
Week 4: February 5 The Chicago School and Beyond: Social Disorganization and Routine Activities Theories	C & A: Chapters 7-9, 39-41 Blackboard Readings: 1) Elliott et al., 1996, "The Effects of Neighborhood Disadvantage on Adolescent Development" 2) Osgood et al., 1996, "Routine Activities and Individual Deviant Behavior"
Week 5: February 12 Sociological Explanations: Differential Association, Subcultural, and Social Learning	C & A: Chapters 10-14, 43 Blackboard Readings: 1) Elliott and Menard, 1992: "Delinquent Friends and Delinquent Behavior" 2) Widom, 1989, "The Cycle of Violence"

Topic	Assignment
Week 6: February 19 Sociological Explanations: Anomie, Strain, and Social Control Theories	C & A: Chapters 15-23 Blackboard Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Broidy, 2001, "A Test of General Strain Theory" 2) Pratt and Cullen, 2000, "The Empirical Status of G & H's General Theory of Crime"
Week 7: February 26 Societal Reactions to Crime, Critical Theory	C & A: Chapters 24-31 Blackboard Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hay, 2001, "An Exploratory Test of Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming Theory"
Week 8: March 4 Feminist Theories	C & A: Chapters 32-36 Blackboard Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Steffensmeier and Broidy, 2001, "Explaining Female Offending" 2) Sommers and Baskin, 1992, "Sex, Race, Age and Violent Offending" 3) Potter, 2006, "An Argument for Black Feminist Criminology" 4) Daly and Chesney Lind, 1988, "Feminism and Criminology"
Week 9: March 11: Spring Break	No Assignments
Week 10: March 18	Exam 1
Week 11: March 25 Integrated Theories	C & A: Chapters 46-50 Blackboard Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Bernard and Snipes, 1996, "Theoretical Integration in Criminology" 2) Herrenkohl et al., 2000, "Developmental Risk Factors for Youth Violence" 3) Catalano et al., 1996, "A Test of the Social Development Model"
Week 12: April 1 Life Course Developmental Theory	C & A: Chapters 44-45 Blackboard Readings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Sampson and Laub, 1992, "Crime and Deviance in the Life Course" 2) Silverthorne and Frick, 1999, "Developmental Pathways to Antisocial Behavior" 3) Fergusson and Horwood, 2002, "Male and Female Offending Trajectories" 4) Farrington, 2003, "Developmental and Life-Course Criminology"

Topic	Assignment
<p>Week 13: April 8 Prevention of Crime: What Works, What Doesn't Work?</p>	<p>Blackboard Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Agnew, 2005, "The Strategies of Prevention and Rehabilitation" 2) Mihalic et al., 2001, "Blueprints for Violence Prevention" 3) Farrington and Welsh, 2005, "Randomized Experiments in Criminology"
<p>Week 14: April 15 Prevention of Crime: What Works, What Doesn't Work?</p>	<p>Blackboard Readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Howell, 2003, "What Doesn't Work in Preventing and Reducing Juvenile Delinquency" 2) Aos et al., 2004, "Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth"
<p>Week 15: April 22 Wrapping Up: The Theory and Prevention of Crime</p>	<p>C & A: Chapter 42 Final Exam: Thursday, May 1</p>

VERBAL AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- Assignment #1: During Weeks 3-7, in the first half of the class, students will summarize for the rest of the class one of the theories that has been assigned. Based on at least three of the required assigned readings, students will: a) summarize the primary tenets of the theory and the criminal behavior(s) it seeks to explain; b) critique the strengths and weaknesses of the theory (including empirical evidence that supports or does not support the theory); and c) facilitate discussion using their own and other students' questions.
 - Presentations and discussion should last 30-45 minutes.
 - A written paper on which the presentation is based is due on the day of the discussion. Papers should be 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages and include citations as appropriate. *While not required as part of the verbal discussion, the written paper will summarize the findings of one additional research article that has tested the applicability of the theory to explain criminal behavior.* This part of the paper should briefly explain the research questions the paper addresses, the dataset utilized, the findings, how the findings compare and contrast to those reported in the assigned readings for this topic, and the student's overall assessment of the merit of the paper. It is appropriate to review one of the articles cited in the required readings (as long as it is by a different author) or to find your own article (I recommend reviewing recent articles published in criminology journals).

- Assignment #2: During Weeks 11-14, students will complete a second presentation which describes a program, policy, or strategy that has been evaluated and shown to be effective in preventing or reducing crime. Students will have 30 minutes to a) summarize the program (e.g., the program's goals, targeted individuals, implementation strategies, length, requirements, etc.); b) identify one criminological theory it is based on and how the program/policy uses that theory in its materials or implementation; c) summarize its effectiveness at reducing criminal activities; and d) prepare one or two questions to facilitate discussion.
 - For a list of potential programs/policies to choose from, see: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/> or Aos, 2004 (see Week 14).
 - You must also submit a 4-6 page paper summarizing this information and citing at least two research articles that describe the program/policy and its evaluation.
 - In addition to the topics mentioned above, in the last sections of the paper, you are required to:
 - e. State your opinion of the strengths and challenges of implementing this program/policy on a broad scale (e.g., strengths could be strong effects; challenges could include the high cost of the program);
 - f. Describe a second, hypothetical prevention program/policy that may also exemplify the theory you have identified in part (b). For example, if the program/policy is based on feminist theory, one potential new strategy would be to provide gender education classes in all elementary schools, to dispel stereotypes regarding masculinity and femininity and teach male and female participants to emulate characteristics of both sexes. Explain how your hypothetical program/policy would put into practice the tenets of the theory you have learned about in this course.