

Criminology

Sociology 384, Section 01

Fall 2005

MW 5:30-6:45 p.m.

GLNN 214

Office: Butte 612

Office Hours: Mon. and Wed 10-11 am
& by appointment

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I. Objectives of Course

The goal of this course is to give students a balanced theoretical and ideological introduction to the crime and delinquency literature. First, we will discuss the legal criteria that must be met before an act can be considered a crime under the system of criminal law practiced in the United States. Second, we will explore how researchers attempt to determine the extent and distribution of crime. Third, we will explore theoretical explanations of crime. Finally, we will discuss how both formal and informal criminal justice institutions control crime.

In the theoretical section of the course, we will be interested in what are thought to be the most important causes of crime. Some criminologists argue that individuals are morally responsible for their actions, whereas others lay blame on structural factors which differentially affect the opportunities of persons in various positions in the status hierarchy. Others blame “moral entrepreneurs” of the political economies of countries that distribute power and resources. All of these explanatory efforts will be described and evaluated. We will be especially interested in the following fundamental questions: 1) What are the beliefs about human nature upon which a particular theory is founded?, 2) What is the theory’s underlying logic with respect to the kinds of factors it identifies as having causal importance in explaining criminal conduct?, 3) How well is the theory supported by empirical evidence?, 4) What are the theory’s implications for social policy?

II. Organization of Lectures

There are four main parts to this course:

PART I. CRIME AND ITS DEFINITION. In this section, we will consider what types of behaviors are crimes. In general, violating any socially prescribed rule can result in punishment. In this course, however, we will focus on rules that are sanctioned (punished) by state criminal justice systems.

PART II. NATURE, MEASUREMENT, AND DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME. In this section, we will consider the diverse types of behaviors that are criminalized by the state. Before we can understand the nature of crimes, we need to have clear definitions of different types of crimes, and ways to measure when and where such crimes occur. Property crimes such as theft and burglary will be considered along with violent crimes such as assault and homicide. Finally, we will spend one lecture period considering forms of hate crime and terrorism.

PART III. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS. Theories are used to explain facts, such as distributions of behaviors that we define as crimes. There are over twenty accepted theories to explain crime. We will consider theories that explain both why individuals commit crimes, and why certain societies or subsets of societies are more likely to experience high crime rates. Motivational theories (often rational choice or biological theories) explain individuals’ proclivity to commit crimes, whereas sociological theories focus on attributes of society such as inequality and poverty.

PART IV. CONTROLLING CRIME: CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS. To control crime, societies develop rules and various types of enforcers such as police and courts. Modern industrial nations such as the United States have complex institutions to monitor, apprehend, and punish (or rehabilitate) criminals or social deviants. In this section, we will explore steps taken by the United States criminal justice system to control crime, and consider how successful these efforts have been or are likely to be in the future. In addition, we will discuss informal justice systems (vigilante organizations, “cultures of honor”) that are used by citizens themselves to protect their property and resolve disputes. Next, to understand criminal justice policies and programs, we will study political ideologies and how these lead to either retributive or rehabilitative criminal justice goals. Finally, we will discuss the costs and benefits of various policies aimed to control guns and drugs.

III. Textbooks

REQUIRED READING

1.) Sense and Nonsense about Crime and Drugs. 5th Edition. By Samuel Walker

2.) Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South. By Richard Nisbett

3.) All God's Children. By Fox Butterfield

Course Reader. (Available at Mr. Kopy)

IV. Exams, Essays, and Grading

The grading for this class will be determined by two in-class midterms (20% each), one 6-7 page essay assignment (20%), one field trip reaction paper (5%), one final exam (20%), attendance/participation (5%), and weekly reading summaries turned in on Web CT (10%).

Grades will be based on percentages and are assigned as follows:

A	=	930-1000 points	93-100%	Excellent Work
A-	=	900-929 points	90-92%	Nearly Excellent Work
B+	=	870-899 points	87-89%	Very Good Work
B	=	830-869 points	83-86%	Good Work
B-	=	800-829 points	80-82%	Mostly Good Work
C+	=	770-799 points	77-79%	Above Average Work
C	=	730-769 points	73-76%	Average Work
C-	=	700-729 points	70-72%	Mostly Average Work
D+	=	670-699 points	67-69%	Below Average Work
D	=	600-669 points	60-66%	Poor Work
F	=	0-599 points	0 -59%	Failing Work

Midterms and Final Exams: The exams will be comprised of both multiple-choice and short answer questions because different students prefer different types of exam formats. Questions will be designed to test knowledge of both conceptual and factual material presented in the lectures and readings. Short answer questions will involve writing about 7-10 sentences about definitions, concepts, theories, and policies presented throughout the course. The final exam is cumulative, but will be weighted more heavily towards the last half of the course. **(3 x 200) = 600 points**

Papers: The paper will require you to think about information presented in lecture and in the readings. I expect that you will be able to link concepts from different parts of the course to show that you are thinking about crime, theories of crime, and criminal justice policy. The paper will be DUE November 30th **200 Points**

Field Trip Reaction:

At some point during the semester, I will be scheduling a field trip to visit a state prison. You will be given plenty of notice of when this trip will take place. You will be strongly encouraged to attend and to make arrangements to be there at the scheduled time. This field trip will take the place of a scheduled class time. Your assignment is to write up a reaction to the experience. What did you learn? How were you impacted? Do you have any criticisms of what you saw? Your reaction paper should be 2-3 pages long, double-spaced, and stapled in the upper left-hand corner. The due date for this paper will be announced in class. **50 Points**

Participation: Listening to lectures may be somewhat useful, but it is likely that active participation by students is preferable. Thus, although I will give lectures during class time, questions and comments are always welcome during lectures. In addition, we will have time after many lectures for discussion. **50 Points**

Weekly Reading Summaries: Throughout the semester, I will post a few questions to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading. You will post your answers to these questions on Web CT. There will be 10 assignments throughout the course, and these will be all be DUE on Wednesdays. (See WebCT for specific due dates). There is NO provision for late submissions, or for submissions turned in outside of class. These assignments will not receive substantive comments and will be graded on the basis of effort. The summaries will each be worth 10 points (**100 points total**), and will be scored based on the following criteria:

- 10 points - sophisticated understanding of the reading and effort is well beyond what is requested
- 8-9 points - reading was taken seriously and completed fully – most assignments will earn this score
- 5-7 points – work is sub-par, and not completed fully
- 3-4 points – very little effort
- 0 points – no work submitted

NOTE WELL:

- Only documented emergencies will constitute excused absences. It is the student's responsibility to sign attendance sheets. ***Do not contact the professor by phone or e-mail about absences that do not fit into the documented emergency category.***
- Any conflicts with assignments or attendance in the course because of religious holidays should be discussed with the professor the first week of class.
- Unless you have a documented emergency there will be no late assignments, make-up exams or incompletes. A missed assignment or exam will result in 0 points unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor at least one academic day in advance, or if there is evidence of a serious and compelling reason.
- Assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of the class period when due. Computer discs will never be accepted as evidence of written work. Emailed papers will not be accepted without prior approval from the professor.
- When there is evidence that a student has committed plagiarism, copied the work of others, allowed others to copy their work, cheated on an exam, altered class material or scores, or has inappropriate possession of exams, or sensitive material, the incident will be investigated by Student Judicial Affairs. The consequences for academic dishonesty are severe.
- Plagiarism is the use of the written work of others (either direct copies or close paraphrases) as one's own original work. If quotations and/or passages from other works are used in papers, they must be accorded the proper citation in order to avoid any misunderstandings about plagiarism.
- All written work will be assessed on content, depth, logic, and quality of written expression.
- All papers must be turned in as hard paper copies (using 12 point standard font, double-spacing, and 1" margins). Pages must be numbered. Write your name in the upper right hand corner of each

page. Use a standard method of citation, and give full references. You may find the APA Style Manual helpful in this regard.

- It is the student’s responsibility to keep a hard copy and/or copy on disk of all assignments submitted to the instructor.
- If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible and I will provide you with the information you will need to receive services. If you prefer, you can contact a counselor at the Disability Support Services Office, Building E, Room 107 (530) 898-5959.
- Students are responsible for handling the necessary paperwork for adding or dropping this class. If a student does not withdraw, and does not attend class or complete required work, an “F” will be reported for his or her grade. Instructors may drop a student or issue a “W” for those students who do not attend the first two classes. Students should never assume that instructors automatically drop students from their class. After the third week of instruction, withdrawal (W) is permitted only for serious and compelling reasons approved by the instructor, department chair, and college dean.

EXPECTED STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM:

- All class participants are expected to exhibit respectful behavior to other students and the instructor regardless of how different the others’ views are from their own.
- All students have the right and privilege to learn in the class, free from harassment and disruption.
- The class follows the standards set in the Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities (EM 96-38) and students are subject to disciplinary action for violation of that code.
- Students are expected to turn off all pagers, cell phones and other electronic devices (including tape recorders) during class time.
- Students are expected to pay attention and participate in class meetings.
- Students may not read outside materials during class.
- Students are not allowed to come and go during the class session.

V. Lecture Outline

Date	Lecture	Readings
	<i>PART I. CRIME AND ITS DEFINITION</i>	
Aug 22	Introduction	
Aug 24	Overview of Human Nature	
Aug 29	Emergence of Criminal Justice Systems	
Aug 31	Criminal Justice System	Reader Chapter 2 (pp. 2-20)
Sept 5 Holliday	NO CLASS	
Sept 7	Film: Insanity Defense	
	<i>PART II. NATURE, MEASUREMENT, AND DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME</i>	
Sept 12	Measuring Crime, Index Crimes Perceptions of Crime Film: Bowling for Columbine	Reader Chapter 3 (pp. 22-29)
Sept 14	Property Crime	Reader Chapter 12 (pp. 82-95)
Sept 19	Property Crime	Reader Chapter 12 (pp. 82-95)
Sept 21	Rape, Robbery, Assault, Homicide	Reader Chapter 11 (pp. 49-60; 69-90)
Sept 26	Hate Crime and Terrorism	

Sept 28	Exam 1	
Oct 3	Distribution of Crime: Age, Gender, Class, Race/Ethnicity	Reader Chapter 3 (pp. 29-47)
Oct 5	Organized Crime	
	<i>PART III. THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS</i>	
Oct 10	Rational Choice and Deterrence Theories	Reader: “An Essay on Crimes and Punishments”; “Routine Activity Theory
Oct 12	Biological and Psychological Theories	Evolutionary Theory Reader: “Personality and Crime: Are Some People Crime Prone?”
Oct 17	Social Learning Theory; Social Bonding and Control Theories	Reader: “The Code of the Streets” Reader: “A General Theory of Crime”
Oct 19	Social Disorganization, Anomie, and Strain Theories	Reader: “Collective Efficacy and Crime”; “Crime and the American Dream”
Oct 24	Labeling Theory, Feminist Theory; Conflict Theory	Reader: “Primary and Secondary Deviance”
Oct 26	Integrated Theory; Discussion of “All God’s Children”	All God’s Children
Oct 31	Exam 2	
	<i>PART IV. CONTROLLING CRIME: CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY</i>	
Nov 2	Perspectives of Criminal Justice;	Walker Chapters 1-4
Nov 7	Vigilante Justice in Tanzania	
Nov 9	Models of Criminal Justice; Conservative Position	Walker Chapters 5-8
Nov 14	Liberal Position	Walker Chapters 11-12
Nov 16	Film: Scared Straight	
Nov 28	Guns	Walker Chapter 10
Nov 30 (Paper DUE)	Drugs	Walker Chapter 13
Dec 5	Film: The War on Drugs	
Dec 7	Conclusions and Review	
Dec 14	FINAL EXAM 6:00 -7:50 pm	