

Paper Assignment
Criminology 282
Spring 2005

Due: IN CLASS on May 9th

This assignment challenges you to draw from all four parts of the course as outlined in the syllabus. Your paper should cover all of the **three** sections below.

1.) Definition and description of crime. First, you should choose a type of crime in which you are interested such as homicide, robbery, drug dealing, or terrorism. It is fine if you are more interested in discussing categories of crime such as property or violent crimes in general, but be sure that you narrow the topic somewhat. Once you have decided on the *scope* of crimes that you want to explain, you should define and describe the criminal behavior. You may want to include a legal definition of the crime, but more importantly, you need to discuss the behavioral patterns of the crime. For example, an essay about homicide would benefit from a discussion of expressive and instrumental murders. A discussion of robbery would require an analysis of different types of robbers such as profession and opportunists.

2.) Theoretical analysis. To explain the criminal behavior that you choose, you may rely on a theory or theories covered in class and readings. You may also design your own theory based on the components of theories covered in class. If you create your own theory, I expect that you will describe the foundation in which it is based. We are covering a wide range of theories, and I suspect that your theory will have at least some similarities to a pre-existing theory. If you think your theory has few similarities with other theories, discuss the topic with me before you start writing. Within your discussion, you must cite at least **five** scholarly journal articles or books *other than the class texts and reader*.

The theoretical section should have the following sub-components:

- a.) Discussion of the assumptions of *human nature* on which your theory is based.
- b.) Clear definitions of the *concepts* important to your theory.
- c.) An explanation of the major cause(s) of crime by specifying the *relationships between concepts*.

3.) Implications for public policy. Finally, your description of criminal behavior and theories to explain it should be connected with a discussion of social control and public policy. Thus, you should address how effective formal (or informal) social control institutions are likely to reduce the criminal behavior you discuss. For example, would harsh punishments be more effective than rehabilitation to control thieves? Is it even possible to “correct” individuals’ criminal behavior? Briefly discuss the best role of police and courts with regards to the criminal behavior. For example, should we make longer prison sentences and add more police to the streets?

FORMAT

The paper length should be five to six (7-8) double spaced pages, and printed using 12-point font. You must include a “References Cited” section to document the literature you will consult. You must cite at least *five* scholarly journal articles or books outside of class readings. I am not concerned with the type of citation format you use, but you need to include references within the text (e.g., (Walker, 1998)). I prefer that you cite outside sources and put ideas into your own words, rather than using long quotations. However, a few short quotations are acceptable.

Writing Hints

- 1.) The first paragraph of any writing assignment is the most important. In effect, the first paragraph should serve as an outline or abstract of your paper. Each following sentence or section in the first paragraph should introduce the various subtopics of the paper in sequential order. The second paragraph should then introduce your first subtopic, and so on.
- 2.) Start with an outline, and then start writing.
- 3.) Use headings and sub-headings (e.g., introduction, definition of crime, theoretical concepts, etc.).

CLARIFICATION OF KEYWORDS IN ASSIGNMENT

Human nature

All theories are based on assumptions of human nature. Further, assumptions of human nature often influence whether or not a theorist stresses processes at the micro or macro level (see Akers p. 4). Classical theorists assumed that humans are guided by individual interest—people seek to gain rewards and avoid punishments. In contrast, many sociologists typically stress the importance of group level phenomena such as institutions and conformance to rules.

Concepts

Concepts organize and simplify phenomena, and are essentially definitions. In order for you to clearly outline a theory, you need to clearly define all of its conceptual attributes. Thus, if subcultures are important in your theory, explain exactly what you mean by a subculture.

Relationship between theoretical concepts

Theories provide explanations about one set of events by referring to other events (Akers, p. 1). Thus, theories are based on relationships between concepts. Your assignment is to explain how the concepts of your theory are causally related to one another. In other words, you need to articulate how your concepts are interlinked to produce the effects to be explained or predicted.