



Criminology

SOCL 532 Section # 700 Spring 2016

January 25, 2016 – May 11, 2016

Professor: Pavel V. Vasiliev

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Class Meetings: Online

Office Hours: Daily by email

Phone: TBD

For Technical Assistance with BLACKBOARD: Contact the WKU IT Help Desk at 270-745-7000 or visit <https://www.wku.edu/it/helpdesk/> for live chat or consult Knowledge Base.

Course Description: This course provides a comprehensive review of the major branches of criminological theory. We will discuss crime mostly from the sociological perspective, i.e. within the context of social groups, institutions, and economic and political arrangements rather than from individual-focused perspectives. Yet some analysis of biosocial and psychological theorizing and research will be included as well. The emphasis of the class is on helping you to start thinking about crime in an evidence-based and systematic rather than anecdotal manner. While we will touch upon criminal justice policy implications this is not a course about police, courts, or prisons – but about theory and research on the nature and patterns of crime. You find yourself with an opportunity to explore a fascinating topic – let's take advantage of this, and make it a great semester for your fellow students and your professor.

Course Objectives: The successful student will:

- 1) Learn the intellectual history of major criminological theories.
- 2) Understand the key claims, concepts, and criticisms of each theory.
- 3) Gain knowledge of research findings' (in)consistency with theoretical claims.
- 4) Learn to apply concepts, i.e. develop policy implications
- 5) Have an opportunity for independent work – creating a presentation or writing a paper.

Materials You Are Required to Read Prior to Each Class Period (see schedule for details):

Williams, Frank P. and Marilyn D. McShane. 2010. *"Criminological Theory."* 5th Edition.

Cullen, Francis T. and Robert Agnew (editors). 2011. *"Criminological Theory: Past to Present. Essential Readings."* 4th Edition.

Readings posted on the Blackboard course management page.

Class Format:

- 1) I will post my lectures as powerpoint files and readings as .pdf files on the Blackboard.
- 2) Study guides will be posted in advance prior to each exam.
- 3) Students have a lot of autonomy to pace themselves through the readings but are expected to take 3 exams, and complete other tasks assigned by professor.

Student Evaluation:

Your final grade for the course will be figured according to the following method:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Exam #1 | 25% |
| Exam #2 | 25% |
| Exam #3 | 25% |
| Research Paper / Presentation | 25% |

I. Exams:

- 1) There will be three closed book exams consisting of primarily multiple choice questions.
- 2) Roughly a half of the questions will cover the assigned readings and another half will cover my lectures which I have posted on the Blackboard. Questions are going to be very straightforward and easy to those who read the material. Study guides will be provided in advance.
- 3) Exams will be available on the Blackboard from 9:00am to 11:30pm on **March 1, April 12** and **May 11**. Once you log in – you will have **90 minutes** to finish, and only **one attempt**.

II. Research Paper / Presentation: You will prepare a research paper or a presentation on a topic of your choosing (within the field of criminology). The goal of this assignment is to allow you to engage in independent research and to demonstrate your knowledge of the chosen topic to the class and the professor. Choose a topic that is fun or relevant for your professional life. Both the presentation and the paper should have no less than 10 academic sources (i.e. cite 10 articles from peer-reviewed academic journals in the fields of criminology or criminal justice). If you choose to create a presentation the substance and tone of the presentation have to be academic and constructive. Submit a topic, a brief outline of the research paper / presentation **no later than April 7** so I can approve it. Review of scholarly literature on a particular issue in criminology is a great option (say you cover the research findings on deterring impact of police patrol or on class and crime debate). I will provide additional guidelines for this assignment later in the semester and I reserve the right to weight the paper / presentation differently in terms of grading to ensure equal reward for equal student effort. If you do not **email me that assignment as an attachment** by noon on **May 10** you lose 25% of the grade.

Tips for Success: *following these steps will allow you to pass the class successfully.*

- 1) Read the assigned material prior to taking the exam, examine lecture powerpoints.
- 2) Be able to explain the key ideas in the readings. Find definitions in the textbook.
- 3) Fill in the study guide, provided in advance by the professor, to prepare for the exam.
- 4) Do not miss exams.

Student Disabilities Statement: All individuals diagnosed with a disability are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As such, you may be entitled to certain accommodations within this class. If you are diagnosed with a disability, please call 745-5004 or stop by Student Disability Services (SDS), DUC A200. All students with the necessary supporting documentation will be provided appropriate accommodations as determined by the SDS office. It is entirely your responsibility to contact SDS and concurrently supply me with your accommodation plan, which will inform me exactly what accommodations you are entitled to. You will only receive accommodations once you provide me with an SDS accommodation plan. Any previously recorded grades will not be changed.

READING LIST / *RECOMMENDED CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule is “recommended” in a sense that you can choose to pace yourself faster or slower and read the materials on any days you desire. But the exam dates are set in stone for the class and non-negotiable (except for documented emergency situations). Exams will be available on Blackboard on March 1, April 12, May 11 from 9:45am till 11:45pm.

Course Structure at a Glance (consult Class Schedule below for precise dates and activities)

| Week | Topics |
|------|---|
| 1 | Course introduction and review of criminology emergence |
| 2 | Classical and neoclassical theories |
| 3 | Biosocial perspective |
| 4 | Anomie / strain theories |
| 5 | Social disorganization theory |
| 6 | Social learning theories |
| 7 | Social control theories |
| 8 | Labeling theory |
| 9 | Conflict / critical theories |
| 10 | Life-course perspective / exiting the criminal trajectory |
| 11 | Theory and policy |
| 12 | Students work on final papers |
| 13 | Final exam week |

Class Schedule: schedule is subject to change!

January

T 26th **Class Introduction**

R 28th **Historical Context and Emergence of Criminology** (*lecture only*)

February

T 2nd **Theory: Assumptions, Evaluation, Classification, Social Context, Research and Policy**
W&M¹ Chapter 1

R 4th **Classical Theory**
W&M Chapter 2
C&A² # 2 “An Essay on Crimes and Punishments” pp.26 – 29

T 9th **Neoclassical / Rational Choice Theories**
W&M Chapter 12
C&A # 32 “Reconceptualizing Deterrence Theory” pp. 394 – 400
C&A # 34 “Routine Activity Theory” pp. 417 – 428
C&A # 33 “Crime as a Rational Choice” pp. 400 – 406

R 11th **Biosocial and Psychological Perspectives**
W&M Chapter 3, C&A pp. 32 - 43
“*Why Do We Rape, Kill, and Sleep Around?*”³

¹ W&M = “Criminological Theory” by Williams and McShane (2010)

² C&A = “Criminological Theory. Past and Present: Essential Readings” by Cullen and Agnew (2011)

³ *Italicized titles* are for articles posted on Blackboard course management system.

“The Crime – Genius Connection”

T 16th **Biosocial and Psychological Perspectives**

C&A # 3 “Gene – Based Evolutionary Theories in Criminology” pp. 43 – 59

C&A # 4 “Does the Body Tell? Biological Characteristics and Criminal Disposition” pp. 59 – 69

C&A # 5 “Personality and Crime: Are Some People Crime Prone?” pp. 69 – 78

R 18th **Anomie / Strain Theories**

W&M Chapter 6

“Cheating in a Bottom-Line Economy”

T 23rd **Anomie / Strain Theories**

C&A # 13 “Social Structure and Anomie” pp. 165 - 173

C&A # 15 “Crime and the American Dream” pp. 178 - 189

C&A # 16 “Pressured into Crime: General Strain Theory” pp. 189 - 198

R 25th **Overview for Exam #1**

March

T 1st **Exam #1**

R 3rd **Social Disorganization Theory**

W&M Chapter 4

“Why Do Drug Dealers Still Live With Their Moms?”

T 15th **Social Disorganization Theory**

C&A pp. 89 – 98

C&A # 7 “Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas” pp. 98 - 105

C&A # 9 “Collective Efficacy and Crime” pp. 112 - 118

R 17th **Differential Association / Social Learning Theories**

W&M Chapter 5, W&M Chapter 11

“Liquor is Quicker? Gender and Social Learning among College Students”

T 22nd **Differential Association / Social Learning Theories**

C&A # 10 “A Theory of Differential Association” pp. 126 – 130

C&A # 11 “A Social Learning Theory of Crime” pp. 130 – 143

“Influence of Delinquent Peers: What They Think or What They Do?”

R 24th **Social Control Theories**

W&M Chapter 10

T 29th **Social Control Theories**

C&A # 18 “Social Bond Theory” pp. 215 – 224

C&A # 19 “A General Theory of Crime” pp. 224 – 239

R 31st **Labeling Theory**

W&M Chapter 8

“On Being Sane in Insane Places”

April

T 5th **Labeling Theory**

C&A # 20 “Primary and Secondary Deviance” pp. 249 – 253

C&A # 21 “Crime, Shame, and Reintegration” pp. 253 – 262

“Our Guys: The Glen Ridge Rape and the Secret Life of a Perfect Suburb”

- R 7th **Overview for Exam #2 (email me the final paper topic)**
- T 12th **Exam #2**
- R 14th **Conflict / Critical Theories**
 W&M Chapter 9
 C&A # 24 “Crime in a Market Society”
 “The Spawn of Slavery: Convict-Lease System in the South”
 “Violent Police – Citizen Interactions: An Analysis of Major Newspaper Accounts”
- T 19th **Conflict / Critical Theories (group presentation topic and membership list are due!)**
 “Taming Women and Nature: The Creation of Crime in Salem Village”
 C&A # 28 “A Feminist Theory of Female Delinquency” pp. 348 – 357
 C&A # 30 “Masculinities and Crime”
- R 21st **Life-Course Perspective: Continuity and Desistance from Crime**
 C&A pp. 451 – 465
 C&A # 39 “A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime” pp. 497 – 504
 C&A # 38 “Pathways in Life-Course to Crime” pp. 477 – 497
 “The Professional Ex- Revisited: Cessation or Continuation of a Deviant Career?”
 “Becoming an Ex-Sex Worker: Making Transitions Out of Deviant Career”
- T 26th **Theory and Policy**
 C&A # 48 “Imprisoning Communities” pp. 630 – 640
 C&A # 49 “Preventing Crime in Everyday Life” pp. 640 – 646
 “How Can We Reduce Crime?”
- R 28th **Student Work on Final Papers / Presentations!**
- May**
- T 3rd **Student Work on Final Papers / Presentations!**
- R 5th **Overview for the Final Exam**
- T 10th **Final Papers / Presentations Are Due**
- W 11th **FINAL EXAM**