

CCJ 3603: Explanations for Crime: Criminological Theory

Spring 2009

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Office Hours: Mondays (3:00 – 4:00)
Tuesdays and Thursdays (10:00 – noon)
*Other hours by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the ways crime has been explained in western society, with primary emphasis on scientific explanations since the 1700s. The entire range of criminological theory, from demonism to Marxism, and the social policy implications of each, will be addressed, along with the basics of theory construction and evaluation.

Course Objectives

1. Students will gain an understanding of the theories that are used to explain criminal behavior.
2. Students will understand the different theoretical explanations for crime, dependent upon the race of the “offenders.”
3. Students will learn the connection between theory, research, and policy.
4. Students will demonstrate both knowledge and application of concepts through the use of writing.
5. Improve student writing.

Textbook(s)

Akers, R. L., & Sellers, C. S. (2009). *Criminological theories: Introduction, evaluation, and application* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Gabbidon, S. L. (2007). *Criminological perspectives on race and crime*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Grading Policy

There will be five (5) areas that comprise the grading for this course: exams, writing assignments, theory-research-policy paper, presentation, and participation.

Exams

There will be 3 exams given throughout the course. The first exam will cover material from approximately the first third of the semester, the second being given around the 2/3 of the semester, and the final exam. The content of the exam will include both objective (e.g., multiple choice) and subjective (e.g., short answer/essay) items. *Exams will be taken via Blackboard.* Each exam will be worth a maximum of 75 points.

Writing Assignments

There will be 10 writing assignments due throughout the semester, based on the material we are discussing in class. The writing assignments are to be submitted via the **Assignment Manager** in Blackboard. The writing assignments will be worth a possible 50 points (meaning 5 points each).

Theory Evaluation Paper

In this paper, you will work in teams of two. You will pick a theory that is used to explain criminal behavior and use the criteria identified in Akers & Sellers (2009) in evaluating that particular theory. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to demonstrate your understanding of the link between theory, research, & policy **and** to help you critically examine our existing criminal justice policies in light of their usefulness, based on prior research. All of our criminal justice policies have a theoretical component as a foundation, regardless of whether or not it is realized. The paper should be approximately 10 pages. Specific guidelines for the paper are posted in Blackboard under **Course Documents**.

In order to help facilitate students gaining the most benefit from this paper, the paper will be due in 3 stages (all sections will be graded), which is detailed below. In addition, each component of the paper is to be submitted via the **Assignment Manager** in Blackboard.

1st stage: Post a brief summary of the theory that you plan to use for your paper (worth a maximum of 5 points) (**Due date: 2/2/09**)

2nd stage: Post an annotated bibliography of the refereed sources you plan to use for the paper (worth a maximum 20 points) (**Due date: 3/2/09**)

3rd stage: Post your final typed paper (worth a maximum 75 points) (**Due date: 4/6/09**)

I advise you to start thinking of the theory you want to use now. In other words, look through the book and course schedule to see what interests you. There will be a limit of 2-3 teams for a particular theory, so it's on a first-come, first-serve basis. Therefore, you do not have to (and should not) wait before signing up for a particular theory.

I also want to mention that if you have any questions about your paper, do not wait until the last minute before you see me. I strongly encourage you to come to my office hours and/or send me an email. I'll be glad to help in any way I can.

Presentation

The presentation will focus on your final paper, where you will discuss your theory, in light of Akers & Sellers (2009) criteria for causality. Each person in the class not only will be required to be present during the presentations, but students must also bring at least one question for the group(s) presenting that particular day. Not being present during group presentation will result in lower participation points. The presentation will be worth a possible 25 points. Information on the group presentation is currently under **Course Documents** in Blackboard.

Participation

I would like this to be a highly participatory class. My goal is not to lecture the entire time, but to have the class, as a whole, discuss the material. I want this class to be one in which students feel free to express their opinions and critically examine the material and verbalize such thoughts. The success of this class not only rests with me, but also with you. Participation will take place in two venues: in class and via the **Discussion Board** in Blackboard (I will post discussion topics). In order to maximize the likelihood of earning points in this category, you must participate in class (not simply show up to class and not participate) AND via the Discussion Board. Participation is worth 20 points.

Based on the information above, the breakdown of the points is as follows:

Exam (3):	225 points
Writing assignments:	50 points
Paper (all graded components):	100 points
Group presentation:	25 points
Participation:	20 points

Total	420 points

Final grades will be based on the following total points:

378-420 points (90%-100%)	= A
336-377 points (80%-89%)	= B
294-335 points (70%-79%)	= C
252-293 points (60%-69%)	= D
≤ 251 points (≤ 59%)	= F

Late Work

I will NOT accept any late work for the class. Assignments are due by the specific due date. The assignments must be submitted via the **Assignment Manager** in Blackboard. I will **not** accept assignments via email, under my door, etc., unless prior arrangements have been made.

Make-up Exams

There may be a legitimate reason why you may miss an exam. However, this is the exception, not the norm, especially since there will be a 24 hour window for you to take the exam. As a general rule, exams are to be taken during the scheduled time window. However, in case of an emergency (i.e., family, medical, or legal), you should see me to make arrangements to take a make-up exam soon thereafter. Documentation (e.g., letter from doctor, supervisor, etc.) will be required prior to taking the exam, and must be provided within one week of your return to class. You also must schedule the make-up exam within one week of your return to class.

Note: Make-up exams will not be the same as the original, but instead will be all essays.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty will be treated very seriously in this class. Any such actions (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will result, at a minimum, in the questionable assignment receiving a zero. Depending upon the severity of the academic dishonesty, it may result in a failure in the course, which will be left to my discretion.

Disability Statement

Students with disabilities who seek reasonable accommodations in the classroom or other aspects of performing their coursework must first register with the UNF Disability Resource Center (DRC) located in Building 10, Room 1201. DRC staff members work with students to obtain required documentation of disability and to identify appropriate accommodations as required by applicable disability laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). After receiving all necessary documentation, the DRC staff determines whether a student qualifies for services with the DRC and if so, the accommodations the student will be provided. DRC staff then prepares a letter for the

student to provide faculty advising them of approved accommodations. For further information, contact the DRC by phone (904) 620-2769, email (kwebb@unf.edu), or visit the DRC website (<http://www.unf.edu/dept/disabled-services>).

Classroom Civility

Students and faculty alike should strive to create a class environment that reflects mutual respect and the importance of learning. If a student's behavior threatens to disrupt that environment, the faculty member has a responsibility to seek resolution of the problem.

A faculty member is empowered to request that a student leave during particular class period if, in the measured opinion of that faculty member, the student:

1. Significantly disrupts the learning process, or
2. Is a threat to others.

Tentative Course Schedule and Reading Assignments (*)

DATE	TOPIC	READING DUE
Week 1: (1/5/09)	Introduction to the course	
Week 2: (1/12/09)	Introduction to theory	A & S: Ch. 1 G: Ch. 1
Week 3: (1/19/09)		MLK: No class
Week 4: (1/26/09)	Classical criminology	A & S: Ch. 2
Week 5: (2/2/09)	Biological/Psychological Determinism	A & S: Chs. 3 & 4 G: Ch. 2
Week 6: (2/9/09)		Exam #1
Week 7: (2/16/09)	Learning theories	A & S: Ch. 5
Week 8: (2/23/09)	Control theories	A & S: Ch. 6 G: Ch. 7
Week 9: (3/2/09)	Labeling theory	A & S: Ch. 7 G: Ch. 5
Week 10: (3/9/09)		Exam #2
Week 11: (3/16/09)		Spring Break: No classes
Week 12: (3/23/09)	Social Disorganization/ Strain theories	A & S: Ch. 8 G: Chs. 3 & 4
Week 13: (3/30/09)	Subcultural/ Conflict theories	A & S: Chs. 8 & 9 G: Chs. 4 & 6
Week 14: (4/6/09)	Colonial/ Feminist criminology	A & S: Ch. 11 G: Chs. 8 & 9
Week 15: (4/13/09)	Presentations	Exam #3
Final Exam Time: 4/20/09 (6:00 – 7:50)		Final activity

* The above schedule, policies, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or by mutual agreement between the instructor and the students.