

CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY CCJ 3603
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of North Florida
Spring 2009

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Class time & location: Tues & Thurs 3:05-4:20 PM, Building 51/Room 1102

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice Mission Statement

The Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice seeks to provide its students with the theoretical, practical and research foundations for understanding crime and the criminal justice system in its social context. The faculty is committed to *excellence* through development of *focused* and *relevant* scholarship and instruction. Through research and teaching in the areas of law creation, crime and deviance, and societal responses to law violation in policy and practice, students develop a greater understanding of social control and its dynamic processes. All departmental coursework stresses the importance of critical thinking about justice issues, particularly as they relate to race, class, and gender dynamics in social relations. Our graduate program emphasizes theory and research, while undergraduate internships enhance *relevance* to current practice and further prepare students to apply their knowledge in the field. Students at the graduate level receive advanced instruction in research design and theory, helping students *focus* their skills for direct application or more advanced study. Rigorous commitment to peer-review and collegiality help assure an ethic of *self-reflection and continuous-improvement* govern all departmental processes.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the study of and explanations for crime. Criminology is an important and dynamic area within the social sciences, especially since ideas about the nature of crime and what should be done about it continue to change over time. This flux creates new questions and concerns related to social constructions of crime, victims and offenders. In this course, we will address these changing concepts as well as various theoretical approaches, explore the meanings and consequences of crime at individual, institutional and macro levels, and investigate possible intervention strategies.

This course meets the following expected **undergraduate learning outcomes**:

Content/Disciplinary Knowledge & Skills

- To understand the social context of crime and punishment and the operational logic and limitations of the criminal justice system.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the tension between social control and democracy and its relevance to the study of crime & punishment.

Critical Thinking

- To demonstrate awareness of the ways in which prevailing social arrangements may bias the criminal justice system against some groups and not others.

Communication

- Write in a clear, logical style
- Speak in an informed and professional manner

GROUND RULES

Students are expected to engage responsibly in ongoing class discussion on a regular basis. Class participants are asked to follow some guidelines to help create a constructive learning environment.

- Treat colleagues with respect. There should be no interruptions of another student who has the floor, negative comments about the opinions of our colleagues, or private conversations taking place during class
- Arrive on time and leave when the *instructor* indicates class is over. Do not pack up materials before the class period ends. This is disrespectful to both the instructor and the other students
- No audible cell phones or pagers
- Social scientists look for patterns – the most common or most typical values, behaviors, and attitudes. Some of you may read sociological or criminological studies and think, “That doesn’t apply to me. It can’t be true.” But simply because you have not experienced something does not invalidate the finding. Remember that personal experience is not sufficient evidence to discount a social science finding or theory.
- This course often deals with sensitive and sometimes controversial material. Discussions should take place within a context of academic inquiry and in the spirit of understanding diverse perspectives and experiences. The goal of class discussion is not to find out the “one true answer,” but rather to facilitate understanding of the different perspectives on a particular topic. Part of becoming educated requires being challenged by ideas that differ from your own.

REQUIRED READINGS

- Barkan, Steven E. (2009). *Criminology: A Sociological Understanding*, 4th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

COURSE STRUCTURE & GRADING SYSTEM

Attendance & Participation	30
3 Exams @ 100 points each	300
Controversial Issue Debate	70
Group Discussions (3 @ 10 pts)	30
TOTAL:	430

FINAL GRADING SCALE* Based on total points possible

90-100%	A	387-430 points
80-89%	B	344-386 points
70-79%	C	301-343 points
60-69%	D	258-300 points
59% or below	F	257 points or less

*Please note that your final grade will utilize the +/- system. For example, the range for a B would be: 80-82% for a B-, 83-87% for a B, and 88%-89% for a B+. All percentages will be translated into grades in the same fashion. The university does not grant A+ grades; the highest grade possible is an A (4.0).

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to conduct themselves ethically during all activities associated with this class. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated.

Definitions

Cheating: Whereby non-permissible written, visual or oral assistance including that obtained from another student is utilized on examinations, course assignments or projects. The unauthorized possession or use of examination or course related material shall also constitute cheating.

Plagiarism: Whereby another's work is deliberately used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.

Any student failing to properly credit ideas or materials taken from another has plagiarized.

These forms of academic dishonesty will result in an F (0 points) on the assignment or exam and potentially severe consequences at the university level. Violations of student academic behavior standards are outlined in the UNF Student Handbook.

Absence/Illness/Personal Issues

It is your responsibility to let me know early in the semester of any health or personal issues that might preclude your full participation in the class. I am much more likely to be understanding if you keep the lines of communication open between us, rather than coming to me *after* you have already missed several days. If a situation arises during the semester, arrange to speak with me as soon as possible. Unexcused absences are not acceptable.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

It is the student's responsibility to complete all assignments by the day they are due.

1. *Exams*

There will be three examinations. Each will be some combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer, and/or essay. The exams will be discussed in more detail before each test day. Each exam is worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points. The third exam is not cumulative, and will only cover the final third of the course. Except in cases of extreme and documented emergencies, **there are no makeup exams.**

2. *Controversial Issue Debate Presentation*

You will work with a team to prepare a debate presentation on a controversial issue related to criminology. Early in the semester, the class will discuss potential debate topics. From this discussion, appropriate topics will be culled and a sign-up sheet will be distributed. You are to choose a topic from this list. Once the groups are formed, I will assign each topic to a presentation date. Each group will prepare a well-researched and documented argument for their side of the issue. Theory, scholarly research, trends, policy implications, and a summary of your argument must be presented. Dividing these tasks is the best way for the team to comprehensively cover the debate topic, both in research and presentation. **The Blackboard Discussion tool must be utilized among group members for communication purposes. Computers are readily available in the UNF library where students may access Blackboard.** A more detailed handout will describe the particulars of the debate presentation.

3. *Group Discussions*

Students will gather in groups during designated class periods (announced during the semester) to discuss class material. A list of questions will be distributed to each group, and groups will discuss the answers to the questions among themselves. During class discussion, individuals will share the answers of their group. Each group will also be responsible for providing the instructor with a copy of their answers and the name of each group member. Everyone in the group receives the same grade. *If you miss a group discussion, you may make up some of the points but will not be able to receive the maximum. If you want credit, it is your responsibility to make sure you complete all discussions if you are absent.*

4. Attendance & Participation

If you have no unexcused absences and contribute regularly to class discussion, it is likely you will receive the full amount of points possible (30). By “regularly,” I mean that on each class day, you contribute meaningfully to the discussion about the class material with thoughts and insights based on what you have read. Attendance/participation points are lost if a student is physically and/or mentally absent from class, whether it be due to an unexcused absence or a lack of engagement with the material. You are expected to be fully “present,” – awake, aware and involved – during class time. If you know you must miss a class for a legitimate medical or work-related reason, you may apply for an excused absence by supplying proper documentation (e.g. doctor’s note, police accident report, emergency room receipt). Other absences will NOT be considered excused.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that the readings are to be completed by the **first class day** of the week that they are due.

January 6 & 8	Introduction Chapter 1, Criminology and the Sociological Perspective
January 13 & 15	Chapter 2, Public Opinion, the News Media, and the Crime Problem Chapter 3, The Measurement and Patterning of Criminal Behavior
January 20 & 22	Chapter 4, Victims and Victimization
January 27 & 29	Chapter 5, Explaining Crime: Emphasis on the Individual
February 3 & 5	Tuesday February 3 EXAM REVIEW Thursday February 5 EXAM I
February 10 & 12	Chapter 6, Sociological Theories: Emphasis on Social Structure
February 17 & 19	Chapter 7, Sociological Theories: Emphasis on Social Process Chapter 8, Sociological Theories: Critical Perspectives
February 24 & 26	Chapter 9, Violent Crime: Homicide, Assault and Robbery
March 3 & 5	Chapter 10, Violence Against Women and Children

March 10 & 12	Tuesday March 10 EXAM REVIEW Thursday March 12 EXAM II
March 17 & 19	SPRING BREAK!!
March 24 & 26	Chapter 11, Property Crime: Economic Crimes by the Poor
March 31 & April 2	Chapter 12, White-Collar and Organized Crime
April 7 & 9	Chapter 14 pp. 433-434 Explaining Illegal Drug Use; 435-437 The Drugs-Crime Connection; pp. 444-453 Sexual Offenses: Prostitution and Pornography Chapter 15, Policing: Dilemmas of Crime Control in a Democratic Society
April 14 & 16	Chapter 16, Prosecution and Punishment Chapter 17, Conclusions: How Can We Reduce Crime? EXAM REVIEW
April 21 3:00-4:50 PM	EXAM III

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time.