

Criminological Theory – SOCI 438

Fall 2018

Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00–12:20, Social Sciences 338/330

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 3:30–4:30 & Wednesday, 2:00–3:00 (and by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will survey the field of criminological theory, which attempts to understand and explain crime. We will examine a range of major theories, including classic theories and their modern revisions. We will also read recent research testing and expanding criminological theories.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will gain a firm understanding of several major areas of criminological theory.
- Students will learn to read and process academic research.
- Students will develop comprehension skills by identifying key concepts from the readings.
- Students will enhance oral communication skills through active participation in class discussion.
- Students will develop writing skills by (1) writing focused summaries of the assigned readings and (2) writing and revising a paper critically examining issues in criminological theory.

REQUIRED READINGS

Cullen, F. T., Agnew, R., & Wilcox, P. (2018). *Criminological Theory: Past to Present* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

We will also have a wide range of additional readings. These articles are intended to expose you to recent research examining criminological theory.

Recommended reading/resource: *Criminological Theories* by Ronald Akers and Christine Sellers. There are many editions of the book available (current edition is 7th), and I think that any of them could prove very useful. The authors do a great job summarizing the major criminological theories, discussing the empirical validity and critiques of the theories, and exploring the applications of the theories.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students must be aware of and carefully adhere to the provisions defining and prohibiting academic misconduct in the UM Student Conduct Code (http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).

GRADING

I will not be putting grades on any of your writing. Research suggests that the grading of writing can interfere with the learning process. This class is designed to help you become a better writer and researcher, and I will grade you on your effort and participation in the course. I will provide extensive feedback on your written assignments, but this feedback is not necessarily linked to your grade.

This approach to grading is called contract grading. One of the goals of contract grading is to reduce the anxiety about grades that students often experience. Another goal is to encourage students to develop their own motivations for excellence. It is designed to help you develop a sense of what makes writing effective and I hope that it allows you to put in a lot of work without worrying about your grade. A key aspect of contract grading is to emphasize qualitative evaluative feedback over quantitative assessments of students' written work.

Grading Contract

You are guaranteed a final grade of a B in the course if you:

1. Meet the stated criteria for all assignments;
2. Meet due dates for all assignments;
3. Attend class regularly, arrive on time, and stay for the duration of the class;
4. Actively participate in all class discussions and exercises;
6. Edit all assignments so that they conform to the conventions of academic English;
7. Make substantive revisions of your work based on feedback.

The grade of B does not derive from my judgment about the quality of your writing, the uniqueness of your ideas, or your enthusiasm for criminological theory. Instead, you will earn a B in this course entirely on the basis of what you do (not on how well you do it). If you meet the conditions above, you will earn a B in this class. However, your final grade will fall rapidly below a B if you do not meet these conditions. I will let you know via email or in person if you are in danger of falling below a B in the course.

A grade of A in this course does rest on my judgment about the quality of your writing, the uniqueness of your ideas and the depth of your understanding of criminological theory. To earn an A in the course, you must do everything that you must do to earn a B as well as:

1. Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of criminological theory;
2. Produce creative, unique, thoughtful work;
3. Consistently make high quality contributions to class discussion;
4. Turn in papers that are concise, carefully edited, and easy to read.

To earn an A, your performance in all aspects of this class must be exceptionally high quality. I will let you know via email or in person if you are in the running for an A in the course. You are welcome to discuss this grading contract, your performance in the course or your concerns about your final grade with me during my office hours. Grade questions and concerns are always best addressed earlier rather than later.

This grading contract borrows extensively from contracts created by Jake Hansen and Dr. Daisy Rooks.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Tuesday, August 28

Introduction & Orientation for the Course

Summary and Paper Assignments Distributed

Thursday, August 30: Social Disorganization

Writing Center Introduction

Read:

“The Chicago School: The City, Social Disorganization, and Crime” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 33-44)

Shaw & McKay “Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 45-51)

WEEK 2

Tuesday, September 4: Social Disorganization

Read:

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhood and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277, 918-924.

Thursday, September 6: Social Disorganization

Paper Topic Due

Read:

Kirk, D. S., & Papachristos, A. V. (2011). Cultural Mechanisms and the persistence of neighborhood violence. *American Journal of Sociology*, 116, 1190-1233.

WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 11: Learning Theories

Read:

“Learning to be a Criminal: Differential Association, Subcultural, and Social Learning Theories” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 67-74)

Sutherland and Creeseey “A Theory of Differential Association” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 75-78)

Akers “A Social Learning Theory of Crime” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 79-92)

Thursday, September 13: Learning Theories

Read:

Article TBA

WEEK 4

Tuesday, September 18

Writing Center Workshop.

No reading.

Thursday, September 20

Discuss the ongoing research process.

No reading.

WEEK 5

Tuesday, September 25: Anomie/Strain Theories

Read:

“Anomie/Strain Theories of Crime” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 105-115)

Merton “Social Structure and Anomie” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 116-124)

Rosenfeld and Messner “Crime and the American Dream” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 130-139)

Thursday, September 27: Anomie/Strain Theories

Annotated Bibliography Due

Read:

Agnew “Pressured into Crime: General Strain Theory” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 140-149)

WEEK 6

Tuesday, October 2

Individual Meetings to Discuss Plans for First Draft: No Class

Thursday, October 4

Individual Meetings to Discuss Plans for First Draft: No Class

WEEK 7

Tuesday, October 9

Writing Center Workshop.

No Reading.

Thursday, October 11: Anomie/Strain Theories

Read:

Bunch, Jackson, Amaia Iratzoqui, and Stephen Watts. 2018. "Child Abuse, Self-Control, and Delinquency: A General Strain Perspective." *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 56, 20-28.

WEEK 8

Tuesday, October 16: Control Theories

Read:

"Varieties of Control Theory" (*Criminological Theory* pp. 150-160)

Hirschi "Social Bond Theory" (*Criminological Theory* pp. 169-177)

Thursday, October 18: Control Theories

First Draft of Paper Due

Read:

Article TBA

WEEK 9

Tuesday, October 23: Control Theories

Read:

Gottfredson and Hirschi "A General Theory of Crime" (*Criminological Theory* pp. 178-190)

Thursday, October 25

Read:

Article TBA

WEEK 10

Tuesday, October 30

Individual Meetings to Discuss Revising First Draft: No Class

Thursday, November 1

Individual Meetings to Discuss Revising First Draft: No Class

WEEK 11

Tuesday, November 6

Election Day: No Class

Thursday, November 8

Individual Meetings to Discuss Revising First Draft: No Class

WEEK 12

Tuesday, November 13

No class: Use this time to review the feedback for the First Draft and work on the Revised Paper.

Thursday, November 15

No class: Use this time to review the feedback for the First Draft and work on the Revised Paper.

WEEK 13

Tuesday, November 20

No class: Use this time to review the feedback for the First Draft and work on the Revised Paper.

Thursday, November 22

Thanksgiving: No Class

WEEK 14

Tuesday, November 27: Life-Course Theories

Read:

“Getting Into and Out of Crime: Life-Course Theories” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 487-502)

Laub and Sampson “A Theory of Persistent Offending and Desistance from Crime” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 523-529)

Thursday, November 29: Life-Course Theories

Read:

Moffitt “Pathways in the Life Course to Crime” (*Criminological Theory* pp. 503-522)

WEEK 15

Tuesday, December 4: Life-Course Theories

Read:

Article TBA

Thursday, December 6

Revised Paper Due

Research Presentations

Focus Group: Feedback on Course

No Reading
