

Loyola University New Orleans  
Graduate Theories of Criminal Behavior CRJU - C700-81  
Fall 2006

**Dr. Lydia Voigt**, Distinguished Professor and Chair

Department of Sociology

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Office Hours: M 3:00 - 6:00 p. m. and before class in Mercy Hall 306E  
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**Course Meeting Information:**

September 15 and 16; October 20 and 21; and November 17 and 18, 2006

(Fridays 6:00 - 10:00 p.m. and Saturdays 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.)

Class meets in 311 Mercy Hall

**Course Description:**

This course provides an in-depth overview of the origin and development of the major etiological theories of crime with special emphasis on criminal justice applications. We will consider both the historical roots and the cultural context of various branches of theories. After a brief review of the classical criminologists, we will focus our study on the contemporary schools of thought and the body of scientific research associated with each perspective. Our examination of the theories of criminality and associated research will be multidisciplinary in nature bringing in contributions from biology, psychology, sociology, law, and criminal justice as well as insights from history, economics and philosophy. Special attention will be given to the development of critical skills of theory analysis. We will consider not only the relationship between theory and research, but also theory and ideology, as well as theory and practice.

**Course Goals and Objectives:**

- To identify and understand the structure and substance of the fundamental paradigms of criminological thought and the works of key theorists (both classical and contemporary) that are associated with each paradigm.
- To critically analyze theories with respect to their relative strengths and weaknesses and to apply the criteria of critical evaluation.
- To understand the major theoretical debates in the field of criminology.
- To be well versed in the connection between theory and scientific research.
- To understand the politics and ethics of theory and research.
- To appreciate the linkage between theory and programmatic applications and policy formation.

- To conduct comprehensive theoretical literature reviews and prepare reports synthesizing major lines of theories and research.

Above everything else, the aim of this course is to convey the exciting quality of theories. Even though a portion of this course is concerned with abstract conceptual and technical matters, behind the discussion is the conviction that theories have important consequences - they influence our beliefs and experiences in everyday life. Theories are not mere neutral forces let out in a market place of ideas; they are at the core of the self-image of individuals and they are interwoven in the cultural fabric of contemporary society. They are at the root of conformity and deviance, and of peace and war; and they mirror the complex web of values held in society. Theories can be deeply absorbing and vitally interesting!

### **Required Readings:**

Cullen, F. T. *Criminological Theory: Past to Present: Essential Readings* (2nd Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2003.

Lilly, J. R., Cullen, F. T., and Ball, R. A. *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002.

Pattillo- McCoy, Mary. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Class Handouts and Library Reserve Materials.

### **Class Format:**

Although formal lectures have been planned for this course, it is primarily a graduate seminar. This means everyone in the class participates in raising questions over the assigned readings and takes an active role in analyzing and discussing the issues. Please be sure to sign up on Blackboard. In the event that there is an interruption to our course due to the cancellation of courses by the university as a result of a hurricane, we will continue the course on Blackboard.

### **Class Decorum:**

- Students are expected to come to class prepared and to actively participate in class.
- Questions and discussions are encouraged in class. Superior contributions to discussions and outstanding impromptu class presentations (based on readings and class materials) may result in extra credit points added to the final grade.
- **Assignments:** All assignments must be submitted in typed form in hardcopy (do not email assignments). Proofread and polish all work prior to submission. Assignments must be handed-in on their designated due dates. Late submissions will result in grade penalties or failure.

- Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at 504-865-2990 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
- The *University Honor Code* will be strictly enforced. All work must represent each student's own efforts.
- **Attendance:** Individuals are expected to be punctual and regular in their class attendance. Excessive absences (no more than 4 hours per term) will result in failure or necessitate withdrawal from the course. If a student misses the first weekend of our Intensive Weekend class, the student must withdraw from the class. In such case contact the Department of Criminal Justice or City College Office immediately.
- If for reasons of serious illness or other emergency you are unable to complete the course requirements as scheduled, you must speak with the professor regarding approval of a grade of "I" (Incomplete). Please note that grades of "I" change to "F" automatically if the course is not completed and the grade changed by the sixth week of the subsequent term, excluding summer terms. The resulting "F" grade remains the permanent grade for the course.
- All students are encouraged to come to office hours, Mondays 3:00- 6:00 p. m. or just prior to class or by appointment. My office is in Mercy 306E (you may enter through Mercy 306 or 308).

## Course Requirements:

- I. **Position Papers:** Prepare written position papers/reactions to your selected discussion questions, which have been designed to amplify the lecture materials. You may choose one from each group of questions associated with each weekend meeting of the class (see Tentative Order of Lectures for questions corresponding to lecture materials for each weekend meeting of the class). Your position papers/reactions should be informed by class materials (lectures and readings) as well as additional library research. Each written reaction should be approximately 3-5 pages double-spaced in length including citations and bibliographic references. Your written papers/responses will form the basis of brief oral presentations to the class, which should serve to stimulate further class discussion of the questions. The written papers/responses must be submitted to be graded at the end of each weekend class when the specific question is scheduled for discussion. Together the *three* position papers/responses (i.e., one position paper corresponding to each weekend session - 3 total) will comprise 20% of the final grade. **Please note that your first position paper is due on September 16, 2006 (i.e., the first weekend meeting of the class).**
  
- II. **Book Review:** In her book, *Black Picket Fences*, Mary Pattillo-McCoy offers a dynamic depiction of a middle-class black community in South Side Chicago. Her study explores both some of the advantages and challenges faced by the community. Among the issues that she discusses is the problem of crime

including the causative roots of crime. In your review, please begin with a thorough description of the book. How does crime function in the community? What are the social structural roots of crime? Which theories best explain crime in the community (discuss fully)? Then provide a review of the theoretical research literature that supports Pattillo's thesis as well as a critical assessment (i.e., the strengths and weaknesses) of the theoretical base that informs the book. Be sure to include citations and a full bibliography, which represents the scope and breadth of your review of the literature. Do you think that Pattillo's community study demonstrates adequate evidence of the theories that she brings to bear on the problem of crime? What lessons can be drawn from Pattillo's analysis? What are some of the preventive implications of the study? Your book review should be approximately 10-12 pages double-spaced in length. **It is due on October 21, 2006.** The book review will comprise 25% of the final grade.

**III. Paradigm Analysis:** There are three parts to this assignment:

(1) Define what is meant by the term/concept of paradigm, specifically as applied in the context of theory development. In other words, what are the different *kinds of theories* that explain crime or criminal behavior? In your answer, please discuss issues such as different levels of abstraction, different levels of explanation (i.e., micro vs. macro), and other common classification schemes, e.g., classical vs. positivistic, process vs. structural, and consensus vs. conflict. (In addition to reviewing your class text books, be sure to conduct an outside literature search and use additional sources of information to formulate your response (e.g., Thomas Kuhn (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; and Frank P. Williams, III (1999). *Imagining Criminology: An Alternative Paradigm*. New York: Garland Press).

(2) Summarize and critically analyze the key theoretical elements of five (5) articles (representing different paradigms) selected from 5 different sections of Cullen and Agnew's *Criminological Theory: Past to Present: Essential Readings*. Compare and contrast the perspectives/approaches of the five articles. Include a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of your selected articles as well as the paradigms that they represent. (Again, please note that this analysis should be informed by additional library research).

(3) Based on a review of the criminological literature over the last five years, **which paradigm appears to be the dominate paradigm in criminology today?** Be sure to support your conclusions! For example, you may want to develop a tally sheet listing the paradigms along with their main differentiating features (i.e., theoretical constructs/methods, etc.) in order to collect empirical evidence of the extent to which different paradigms/perspectives are being employed/referenced by contemporary theorists in recently published journal articles. (Or, you may invent your own strategy to study this question!) What do you think accounts for the current popularity of the dominating paradigm?

Your paradigm analysis should be approximately 12-15 pages double-spaced in length. In addition, hand in the “evidence” that you gathered to answer the question of what paradigm is most prevalent or dominate. Again, please note that there are three main portions to this assignment: (1) A definition and discussion of the concept of paradigm; (2) A comparison of your five selected articles, which represent different paradigms; and (3) An empirical study of the criminological journals in order to ascertain which paradigm predominates in the field today. This assignment is due on **November 18, 2006**. The paradigm analysis will comprise 30% of the final grade.

- IV. **Final Examination:** Your Take–Home Final Examination (approximately 10-12 pages in length, which comprises 25% of your final grade) is due on **Monday, December 4, 2006**. After reviewing all of the theories and the associated empirical evidence as well as their respective policy implications that we have considered in class, and in light of what you have learned from additional outside sources, please respond to the following question: **What is a good theory?** In responding to this question, reflect on the following: What makes a theory good? How do you know which theories are good? Be sure to consider the “Criteria for Evaluating Theories,” discussed in class, and give examples of theories that demonstrate the various criteria. Finally, select a *contemporary* theory/theorist (i.e., based on a selected journal article or book that has been published in the last three years) that you think does a great job of explaining crime (please explain fully using class lecture materials and readings to illustrate your key points). Please offer a comprehensive description of the theoretical work, which you have chosen, as well as a discussion of its merits and shortcomings. What paradigm does the theory/theorist represent? What is it about the theory/theorist that impresses you the most? Be sure to include a full bibliography, which includes your class as well as outside references. Your final examination is due on Monday, December 4, 2006. Please bring your completed examination to Mr. David Aplin, who is the administrative assistant for the Criminal Justice Department; his office is in 104 Stallings Hall. Ask to have your papers/exams put in Dr. Voigt’s folder. (Please note: do *not* email your papers/exams.)

## **Tentative Order of Lectures**

### **September 15 and 16, 2006**

**Crime, Criminals and Criminal Justice: Public Opinion vs. Expert Knowledge**

**Crime and Ideology**

## History of Criminal Law and Criminological Thought

### Origins of Scientific Criminology

#### Linking Theory, Research, and Practice:

- Theory Components and Structure
- Theory Testing: The Scientific Method
- Theory Applications: The Evaluation Process
- Critical Analysis: Elements of Critical Evaluation
- The Ethics and Politics of Theory and Research

**Reading Assignment:** Cullen and Agnew, *Criminal Theory: Past to Present: Essential Readings*, Introduction and Parts I-IV; and Lilly, et al., *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*, Chapters 1-2. Begin reading Pattillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences* (please note that your book review is due on October 21, 2006).

**Class Discussion Questions:** Please choose one of the following questions for your first position paper (written response due in class). Be sure to cite references for your observations/conclusions. Please be prepared to discuss *all* questions in class.

1. What is Criminology? (Please offer a detailed discussion of its meaning, its substantive areas, the significance of its contributions to our understanding of human behavior and society, and its place in the world of ideas.)
2. Is Criminology a science? (Please discuss the debated issues - explain fully.)
3. Why is Criminology considered a multiparadigm discipline? (Please discuss what is meant by multiparadigm and what significance this has.)
4. What is the meaning and significance of the terms *macro* and *micro* theories? (Please discuss fully and give some examples.)
5. How did the media's portrayal of crime and violence during and after Hurricane Katrina compare to the actual incidents of crime and violence for this time period?

## **October 20 and 21, 2006**

(In addition to your second position paper, your **Book Review** is due this weekend!)

### **Criminological Paradigms:**

- **Biological Criminology**
- **Psychological Criminology**
- **Mainstream Sociological Criminology**

**Reading Assignment:** Cullen and Agnew, Parts V-VIII; and Lilly, et al., Chapters 3-5.

**Class Discussion Questions:** Please choose one of the following questions for your position paper. Be sure to cite references for your observations/conclusions. Please be prepared to discuss *all* of the questions in class.

1. Are human beings naturally violent?
2. Can dangerousness be predicted in individuals?
3. Does mental illness cause crime?
4. Are crimes in certain geographical zones or social areas foreseeable?
5. According to research results, what are the major correlates of crime?
6. Is crime like beauty in the eyes of the beholder?

## **November 17 and 18, 2006**

(Please note that in addition to your third position paper, your **Paradigm Analysis** is due this weekend.)

### **Criminological Paradigms (continued):**

- **Conflict Theories: Critical/Radical Criminology**

### **New Directions in Theories:**

- **Feminist Theories**

- **Integrated Theories**
- **Life-Course Theories**

### **The Impending Crisis in Criminology**

**Reading Assignment:** Cullen and Agnew, Part IX-XII; and Lilly, et al., Chapters 6-9.

**Class Discussion Questions:** Please choose one of the following questions for your position paper. Be sure to cite references for your observations/conclusions. Please be prepared to discuss *all* of the questions in class.

1. To what extent does social class or power determine who or what is criminal?
2. Compare and contrast a radical conflict view of criminology with a consensual view (include in your discussion the key underlying assumptions of both perspectives). What is the significance of this difference?
3. What is the future of crime trends? (Be sure to provide evidence.)
4. What is the future direction of criminology? (Please include ideas of major authorities on the subject.)
5. How can it be that over a century of theorizing and research has made little or no apparent impact on the trends of crime in our society or upon our ability to modify criminal tendencies in individuals?

(Reminder: Your completed Take-Home Final Examination and any outstanding assignments are due on Monday, December 4, 2006 in Mr. David Aplin's office in Stallings Hall room #104.)

**Final Examination Question:** What is a good theory? (See details above, #IV on page 5.)

Happy Holidays!

