

Loyola University New Orleans
Graduate Theories of Criminal Behavior CRJU - C700-A51
Fall 2007

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Office Hours: Mondays 3:00 - 5:45 p. m. and by appointment

Course Meeting Information:

This class will meet during the **first 8-week** session: From 6:00 – 10:00 pm on **Mondays**: August 20 and 27; September 10, 17, and 24; October 1 and 8; and **Tuesday** October 16, 2007.

The class will meet in 216 Bobet 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 theoretical paradigms. After a brief review of the classical criminologists, we will focus our study on the contemporary schools of thought and their supporting body of scientific research. Our examination of the causes of criminal behavior and criminal patterns in society along with the 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 practice including the influences of ideology and culture.

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:

Lilly, J. R., Cullen, F. T., and Ball, R. A. *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences* (4th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.

Messner, S. F. and Rosenfeld, R. *Crime and the American Dream* (4th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson, 2007.

Pattillo- McCoy, M. *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.

Recommended Reading:

Agnew, R. *Pressured Into Crime: An Overview of General Strain Theory*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2006.

Class Format:

Although formal lectures have been planned for this course, it is primarily a graduate seminar. This means everyone in the class is expected to participate in raising questions over the assigned readings and take an active role in analyzing and discussing the issues. Please be sure to sign up on *Blackboard*. Routinely check the course Blackboard site for special class messages and handouts. In the event that there is an interruption to our course due to the cancellation of courses by the university as a result of an emergency or 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 submitted 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 1 class per term) will result in failure or necessitate withdrawal from the course. 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- 5:45 p. m. or by appointment. My office is in Monroe Hall 537F.

Course Requirements:

I. Class Demonstration: In teams of two or three, students will be assigned to a particular theoretical school of thought (e.g., biological trait theories, psychological trait theories, social process theories, sociological structural theories, labeling theories, conflict /critical theories, or integrated theories) and asked to develop an interactive class demonstration/project that can be used to illustrate some key aspect or set of dynamics related to their theoretical perspective.

The team's first task is to pose a relevant question associated with the theoretical perspective/ paradigm (e.g., if a team were assigned to psychological trait theories, a question that could be posed may be: Can personality traits predispose an individual to commit crimes?).

Next, the team is to develop a class exercise that effectively addresses the question. For example, based on the question above: (1) The class may be divided into three groups:

group one may be asked to work together to create a list of traits associated with a highly successful individual; group two may be asked to describe a minimally successful individual; and the third group may be asked to characterize a criminal individual. (2) Following the class exercise, the team may engage the class in a discussion of the various traits and critical analysis of the results of the exercise. For instance, the class may be asked to consider questions such as: Are there distinct traits evident for the different types of individuals? What are the difficulties related to assigning certain traits to specific types of individuals? How does bias or stereotyping affect our perceptions of successful or criminal personality traits? Are there times/situations when various traits overlap?

Finally, the team should offer an electrifying summation, including a consideration of the main weaknesses and strengths of its theoretical perspective. The summation should tie in some outside research on the applications of the theoretical perspective, which further may serve to illustrate the usefulness or shortcomings of the theoretical perspective.

Students are encouraged to be creative in their approach. You may use research tools (e.g., class surveys, experiments, etc.) and classroom media equipment for your demonstrations/projects. The team demonstration/project will represent 20% of the final grade in the course. Students will be assigned to specific theoretical teams by the professor. Due dates associated with each team's demonstration project will also be assigned by the professor; these dates will correspond with the syllabus schedule of the lectures related to the respective theoretical perspectives. The project grade will be based on the effectiveness of the team in communicating the essential theoretical components, successful engagement of the class in the project, incorporation of a critical analysis of the theoretical perspective, and the content and quality of the summation.

II. Book Review: In her book, *Black Picket Fences*, Mary Pattillo 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 foundation 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? Can some of the insights and solutions contained in Pattillo's study of south side Chicago be applied to the problem of crime in New Orleans? Be sure to discuss concrete strategies based on Pattillo's book that can be used here in New Orleans. Your book review should be approximately 8-10 pages (double-spaced) in length. **It is due on September 17, 2007.** The book review will comprise 25% of the final grade.

III. Critical Analysis of *Crime and the American Dream*: In light of what you have learned from class and additional outside research, please begin by responding to the question: **What is a good theory?** In other words: 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. With this in mind, critically analyze the book, *Crime and the American Dream*, by Steven Messner and Richard Rosenfeld. Do you think that Messner and Rosenfeld’s book does a “good” job of explaining the nature and extent of crime in the United States (please explain fully)? Be sure to offer a comprehensive description of Messner and Rosenfeld’s theoretical work as well as a discussion of its merits and shortcomings. What paradigm does the theory represent? What is it about the theory that impresses you the most? Do Messner and Rosenfeld sufficiently address the main criticisms usually associated with their theoretical perspective? Be sure to include a full bibliography, which includes your class as well as outside references. Your critical review should be approximately 8-10 pages in length; it is due on the last day of class: **Tuesday, October 16, 2007**. It will comprise 25% of your final grade.

IV. Term Paper: Dominate Paradigm Analysis: There are two parts to this assignment:

(1) Define what is meant by the term/concept, *paradigm*, specifically as it is applied in the context of theory development. What are the different kinds of theories or paradigms that explain crime or criminal behavior? 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) Based on a review of criminological literature (e.g., a sample of various criminological/professional journals over the last 3-5 years; criminological abstracts, bibliographic listings, or internet searches), **which theoretical 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, levels of analysis, etc.) in order to collect empirical evidence of the extent to which different paradigms/perspectives are being applied/referenced by contemporary researchers/authors in recently published journal articles or other publications. (Or, you may invent your own strategy to study this question!) What do you think accounts for the current popularity of the dominating paradigm? How (or in what context) is the paradigm typically applied? Your paradigm analysis should be approximately 5-8 pages (double-spaced) in length. In addition, please submit the “evidence” that you gathered to answer the question of what paradigm is most prevalent or dominate. Again, please note that there are two main parts to this assignment: (1) a definition and discussion of the concept of paradigm; and (2) your own “empirical study” of the criminological journals/publications/abstracts/bibliographies in order to ascertain what paradigm predominates in the field today. Be sure to address the questions associated with each

part. This assignment is due on Monday, **December 3, 2007**. The dominate paradigm analysis will comprise 30% of the final grade. Please bring your completed analysis to Ms. Joy David, who is the administrative assistant for the Sociology Department; her office is in 537 Monroe Hall. Ask to have your work placed in Dr. Voigt's folder. (Please note: *Do not email your papers.*)

V. Extra Credit: Review of Robert Agnew's book, *Pressured into Crime*.

After providing a description of Agnew's strain theory and its main theoretical contributions and applications, consider the question: What is a good theory (see question III)? Is Agnew's theory an example of a "good theory"? Your extra credit review of Agnew's book may be handed-in along with your dominate paradigm analysis on Monday, December 3, 2007 in 537 Monroe Hall. Please be sure to give your completed work to Ms. Joy David.

Tentative Order of Lectures

Please note: All of our classes with the exception of the last class meet on Monday nights. The last class is scheduled for Tuesday, October 16th.

August 20 and 27, 2007

Crime and Culture

History of Criminal Law and Criminological Thought

Origins of Scientific Criminology

Criminological Paradigms

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: Lilly, Cullen, and Ball, *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*, Chapter 1. Begin reading Pattillo-McCoy's *Black Picket Fences* (please note that your book review is due on September 17, 2007).

Discussion Questions: Please be prepared to discuss *all* questions in class.

1. What is Criminology? (Please consider 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 consider the debated issues.)
3. Why is Criminology considered a multiparadigm discipline? (Please consider what is meant by multiparadigm and what significance this has.)
4. What is the meaning and significance of the terms *macro* and *micro* theories?

September 10, 2007

Biological Criminology

Psychological Criminology

Reading Assignment: Lilly, et al., Chapters 2 and 13.

Class Discussion Questions: 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. How is criminal offending learned (psychological view)?

September 17 and 24, 2007

Mainstream Sociological Criminology

- **Classical Sociological Theories**
- **Social Structural Theories**
- **Social Process Theories**

Reading Assignment: Lilly, et al., Chapters 3-6, 11 and 12. (Please note that your book review of *Black Picket Fences* is due on September 17th!)

Class Discussion Questions: Please be prepared to discuss *all* of the questions in class.

1. Are crimes in certain geographical zones or social areas foreseeable?
2. According to research results, what are the major social structural correlates of crime?
3. How does the theory of the sociological process of learning crime compare to the psychological learning theory?
4. Why are you not a criminal?
5. How can the opportunities for crime be reduced?
6. Is violent crime rational?

October 1 and 8, 2007

Labeling Theories

Conflict Theories: Critical/Radical Criminology

New Directions in Theories:

- **Postmodern Theories**
- **Feminist Theories**
- **Integrated Theories**
- **Life-Course Theories**

Reading Assignment: Lilly, et al., Chapters 7-10, and 14.

Class Discussion Questions: Please be prepared to discuss *all* of the questions in class.

1. Is crime like beauty in the eyes of the beholder?
2. To what extent does social class or power determine who or what is criminal?
3. What role do class, race, and gender play in criminological theory and research? In criminal justice?
4. Compare and contrast a radical conflict view of criminology with a consensual view (be sure to consider the key underlying assumptions of both perspectives). Why is this difference significant?
5. What is meant by the gendering of criminology?
6. Are there any examples of truly integrated theories?

Tuesday October 16, 2007

The Impending Crisis in Criminology

The Future of Criminology

Class Discussion Questions: Please be prepared to discuss *all* of the questions in class.

1. What is the future of crime trends?
2. A question that has been raised is: How can it be that over a century of theorizing and research has made relatively little or no apparent impact on the trends of crime in our society or upon our ability to modify criminal tendencies in individuals? Is this a fair assessment? How would you respond to this?
3. What is the future direction of criminology?

(Reminder: Your completed critical review of Messner and Rosenfeld's book, *Crime and the American Dream*, is due this evening!)

Please note: Your term paper on what paradigm is currently dominate in criminology is due on Monday December 3, 2007. You may also hand in your extra credit assignment and any other outstanding assignments at that time. Please bring you completed work to Ms. Joy David's office in 537 Monroe Hall.