

Criminology

SOC 2230

University of Virginia

Fall 2015

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Office Hours

Tues. & Thurs.

11:00AM - 12:00PM

4:00 - 5:00PM

Or by appointment

There are different approaches to the subject of crime within criminology. Psychology looks into mental processes and sees criminal behavior as the expression of disordered mental states. The criminal appears then to be inherently different from other people.

Criminology is also studied by law enforcement and with the aim of preventing more crime. This course presents a distinctively *sociological* perspective on crime. Sociology, like some other fields, attempts to explain crime, but sociological explanations are different.

Sociological explanations of crime are found in the characteristics of society as a whole and in the experiences the criminal offender has had with other people. Forces within the social world are seen to be moving the person to commit criminal acts. The implication here is that the criminal offender is, in most respects, no different from other members of society.

This view is in stark contrast to images in the media which portray "the criminal" as an alien kind of person. Students will find many of the social forces which cause crime to be quite familiar because they themselves are subject to some of the same influences as are active criminals. There are many different explanations or "theories" of crime, and this course is organized accordingly. Some theories explain the crime rates of entire societies or large segments of them. Other theories are smaller scale and follow the individual's life-history to see what happened to make him an active criminal. All of the theories covered in

this course have wide currency within criminology, and each student will be challenged to decide for him- or herself which one gives the most plausible explanation of crime.

Required Readings

Students should read the texts assigned for each subject before lecture. The readings assigned for each date are listed in the course “Plan of Study” at the end of this syllabus. Ideally, after having heard the major ideas of the texts discussed in lecture, a student will *again* read at least portions of them for the added benefit of recognizing and understanding things that were not immediately understood in their first reading.

Lanier, Mark M. and Stuart Henry. 2010. *Essential Criminology*. 3rd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Cullen, Francis T. and Robert Agnew. 2001. *Criminological Theory: Past to Present, Essential Readings*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wright, Richard T. and Scott Decker. 1994. *Burglars on the Job: Streetlife and Residential Break-ins*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Simons, Ronald L., Leslie Gordon Simons and Lora Ebert Wallace. 2004. *Families, Delinquency, and Crime: Linking Society’s Most Basic Institution to Antisocial Behavior*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

➤ *Additional readings will be posted in folders for the topics on Collab.*

Slide Presentations

During lectures, PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat slide presentations will be projected showing concepts, names, tables and data. These are available in folders under “Lectures” on Collab. It is recommended that students print out these overheads and take notes on them during lecture. The student can then concentrate on understanding these materials when they are explained and not be preoccupied with copying them. Having precise instructions on how to read tables and theoretical models will be crucial.

Exams

The dates for the exams and the subjects that each will cover are listed in the “Plan of Study” at the end of this syllabus.