

Contemporary Criminological Theory (CCJS 454)

Term: Fall 2022
Time: Section 0101 MWF 10:00am to 10:50am
Location: [ARC 1101](#) (Architecture Building)

Instructor Dr. Wade C. Jacobsen
Email wcj@umd.edu
Office Hours MW 11:00am to 11:50am, or by appointment
2220H LeFrak Hall, or on [Zoom](#).

TA Sophia Amoroso
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Office Hours Tue 3:30pm to 4:30pm on [Zoom](#)
Wed 4pm to 5pm at [Morrill 0102](#)
Fri 1pm to 2pm on [Zoom](#)

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of major contemporary criminological theories. For each theory, we will cover the major concepts and propositions, review the empirical evidence, and discuss implications for policy and practice.

You Have Four Primary Learning Objectives in This Course

1. Know the major concepts and propositions of contemporary criminological theories
2. Demonstrate an ability to apply these theories to the explanation of criminal behavior
3. Show familiarity with early and recent research on these theories
4. Describe ways these theories have informed or could inform policy and practice

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The course [ELMS](#) page includes the course schedule, daily reading assignments, daily reading assessments, and dates/times for all assignments and exams. Most of these materials are available in the course modules. I will notify you if the schedule changes for any reason. All reading assignments should be completed prior to class.

Recommended Texts

There are no required textbooks in this course, but as this is a theory course, you are required to read. Many of the readings use language that is dated and can be difficult to understand. We will be discussing most (not all) of the readings in class, but it may be helpful to have additional guidance. For this, I recommend obtaining a textbook on criminological theory. I have provided a list of suggested textbooks on the course [ELMS](#) page. Copies of some of these textbooks are available through Course Reserves (see the course [ELMS](#) page for more info).

Office Hours and Email

I want you to do well in this class. Our TA and I will each be available during our respective office hours to discuss assignments, answer questions, or provide additional clarification on class material. If circumstances prevent us from being available during regularly scheduled office hours, we will try to notify the class in advance. If you are not available during office hours, please email us to schedule another time to meet as needed.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class. If you don't, you may miss quizzes and lecture material that will help you prepare well for exams. I will give you an exam study guide but will not distribute lecture notes. If you have to miss class, I suggest getting notes from a classmate.

Course Grading Scale

Your final grade for this course will be based on the following scale:

A+	=	97% +	C+	=	77% to 79%
A	=	93% to 96%	C	=	73% to 76%
A-	=	90% to 92%	C-	=	70% to 72%
B+	=	87% to 89%	D+	=	67% to 69%
B	=	83% to 86%	D	=	63% to 66%
B-	=	80% to 82%	D-	=	60% to 62%
			F	=	below 60%

To calculate final grades, weight the raw scores on your assignments by the percentage value in the table below and sum the categories. I will round the percentage to the nearest whole number, rounding up at .5 (for example, 86.4% will be a B and 86.5% will be a B+). If you have questions or concerns about a grade on an assignment and believe I should review it, please describe your concern in detail via email, within 48 hours of the assignment due date. If you have questions or concerns about your final grade, please email me as early as possible after grades are posted. For more information on grade complaints, visit:

<https://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

Graded Materials

Assessment	Percent of Final Grade
<i>Exams</i>	
In-class Exam 1	15%
In-class Exam 2	20%
Final Exam	30%
<i>Reading Assessments</i>	
	3%
<i>Term Paper</i>	
Thesis statement/Outline	2%
First Draft	0%
Final Draft	30%

Exams

There will be three exams in this course: two in-class exams (one for each of the first two sections in the course schedule) and one comprehensive final. All three will include multiple choice and short answer questions. Makeup exams will *only* be given in cases of [university-excused absences](#), and official documentation is required. Exams are considered "major scheduled graded events." Therefore, the University medical excuse policy, which allows one student-signed honor statement attesting to illness, does not apply. Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, religious observances, required school activities, and required court appearance. I will not accept a Health Center honor statement to verify an illness. If you go to the Health Center and a doctor will not write you a note, you will need to get a copy of your medical record from them to verify your illness. By law, you are entitled to get a copy of this, and it is your responsibility to do so. I must be notified *prior* to

missing an exam for me to consider giving you a makeup, and you are expected to take the make-up exam *prior* to the exam date. If you have a serious problem on the day of an exam, email or call me so that I can advise you what to do.

Reading Assessments

To prepare for each lecture, you should come to class having completed the assigned readings and accompanying reading assessment on ELMS. Each assessment has only one or two questions (multiple choice) and is due before class by the indicated time. You can complete assessments at any time throughout the semester up until the due date. Making up a reading assessment is not possible, but your two lowest assessment scores will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Group Work

During class lectures, there will be many opportunities for low-stakes, informal group work. I encourage you to take advantage of these very important opportunities to learn from and share what you learn with your peers. Group work is not permitted on the term paper or exams.

Term Paper

You will be required to write a term paper in this class. I have listed potential topics in the table below. This paper is divided into three separate assignments, which are due *before class* (submit Microsoft Word document online via ELMS by the indicated day and time):

- (1) Clear presentation of thesis with a detailed outline (no more than two pages)
- (2) First draft of your term paper for feedback (**optional** – no grade, not required)
- (3) Final term paper (no more than 2,000 words, excluding references).

I strongly recommend that you write multiple drafts. You will not do well on the final paper (25% of final grade) if it is a first draft. I will grade your final paper based on how well you have done the following **six** requirements:

- (1) Clearly present the thesis of your paper in the opening and concluding sections.
- (2) Compare and contrast the major propositions of two theories from our discussions this semester. Make sure you demonstrate a solid understanding of the core components of each theory and accurately define important concepts. You may need to read ahead in the course schedule if we have not already covered the theories you choose in class lectures. Be sure to appropriately cite class readings.
- (3) Provide the reader with a sense for how much each of your two theories is supported empirically. For this, you should cite findings from prior research (minimum of ten), including recent studies. You may find other relevant articles online ([UMD library](#) or [Google Scholar](#)). Do not cite class lectures or the textbook; instead, cite the original works that are included in the textbook (references at the bottom of each article).
- (4) Make sure your paper has a clear organization and natural flow. It should include an introduction section, transition sentences to connect major ideas, and a conclusion section. It should also have few, if any, grammatical or spelling errors, and the use of passive voice should be kept to a minimum.
- (5) Use 12-point Times New Roman (double-spaced) and 1-inch margins. Follow [APA](#) (American Psychological Association) or a similar [style guide](#) for in-text citations and references/bibliography. I have no preference, but you should be consistent.
- (6) Demonstrate an ability to apply the two theories you choose, by following the instructions in the Term Paper Topic Options presented on the next page.

Term Paper Topic Options

Option 1	Many schools in the United States are interested in improving the safety and learning environment they provide for their students. One strategy is to use strict discipline policies such as suspension or expulsion in response to violent or otherwise disruptive behaviors. Another strategy is to increase security measures by installing metal detectors and keeping a police officer present. Still, other strategies may involve approaches that are very different from these, or they may include some combination of multiple approaches. With the theories you choose in mind, describe at least three features of a hypothetical strategy for improving the safety and learning environment of a school. I understand you may not be familiar with school programs or policies. What is important is that you demonstrate how the theories you choose could be applied to school crime and misbehavior.
Option 2	Read the book <i>Les Misérables</i> by Victor Hugo (abridged or unabridged) enough to understand the early part of the story of Jean Valjean: his initial arrest, time in prison, and the events following his release that led to his desistance from crime. Use the theories you choose to explain (1) Valjean's initial theft of bread, (2) his subsequent theft of silver, and (3) his eventual desistance from crime. I understand you may not be an expert on 19 th century French fiction. What is important is that you demonstrate how these theories can be used to explain this criminal behavior.
Option 3	You are at a dinner party at your uncle's home. He lives in a wealthy suburban neighborhood just outside a large city with a relatively high crime rate. He asks how your semester is going and you mention your class on criminological theory. This piques his interest and he asks you to share your insights on the recent rise in the number of burglaries in his neighborhood. He says some of the neighbors are lobbying for harsher sanctions for burglary offenses, but he questions whether this would be an effective solution. With the theories you choose in mind, give your uncle at least three specific suggestions for strategies that may help to address the burglaries in his neighborhood.
Option 4	Choose another topic with my approval. Please share your idea with me in person during my office hours prior to the due date for the term paper thesis statement. Only topics that allow you to include all the required content and that are consistent with the course objectives will be approved.

Late Work

Turn in your term paper writing assignments on time. If you don't you will lose 10% of a perfect score for every weekday (Mon-Fri) it is late. For example, if you score 90/100 on your term paper first draft but turn it in two weekdays late, your final score will be 70/100. Late assignments should be submitted on ELMS (no hardcopies please).

As a UMD Student, You Are Committed to Academic Integrity

I require absolute academic integrity in this course. The [University of Maryland Honor Pledge](#) reads: *I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.* We are each responsible for keeping this pledge. I will refer any suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the University Honor Council. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarizing, cheating, having unauthorized possession of an examination, fabricating citations or other information, submitting or tampering with the work of another person, and aiding another person in doing any of these things. You are permitted to take notes in the class and to share these notes with other students currently in the class. However, **you may not record, reproduce, or distribute my lectures or course materials for any purpose outside of this class.** For more information on academic integrity, visit <https://www.president.umd.edu/administration/policies/section-iii-academic-affairs/iii-100a>

Class Conduct

You are expected to adhere to the [Code of Student Conduct](#). I also expect you to arrive on time each day having read the assigned material, and to actively participate in class activities. You should be courteous and respectful to me and to other students in this class. This includes using appropriate language, keeping your cell phone silenced and put away during lectures, and

refraining from other disrespectful or distracting behavior (reading outside material, browsing the internet, text-messaging, having side conversations, sleeping, etc.). For more information related to student conduct, visit <https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/>

Information for Students with Disabilities

Students seeking accommodations for a disability should contact Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) at [301.314.7682](tel:301.314.7682), or adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. After receiving an Accommodations Letter from ADS, you should meet with me **as soon as possible** (preferably the first week of class) to provide a copy of the *Accommodations Letter* and for my signature on the *Acknowledgment of Student Request* form. Together, we will plan how the accommodations will be implemented. Specific details must be documented and added to the Acknowledgment of Student Request form. You are responsible for submitting the signed original form to ADS and retaining a copy of the signed *Acknowledgment of Student Request* for your records.

Masking Requirements

In accordance with University [policy](#), wearing a properly fitted KN95 mask is recommended while you are indoors for added protection, but it is not currently required.

University and Course Related Policies

For additional information on UMD course related policies (academic integrity, discrimination, course conduct, sexual misconduct, accessibility, attendance, grading and exams, resources, etc.), please visit: <https://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>