

**CCJS651: Seminar in Criminology**  
**Wednesdays from 4 pm to 6:45 pm in 2205 LeFrak**  
**Spring 2024**

Instructor: Dr. María B. Vélez  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11 am to 1 pm; or by appointment  
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**Course Objectives:**

This course introduces dominant explanations of the study of the causes of crime. The central focus centers on the major theories of crime causation developed over the past two hundred years. We will also discuss key advancements in theory and related research over recent years.

**Learning Goals:**

The major objectives of the course are to become familiar with the foundations of key theoretical traditions and effectively apply them to the explanation of crime; to understand past and current theoretical debates; and to critically evaluate key theoretical approaches considered in light of their basic assumptions, causal propositions and empirical evidence. This course begins to lay a foundation for students to effectively prepare for the qualifying exams required to advance in the doctoral program in CCJS.

**Required Texts:**

1. Bernard, Thomas J., Jeffrey B. Snipes, and Alexander L. Gerould. 2019. *Vold's Theoretical Criminology*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (available at the UMD bookstore)
2. All other readings will be made available on ELMS.

**Requirements:**

Along with attending class and reading all of the required material, the following constitute course requirements:

1. *Class Participation* (10% of your grade)

Participation in class discussions is a vital component of the course and so I expect every student to participate fully in each and every class meeting. Note that coming to a particular class unprepared or missing class (unexcused) will result in a 10-point deduction for that day's participation grade. Students will be graded on participation, and missing class is discouraged (see below discussion on excused absences). **In order to promote useful class discussion, each student will prepare one question that speaks to a unifying theme, theory, or issue in the week's readings (i.e., a question about them as a group or totality) prior to class.** The question will be added to our "Discussion Question" google document by 2pm of class day to stimulate the class discussion. Be sure to include your name with your question. Please read through these discussion questions before class as we will use them to help with class discussion. In the end, there are no shortcuts to doing the reading. Take extensive notes, jot down ideas, etc. Please see section on reading below.

## 2. *Presentations* (20% of your grade)

Students are responsible for providing a 12 to 15-minute presentation on a theory of their choice using a presentation software like PowerPoint. We will then have 5 minutes for Q and A. The presentation will focus on providing the class with a brief overview of the theory, the theory's key contribution, two different and recent empirical articles that have tested the theory, a key conceptual challenge, and a key methodological challenge. The idea behind this assignment is that this presentation can serve as a foundation for teaching criminological theory to undergraduates. It also provides students an opportunity to get to know a theory of their choice and one that we may not have covered much if at all in class. A one-page proposal (single-spaced) that previews your theory presentation is due at the beginning of class on **February 28<sup>th</sup>**, the sixth week of class. You will also briefly present this proposal to the class on this day (2/28/24). Students are **required** to meet with me at least three days before your assigned day for the final presentation so that I can review your slides (please email me to set up a time).

3. *Precis* (10% each; 20% total). Each student will put together 2 *precis*. Each *precis* will introduce and connect the readings within an area (i.e., each week). The *precis* is a 2-4 page single-spaced summary of the theory, data, methods, and argument of the readings that are essential to the week's reading. Based on the readings, the *precis* should identify the core concepts, assumptions, and ideas of the area for that week, and provide a sense of its current empirical status given what you read (i.e., to what degree is it supported with evidence) and one key policy implication *for the area*. **Note: This exercise is not about providing a laundry list of what the articles/readings say but rather what ideas connect them (i.e, think about two to three themes that organize the area.** One is due before the midterm exam and the second is due before the final exam. Please provide a hard-copy of your *precis*.

4. *Exams* (Midterm is worth 25% and the final exam is worth 25%; exams are thus 50 % of your grade).

The essay midterm and final exams are designed for you to demonstrate a solid understanding of the various theoretical frameworks covered throughout the semester and to exhibit your ability to think critically and to synthesize material. The exam questions are designed to mimic those used in our qualifying exams. If you must miss an exam (excused absence only), you should let me know well in advance and with appropriate documentation. See the graduate school link for policies on excused absences below.

### **Expectations for a graduate level course on criminological theory:**

- 1) Read, Read, and Then Read Some More– This is a graduate-level theory course and this course demands significant reading. While I have done my best to keep the readings to a manageable length, it is imperative, not only for your grade, but for the quality of the discussion, that you read them carefully and actively. To elevate the level of the discussion, everyone is expected to engage deeply with the texts. Please come to class prepared.
- 2) Offer Arguments, not Opinions – While the notion that “everyone is entitled to their opinion” is the trend now, this does not apply to academic discussions. In this class, you ARE NOT entitled to your opinions; you are only entitled to what you can argue for in a thoughtful way

based on reading materials. In other words, students will have the opportunity to hone their analytical skills in this class. Remember the purpose of theory is not to reach definitive answers, but to keep the conversation going.

3) Students are expected to attend all classes. If you must miss a class, please let me know ahead of time and follow the procedures for an excused absence as set out by the UMD Graduate School.

### **Other Business:**

1. The Graduate School provides a guide to information about graduate course policies including excused absences and academic integrity, other policies related to graduate study, and relevant on-campus resources. The guide at the following link applies to your graduate coursework and experience at UMD: <https://gradschool.umd.edu/course-related-policies>

2. **Accessibility Support:** Please make sure you work with Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) to plan out any accommodations you might need. Once the accommodation is determined, please discuss the plan with me.

3. While we are back on campus and having in person classes, many of us are dealing with additional stress and anxiety. Please let me know if you find yourself in a situation that makes it difficult to meet the goals of this class and please do so sooner rather than later. Contact me via email and we can set up a time to meet.

## CLASS SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

### WEEK 1 (1/22-1/26) Wednesday

- Introductions
- Intro to the course (discuss syllabus, why we need theory)
- Overview of early classical/positivist conceptions of crime
- Tools for evaluating theory

#### Readings:

Bursik, Robert J. 2009. The dead sea scrolls and criminological knowledge: 2008 presidential address to the American society of criminology. *Criminology* 47:5-16.  
The ASC Ethics Committee. "It Is Time to Do Better with Ethics Education at the Doctoral Level." *The Criminologist* (January/February 2024).

### WEEK 2 (1/29-2/2) Wednesday

#### **Topic: (Neo) Classical Theories: Deterrence, Routine Activities, and Rational Choice**

#### Readings:

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapters 1 and 3.

Paternoster, Raymond and Ronet Bachman. 2001. "The Structure and Relevance of Theory in Criminology." Pp. 1-10 in *Explaining Criminals and Crime: Essays in Contemporary Criminological Theory*, edited by R. Paternoster and R. Bachman. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Cohen, Lawrence and Marcus Felson. 1979. Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activities Approach. *American Sociological Review* 44: 588-608.

Stafford, Mark C. and Mark Warr. 1993. A reconceptualization of general and specific deterrence. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30:123-135.

Grasmick, Harold and Robert J. Bursik Jr. 1990. Conscience, significant others, and rational choice: Extending the deterrence model. *Law and Society Review* 24:837-861.

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<sup>1</sup> While I plan to stick to this schedule, please know that we may have to make adjustments throughout the semester. If changes are made, I will inform students as soon as possible.

WEEK 3 (2/5-2/9) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Biological, Psychological, Developmental and Life Course Theories**

Readings:

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapters 4, 5, and 14.

Beaver, Kevin M., Eric J. Connolly, Joseph L. Nedelec, and Joseph A. Schwartz. 2018. On the Genetic and Genomic Basis of Aggression, Violence and Antisocial Behavior. In Hopcroft, Rosemary Lynn, ed, *The Oxford handbook of evolution, biology, and society*. Oxford University Press.

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. Adolescence-limited and life-course persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review* 100: 674-701.

Laub, John H., Zachary R. Rowan, and Robert J. Sampson. 2018. The age-graded theory of informal social control. *The Oxford handbook of developmental and life-course criminology* 295-322.

Broidy, L., & Cauffman, E. (2017). The Glueck Women: Using the Past to Assess and Extend Contemporary Understandings of Women's Desistance from Crime. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 3(2), 102-125.

Rocque, M., & Posick, C. (2017). Paradigm shift or normal science? The future of (biosocial) criminology. *Theoretical Criminology*, 21(3), 288-303.

WEEK 4 (2/12-2/16) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Anomie and Strain Theories**

Readings:

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapters 6 and 7

Durkheim, Emile. 1979. *Suicide*. New York: The Free Press. Chapter 5: "Anomic Suicide."

Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social structure and anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3:672-682.

Cloward, Richard A. and Lloyd Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. Chapters 4-6.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. *Crime and the American Dream*. Chapters 1 and 4.

Agnew, Robert. 1992. Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency. *Criminology* 30: 47-87.

WEEK 5 (2/19-2/23) **Wednesday**

**Topic: The Chicago School and early social disorganization approaches to crime**

Readings: Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapter 8.

Shaw, Clifford R. and Henry McKay. 1969. *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Excerpts).

...1949. Rejoinder. *American Sociological Review* 14:614-617.

Shaw, Clifford R. 2013. *The jack-roller: A delinquent boy's own story*. University of Chicago Press, 2013. (Excerpts).

Kornhauser, Ruth R. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Chapters 3 and 4).

Matsueda, R. L. (2006). Differential social organization, collective action, and crime. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 46 (1-2), 3-33.

WEEK 6 (2/26-3/1) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Contemporary reformulations and/or extensions of social disorganization theory**

Readings:

Bursik, Robert J. 1988. Social disorganization and theories of crime and delinquency: Problems and Prospects. *Criminology* 26:519-552.

Sampson, Robert J., and W. Byron Groves. 1989. Community structures and crime: Testing social disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 774–802.

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudenbush, and Felton Earls. 1997. Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy. *Science* 277: 918-24.

Wilson, William Julius. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Chapters 1-2.

Peterson, Ruth D. 2012. "The Central Place of Race in Crime and Justice – The American Society of Criminology's 2011 Sutherland Address." *Criminology* 50(2):303-328.

**One page proposal of theory presentation – DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**

**WEEK 7 (3/4-3/8) Wednesday**

**Topic: Social control and self-control theories; Discuss Mid-Term Exam**

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapter 10.

Reiss, Albert J. 1951. Delinquency as the failure of personal and social controls. *American Sociological Review* 16:196-207.

Sykes, Gresham M. and David Matza. 1957. "Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency." *American Sociological Review* 22(6):664-70.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press. Chapters 1-2; 6-8.

Gottfredson, Michael and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press. Pp. 1-15, 85-120, 123-168.

Geis, Gilbert. 2008. Self-control: A hypercritical assessment, in Eric Goode (Ed.). *Out of control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hirschi, Travis & Michael R. Gottfredson. 2008. Critiquing the critics: The authors respond, in Eric Goode (Ed.). *Out of control: Assessing the General Theory of Crime*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

**WEEK 8 (3/11-3/15) Wednesday**

**IN CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

**FIRST PRECIS DUE BY TODAY BEFORE EXAM**

**WEEK 9 (3/18-3/22) Wednesday**

**SPRING BREAK**

WEEK 10 (3/25-3/29) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Subcultural, differential association and social learning theories**

**Readings:**

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapter 9.

Cohen, Albert K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. Chapters 4-5.

Wolfgang, Marvin, and Franco Ferracuti. 1967. *The subculture of violence: Toward an integrated theory in Criminology*. London: Tavistock. Pp. 95-163 (Part III).

Sutherland, Edwin H. and Donald R. Cressey. 1966. *Criminology*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company. Chapter 4.

Kornhauser, Ruth R. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2 & 5.

Akers, Ronald L. and Wesley G. Jennings. The Social Learning of Crime and Deviance. *Handbook on Crime and Deviance* pp. 113-129.

WEEK 11 (4/1-4/5) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Tests of differential association/social learning theory and social control/self-control (aka “fireworks week”)**

**Readings:**

Posick and Rocque. 2018. “Introduction: What is Theory and Why are there Debates?”

Matsueda, Ross L. 1982. Testing control theory and differential association: A causal modeling approach. *American Sociological Review* 47:489-504.

Costello, Barbara, & Paul R. Vowell. 1999. Testing control theory and differential association: A reanalysis of the Richmond youth project data. *Criminology* 37:815-842.

Akers, Ron L. 1996. Is differential association/social learning cultural deviance theory? *Criminology* 34:229-247.

Hirschi, Travis. 1996. Theory without ideas: Reply to Akers. *Criminology* 34:249-256.

Costello, Barbara. 1997. On the logical adequacy of cultural deviance theories. *Theoretical Criminology* 1: 403-428.



WEEK 12 (4/8-4/12) **Wednesday**

**Topic: Critical Criminology: Conflict, Marxist, and Labeling**

**Readings:**

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapters 11, and 12

Lemert, Edwin. Primary and Secondary Deviation.

Pager, Devah. 2003. The mark of a criminal record. *American journal of sociology* 108: 937-975.

Quinney, Richard. "Class, State, and Crime."

Colvin, M., & Pauly, J. (1983). A Critique of Criminology: Toward an Integrated Structural-Marxist Theory of Delinquency Production. *American Journal of Sociology*, 89(3), 513-551.

Chapter 5 from Blalock, H. M., Jr. (1967). *Toward a theory of minority-group relations*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Braithwaite, John. "Crime, Shame and Reintegration."

Carter, M. J., & Fuller, C. 2016. Symbols, meaning, and action: The past, present, and future of symbolic interactionism. *Current Sociology* 64(6):931-961.

WEEK 13 (4/15-4/19) Wednesday

**Topic: Feminist Theory**

**Readings:**

Bernard, Snipes and Gerould: Chapter 13

Daly, Kathleen, and Meda Chesney-Lind. 1988. Feminism and criminology. *Justice quarterly* 5: 497-538.

Chesney-Lind, Meda. "Girls' Crime and Woman's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency."

Miller, J. (2014). Feminist criminology. In M. Schwartz & S. Hatty (Eds.), *Controversies in critical criminology* (pp. 15–27). New York: Routledge.

Messerschmidt, James. 2014. Crime as structured action: doing masculinities, race, class, sexuality, and crime [excerpts].

De Coster, Stacy, and Karen Heimer. 2017. Choice within Constraint: An Explanation of Crime at the Intersections. *Theoretical Criminology* 21:11–22.

WEEK 14 (4/22-4/26) Wednesday

**Topic: Rethinking Criminological Theory**

Hillyard, Paddy, and Steve Tombs. 2007. From 'crime' to social harm?. *Crime, law and social change* 48: 9-25.

Potter, Hillary. 2013. Intersectional criminology: Interrogating identity and power in criminological research and theory. *Critical Criminology* 21: 305-318.

Cunneen, Chris, and Juan Marcellus Tauri. 2019. "Indigenous peoples, criminology, and criminal justice." *Annual Review of Criminology* 2, no. 1: 359-381.

Korver-Glenn, Elizabeth, Prentiss Dantzler, and Junia Howell. 2021. "A Critical Intervention for Urban Sociology." Invited chapter prepared for *The Racial Structure of Sociological Thought* (under review), edited by Victor Ray and Jennifer Mueller. <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/zrj7s/>

Rivers III, Louie, Carole Gibbs, and Raymond Paternoster. "Integrating criminological and decision research theory: implications for understanding and addressing crime in marginalized communities." *Deviant behavior* 38, no. 1 (2017): 74-93.

**PRESENTATIONS #1**

WEEK 15 (4/29-5/3) Wednesday

**Topic: New Directions; Discuss In-Class Final Exam**

Agnew, R. (2012). Dire forecast: A theoretical model of the impact of climate change on crime. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(1), 21–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480611416843>

Butts, Jeffrey A., Caterina Gouvis Roman, Lindsay Bostwick, and Jeremy R. Porter. "Cure violence: a public health model to reduce gun violence." *Annual review of public health* 36 (2015): 39-53.

Channing, Iain, David Churchill, and Henry Yeomans. 2023. "Renewing Historical Criminology: Scope, Significance, and Future Directions." *Annual Review of Criminology* 6

LaFree, Gary, Michael A. Jensen, Patrick A. James, and Aaron Safer-Lichtenstein. 2018. "Correlates of violent political extremism in the United States." *Criminology* 56, no. 2: 233-268.

Sampson, Robert J. and A.S. Winter. "Poisoned development: Assessing childhood lead exposure as a cause of crime in a birth cohort followed through adolescence." *Criminology* 56, no. 2 (2018): 269-301.

**PRESENTATIONS #2**

WEEK 16 (5/6-5/10) Wednesday

**In-Class Final Exam on 5/8/2023**

**SECOND PRECIS DUE BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**