We must be concerned not merely about who murdered them, but about the system, the way of life, and the philosophy which produced the murderers.

– Martin Luther King, Jr.

CCJS 454 SECTION: 0101
CONTEMPORARY CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY

SPRING 2018
INSTRUCTOR
DR. WENDY STICKLE
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301-738-6307

COURSE FORMAT
ONLINE

OFFICE HOURS
BY APPOINTMENT

REQUIRED TEXT

SELECTED READINGS, AVAILABLE ON ELMS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
3 EXAMS 40%
1 TERM PAPER 20%
POLICY PRESENTATION 10%
BLOG POSTS 15%
REACTION POSTS 15%

This course is designed to expose students to many of the major accounts of criminological theory, focusing primarily on developments in the twentieth and twenty-first century. In addition, this course aims to teach students to critically assess and compare these theories to determine their relative merits and limitations. This course is primarily focused on theories related to the onset of criminal behavior - theories related to desistance from criminal behavior, or the amplification of criminal behavior in response to criminal sanctions, are not covered in depth.
REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL ONLINE LEARNING

This class is taught online, and for some of you, this may be your first online course. Whereas in classes taught in person there are regularly scheduled meeting times and places, this class will not meet in that format. The course is asynchronous, meaning that the material will be released each week in its entirety, and students can access the lectures and assignments on their own time.

However, while we are asynchronous the class does meet regularly through our ELMS course website. Logging onto the course website and becoming a frequent participant in the course will help you to quickly become comfortable and engaged in the material with you fellow classmates. Although you may never meet everyone in the class in person, you may find you get to communicate and discuss material more in this format than you had in a typical classroom.

Success in this online course will require you to:

- Ensure technical access to the online classroom. It is your responsibility to make sure you are using an appropriate Browser. Note: Internet Explorer does not appear to be completely compatible with the updated version of ELMS, so avoid using IE. I recommend Chrome or Firefox. All technical problems should be resolved using UMD OIT.
- Invest a minimum of 7-8 hours each week in the course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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 current research on these theories
4. Describe ways these theories have informed or could inform policy and practice
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you have a question about the course, it is likely that you are not alone. Therefore, INSTEAD of sending Dr. Stickle an individual email about course-related questions, please always submit your questions in the ‘FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS’ area on the course website. You will find this under ‘Discussions’ and I will quickly respond to all questions and concerns. This will enable all students to benefit from answers to questions.

You should always check the threads in the F.A.Q. section before sending me an email, it is likely that someone else has had your concern and it has already been addressed. Of course if your question is relating to a personal issue, feel free to email me.

GRADING DETAILS

Exams (40%): Each exam will test the student on material covered during the previous portion of the course. The student will be held responsible for all assigned readings, lecture materials, as well as class discussions. The exams will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, true/false, short answer, and essay questions. The exams will not be cumulative. Students will have 24 hours to complete the exam.

Term Paper (20%): You will be required to write a term paper in this class. This paper is divided into three separate assignments (due dates noted on ELMS):

1. Clear presentation of thesis and what you plan to do (no more than two pages)
2. Detailed Outline and annotated bibliography (include at least five empirical sources and 3-5 sentences for each article: a summary of the article, an evaluation of the article’s argument, and a statement (1-2 sentences) of how it fits with the greater structure of the paper.
3. Final term paper (no more than 2,000 words or 9 pages, excluding title and reference pages)

More details on this assignment, including topic options, are available on ELMS.

Policy Presentation (10%): You will be assigned to a group. Your group will be assigned a week where it is their assignment to assemble a brief presentation about one criminal justice policy that has been developed based on the criminological theories we are discussing that week in class. These presentations will be due every Friday during the course at 12:00pm EST to Dr. Stickle (wstickle@umd.edu). I will then post the student presentations in the weekly modules so you all students can access the materials assembled by their fellow students. I will assign programs to assure there is no overlap. Students are
expected to assemble a brief PowerPoint presentation about their policy (10 slides maximum plus a reference slide), and submit one multimedia resource (video, audio clip, news article, etc.).

**Class Participation:**

- **Weekly Class Reactions (15%):** Each week, after students complete the readings, experience the lectures, view student policy presentations, and participate in the online blogs, they will be required to post a class reaction paper (300 - 400 words) that assessed the material presented that week, offers a critique and poses unanswered questions of future questions for the theory in question. Students will submit these and only the professor will have access to them. These reactions will be due every Tuesday at 11:59pm EST. **You must submit at least 12 reaction papers.**

- **Weekly Online Blog Postings (15%):** Once a week, after reading and viewing the course material, students will be expected to engage in a thoughtful discussion of the material presented on Online Blogs and any other required readings for the week. This is your opportunity to express your thoughts on the readings, and engage in a discussion of the material with both your fellow students and the professor. I will pose a few discussion topics to get things moving each week, but students should not feel limited to only discussing these prompts. When a blog is assigned, I expect students to post one original blog entry (250 words) attacking an issue in the week's materials, and engage in a thoughtful discussion with at least three other students by commenting on their entries. **You must participate in at least 12 blogs.**

All personal opinions should be supported by references to texts and the online class discussions or blog.

Contributions that are routinely bunched at the end of a week will receive a lower grade than regular, continuous comments. Quality of discussion is valued; simply commenting that “you agree” with a previous entry will not earn you credit. Thoughtful, articulate responses to the topics being discussed will earn students a higher grade on their entries.

To help you construct your postings, here are some examples:

**Example of an ‘Excellent’ Original Blog Posting:**

Classical criminology first emerged as a protest against the harsh, existing criminal justice policies of the spiritualistic approach to criminology. Classicism is most associated with the ideas of Italian philosopher and scholar, Cesare Beccaria. According to Beccaria,
punishments should be certain, severe (just proportional to the seriousness of offenses), and swift so that potential offenders would then be deterred and avoid committing crime based on rational calculation. He believed that the primary goal of punishment was deterrence (CAW pg. XX). Today, these basic ideas of the classical approach have become the basis for all modern criminal justice systems. One of the main issues that I have with the deterrence theory is that it's based on the assumption that humans are rational beings and therefore offenders rationally calculate the costs and benefits of committing a crime. I don’t contest that humans are rational beings-I just don’t think that criminal behavior is always calculated rationally. What about the numerous people who are under the influence of alcohol or another substance or even under a certain emotional when they commit the crime? Surely these states inhibit rational? Also, these theories don’t explain why people commit crime, but rather assumes that there are always people around who will commit a crime if given a chance. So how do we find out a definitive way to measure why people commit crime? Is there such a way? And if research shows that severity of punishment does not have a significant impact on deterrence, why is it that the United States has such a huge problem with mass incarceration specifically because of the severity of sentences on drug related crimes?

Example of an ‘Excellent’ response to another students’ blog posting:
I think you bring up an excellent point about rationality, and how it can change under conditions such as being intoxicated, enraged, etc. But I think that the theory might argue that although rationality is altered it is still a decision-making process. That might be what Comish & Clarke meant by ‘bounded rationality’ (scholarly article pg. XX). Even though the decision is quick and seems thoughtless, they would argue the person used the information they had available and made the decision to act. Just a thought!

Example of a ‘Poor’ response to another students’ original blog posting:
I agree, nice job! I think we need to rethink our use of incarceration since it doesn’t deter criminals.

**Extra Credit:** There will be no opportunities to receive extra credit in this class. There are a lot of assignments. Students have many opportunities to do well in this course.
Final Grade

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COURSE POLICIES

Makeup Policy: Exams, policy presentation, and term paper assignments are considered to be Major Scheduled Graded Events and therefore the new University medical excuse policy which allows one signed honor statement attesting to illness does not apply to them. Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, required school activities, and required court appearance. If 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. Documentation must be provided via email within 24 hours of the missed assignment. Students must notify me prior to the missed exam or paper due date whenever reasonable.

Sending Email: Please use the subject line “CCJS454” whenever you send an email, which will increase the probability of me responding quickly. I will mainly rely on email in order to communicate with students. I prefer communications be send via gmail rather than through ELMS. Please check your email regularly.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Use of Technology: Given this course is online, you must have daily access to a computer and internet in order to complete the course requirements.

*ACADEMIC INTEGRITY*

Academic dishonesty of any form will NOT be tolerated. Academic Dishonesty encompasses the traditional behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc., but also includes activities such as possessing and or reviewing previous semester's exams and computer assignments. Additionally, students will be asked to write the University approved Honor Pledge on each exam and project. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally Recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at
Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit:

http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html

**Code of Conduct**: Even though this class is online, the same expectation of appropriate conduct applies. Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another, or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Security. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

**Religious Observations**: Although I do not anticipate there to be any religious observations during this course, please notify me within the first three days of the course.

**Grade Disputes**: If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe the professor should review them, you must submit a written request over email to the professor that describes your concern in detail. This request must be submitted within three days of the day that grades for the relevant assignment are disseminated.

**Copyright**: The lectures I deliver in this class and the course materials I create and distribute are protected by federal copyright law as my original works. My lectures are recorded or delivered from written lectures in order to ensure copyright protection. You are permitted to take notes of my lectures and to use course materials for your use in this course. You may not record, reproduce, or distribute my lectures/notes for any commercial purpose without my written consent. Persons who sell or distribute copies or modified copies of my course materials, possess commercial copies of my notes (i.e. Terpnotes), or assist another person or entity in selling or distributing those materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, Part 9(k).

**Course Evaluation**: I take your course evaluation very seriously. Each year I revise my syllabus, course assignments and exam questions based on the feedback I receive on the course evaluation. I am not only interested in the scores that you give this class but I am also very interested in the specific comments you have about this course. I want to encourage each student in this class to evaluate not only my class but all of your classes. One important campus-wide evaluation is the online evaluation at the end of the semester.
Students can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete their evaluations.

**Disability Support:** I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than the third day of class. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM’s DSS Office.

For more details on course-related polices, visit this website: [http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html)
Below is a simple course schedule. Each week will start on Wednesday. More details on daily expectations and additional readings can be found on ELMS, under Modules.

**Week 1 (starting Wednesday, Jan 24)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Introduction to Criminology

**Week 2 (starting Wednesday, Jan 31)**
- **Lecture Topic:** The Origins of Modern Criminology
- **Reading:** CAW Part I

**Week 3 (starting Wednesday, Feb 7)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Modern Deterrence Theories and Rational Choice Theory
- **Readings:** CAW Part X
- **Term Paper Thesis Assignment due (Monday Feb 12)**

**Week 4 (starting Wednesday, Feb 14)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Environmental and Routine Activities Theory
- **Reading:** CAW Part XI

**Week 5 (starting Wednesday, Feb 21)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Positivism and Individual Trait Theory
- **Readings:** CAW Part XII

**Week 6 (starting Wednesday, Feb 28)**
- **Exam 1 (Feb 28)**
- **Lecture Topic:** The Chicago School and Social Disorganization Theory
- **Readings:** CAW Part II

**Week 7 (starting Wednesday, Mar 7)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Strain Theories
- **Readings:** CAW Part IV

**Week 8 (starting Wednesday, Mar 14)**
- **Lecture Topic:** Learning Theories
- **Readings:** CAW Part III
Week 9 (starting Wednesday, Mar 21)
  ▪ Spring Break!!

Week 10 (starting Wednesday, Mar 28)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Control Theories
  ▪ Readings for next class: CAW Part V
  ▪ ***Detailed Outline and Annotated Bibliography Due April 2

Week 11 (starting Wednesday, Apr 4)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Labeling Theory
  ▪ Readings: CAW Part VI

Week 12 (starting Wednesday, Apr 11)
  ▪ Exam 2 (Apr 11)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Life Course and Developmental Theories
  ▪ Readings: CAW Part XIII

Week 13 (starting Wednesday, Apr 18)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Integrated Theory
  ▪ Readings: CAW Part XVI

Week 14 (starting Wednesday, Apr 25)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Explaining Correlates of Crime (Gender and Race)
  ▪ Readings: Part VIII and Part XV

Week 15 (starting Wednesday, May 2)
  ▪ Lecture Topic: Putting Theory to Work: Guiding Public Policy
  ▪ Readings: CAW Part XVII