



SOCI 2250 – CRIMINOLOGY

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Course Description

Sociology is the “study of society” that examines and questions patterns of social behavior. Criminology is the study of behavior deemed “criminal,” its changing definitions, its causes, its perpetrators, and responses to it. This course will introduce theories and concepts central to the sociological study of crime, policing, and punishment in an effort to move beyond common-sense understandings of these topics. The goal is for students to learn to critically evaluate what it means to classify something as criminal, who engages in crime, the nature of criminal justice institutions in the United States, and the challenges that different groups encounter in the face of these institutions. Throughout the quarter, students will learn to use sociological and criminological theory, research, and concepts to evaluate these elements of the social world to gain a better understanding of their lives and the lives of those around them.

Students are expected to be actively engaged and professional. *Students are also strongly encouraged to remain open to new material and perspectives on our topics, and to ask questions regarding course materials or objectives.*

Course Objectives

This course is intended to introduce you to several central principles, methods, concepts, and perspectives used as “tools” in criminology. Students will develop a social scientific approach to understanding these phenomena and will be encouraged to reconsider and challenge widely held beliefs that they may hold or which they may encounter. The primary objective of the course is for students to expand their perspectives to think sociologically and critically about these largely taken-for-granted aspects of social life in the modern world, and to demonstrate this knowledge. These objectives will be met through course materials, quizzes, and exams.

Required Text & Materials

There is no required textbook for this class. Instead, readings and other materials will be available through the Canvas course page.



READING LIST: THEMES & MATERIALS

Course Introduction – Defining Crime & Criminology

- Reading: "Sociology of Deviance & Crime"
Reading: Durkheim, "The Normal & the Pathological"

How Do We Measure Crime?

- Reading: Uggen & McElrath, "Six Social Sources of the US Crime Drop"
Reading: FBI, "The Nation's Two Crime Measures"
Reading: "Many Americans Are Convinced Crime is Rising in the US..."
Optional: "The Trouble with Crime Statistics"

The Politics of Crime

- Reading: Page, "Why Punishment is Purple"
Reading: Rosenfeld & Messner, "A Social Welfare Critique of Contemporary Crime Control"
Optional: "2020 Presidential Candidates on Criminal Justice"

Theories of Criminal Behavior, Part 1

- Reading: Rosenfeld and Messner, *Crime & the Economy*, chapter 2

Theories of Criminal Behavior, Part 2

- Reading: "Sutherland's Differential Association Theory Explained"
Reading: "Deviance and Strain Theory in Sociology"
Reading: "An Overview of Labeling Theory"
Video: [Perspectives on Deviance](#)

Contemporary Issues in Criminology – Race & Policing in America

- Reading: Cobbina, *Hands Up, Don't Shoot*, chapter 1
Reading: "Ten Key Facts About Policing..."
Video: [PBS Frontline: Policing the Police](#)
Optional: Benton, "Representation is Not Enough..."

Contemporary Issues in Criminology – Mass Incarceration

- Reading: Shannon & Uggen, "Visualizing Punishment"
Reading: Comfort, "Repercussions of Incarceration on Close Relationships"
Reading: Cullen et al., "Prisons Do Not Reduce Recidivism"
Video: [PBS Frontline: Prison State](#)
Optional: Comfort, "Punishment beyond the Legal Offender"