SURVEY OF CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES  
CCJ 5606, Wednesday 10:00 a.m., Eppes 0214

Professor: Carter Hay  
Office: Eppes Hall 307  
E-Mail: chay@fsu.edu  
Office hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
(please make an appointment)

Course description and objectives

This course is designed to accomplish two goals. The first is to increase student understanding of the content of major theories of criminal involvement. For each theory, this content most notably includes its basic intellectual orientation, its specific hypotheses, and the extent of empirical support for those hypotheses.

The second goal is to train students in what it means to think theoretically. This mode of thinking goes beyond the arguments of any one theory. It involves a more general practice of thinking about an outcome (with involvement in crime as just one example) in terms of the complicated causal process that may lead to it.

Reading material

Once we get past The Jack-Roller (2nd class meeting), the readings often will be of two types. The first will be a review article or chapter that describes the theory’s history, arguments, and overall results from empirical tests. The second will involve an empirical study that analyzed data to test hypotheses from that theory.

The readings are available from four sources:


2. The book The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy’s Own Story from Shaw (1930) (also available at the FSU Bookstore and online vendors).

3. Chapters that have been placed on electronic reserve. I have done this for works that are not available through normal online searches. They will appear on the Canvas course site.

4. Recent journal articles that can be obtained online through your own search. There are many ways in which these articles can be found, but the simplest approach is to go through the FSU libraries’ website (https://www.lib.fsu.edu/) because FSU has arrangements with many of the full-text vendors. I often search the “Proquest Criminal Justice” database.

Course requirements

1. Research paper (30% of grade). Each student will prepare a research paper that systematically reviews and critiques a major theory of crime causation. The audience for your paper should be researchers seeking to do work on that theory—your goal should be to organize knowledge of this theory in a way that will be useful to such researchers.
Every paper should accomplish three goals. First, it should describe the historical and intellectual background of a theory, and then clearly describe its causal arguments. Second, it should describe the empirical research that has sought to test those causal arguments. Third, it should discuss an important priority for future research.

We will discuss in more detail at a later point more precise expectations about the paper and how it should be prepared.

One other note: Papers that take a different approach than what is suggested here are acceptable (and encouraged, actually) provided that (a) it moves the paper in the direction of being something that could be submitted for publication to a peer-reviewed journal and (b) the paper topic is developed in consultation with me.

2. **Exam (40% of grade).** There will be an in-class essay exam testing your knowledge of the theories that have been covered to that point. One week in advance of the exam, I will pass out a list of essay questions for which you should prepare answers. A small number of these questions will be selected to appear on the exam.

3. **“Theory-to-research” assignment (20% of grade).** Each student will prepare a short paper in which you describe a research idea that can be pursued to shed light on some key argument made by one of the theories we’ve covered.

   The goal for these assignments is to emphasize the need to examine criminological theory in terms of the new research it should inspire. The key point is this: A theory is useless without empirical tests of it. In Nagin and Tremblay’s (2005:918) words, “theories are generally little more than simpleminded human brain products offered for falsification.” Theory becomes useful only when it inspires new research that tests its ideas, therefore helping us understand how the world actually operates, not just how it appears in some theorist’s mind.

   (For this also, we will later discuss some precise expectations about these assignments).

4. **Class participation (10% of grade).** Each student is expected to attend class, read the assigned material, and contribute to the class discussion. A major component of class time will involve me calling on students to answer questions about the material. Please see the “Guide to class participation and notes” document in the Course Library.

**Other policies and issues**

- Changes in the reading and schedule may occasionally be made. Notice of changes will be made during class (or on the Canvas course website) and students are responsible for getting this information.

- University attendance policy: Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

- The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “... be honest and truthful and ... [to] strive for
personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy](http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy)).

♦ Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:
   (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
   (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu  
[http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/](http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/)
### Schedule of Topics and Assignments

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August 28</strong></td>
<td>Discussion of the course and preliminary issues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 4</strong></td>
<td><em>The Jack-Roller</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 11</strong></td>
<td>Social control theory</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>September 18</strong></td>
<td>Self-control theory</td>
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<td><strong>September 25</strong></td>
<td>Deterrence and rational choice theories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 2</strong></td>
<td>Social disorganization and ecological theories</td>
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<td><strong>October 9</strong></td>
<td>Differential association/social learning theory</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 16</strong></td>
<td>Workshop on your term papers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em><strong>Theory-to-research assignment is due</strong></em></td>
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<td><strong>October 23</strong></td>
<td>Labeling theory</td>
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<td><strong>October 30</strong></td>
<td>Strain theory</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>November 6</strong></td>
<td><em><strong>In-class exam</strong></em></td>
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<td><strong>November 13</strong></td>
<td>No class—ASC</td>
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<td><strong>November 20</strong></td>
<td>Strain theory continued (with an emphasis on Agnew)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>November 27</strong></td>
<td>No class—Thanksgiving Break (FSU closed)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>December 4</strong></td>
<td>Life course</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>December 9</strong></td>
<td><em><strong>Term paper is due at 5:00 p.m.</strong></em> (it must be turned in as an electronic copy using the Canvas system—more on that later).</td>
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Reading Assignments

Note: Asterisks indicate a chapter that can be downloaded from the Files page on the Canvas course site; all others can be obtained from the Akers et al. text or through searches of the Proquest Criminal Justice database accessed from lib.fsu.edu.

August 28. Discussion of the course, discussion of preliminary issues
Akers et al. 2017. “Introduction to Criminological Theory.” Ch. 1

September 4. The Jack-Roller

September 11. Social control theory
Akers et al. 2017. “Social Bonding and Social Control Theories.” Ch. 6 (read just on social control and social bonding—leaving the self-control sections for next week).


September 18. Self-control theory
Akers et al. 2017. “Social Bonding and Social Control Theories.” Ch. 6 (read the sections on self-control).


September 25. Deterrence and rational choice theories


October 2. Social disorganization and ecological theories


October 9. Differential association/social learning theory


October 16. Workshop on your term papers, assignment due, no new reading

October 23. Labeling theory


October 30. Strain theory


November 6. Exam day

November 13. ASC week—work on term papers

November 20. Strain theory (continued, with an emphasis on Agnew’s theory)


November 27. Thanksgiving (FSU closed)—work on term papers this week

December 4. The developmental/life course perspective
