

**Theory Comprehensive Exam
Fall 2008**

Instructions: For this exam, you are to select any four (4) of the following questions. All responses are to be turned in at 4:00 p.m. Several faculty members have been assigned to monitor the exam, and their designated hours are listed below. You may contact Margarita if you have any problem requiring faculty attention.

8:00am-10:00am	Sarah Bacon
10:00am-12:00pm	Ted Chiricos
12:00pm-2:00pm	Eric Stewart
2:00 pm-4:00pm	Eric Baumer

1. What is desistance? What is the best theoretical explanation for desistance? Systematically describe this theory, the relevant empirical evidence, and the key issues to be addressed in future research.
2. Social and racial threat have become increasingly useful in criminology to those interested in understanding the mobilization of social controls in a variety of contexts. Discuss the origins and evolution of this theoretical perspective and highlight some of the kinds of research that have been done to apply this approach empirically.
3. A number of contemporary criminological theories have their roots in sociology. A key sociological theorist that has informed the theoretical developments in the field of criminology is Emile Durkheim. Discuss the contemporary criminological theories that draw from Durkheim's framework. How have these theories been reformulated from his original insights? Within your response, include as many different macro- and micro-theoretical perspectives as possible.
4. One of the most important issues in criminology is the role that sanctions play in the etiology of crime. In general terms, the deterrence doctrine asserts that sanctions in the wake of illegal behavior reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior while the labeling perspective asserts that sanctions increase the likelihood of future illegal conduct. Specify the causal process that each perspective asserts comes into play when individuals are sanctioned and how this process ultimately leads to either decreased (in the case of deterrence) or increased (with labeling) offending. Once you have done so, summarize the research on the role of sanctions and discuss how it has informed the labeling vs. deterrence debate.
5. Discuss racial and ethnic differences in crime by describing the extent of those differences, being sure to note how the magnitude of differences may vary according to such things as the data source and the type of crime being considered (and other factors that you see as important). Then identify the theory or theories that best explain racial/ethnic differences in crime. Be sure to provide a detailed description of empirical research that bears on this issue.

6. It is a criminological truism that women commit less crime than men. In recent years, however, girls' involvement in delinquency, including violence, has been increasing, and the gender gap in offending appears to be narrowing. What criminological theory is best equipped to explain not only sex differences in offending, but also the closing gender gap?

7. During the past century there have been three significant shifts in violent crime rates: a strong persistent increase from the early 1960s through the mid-to-late 1970s; an abrupt and sharp increase in youth violence from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s; and an unprecedented decline in all forms of crime during the 1990s. Describe the theoretical accounts that have been offered for each of these major crime shifts, and summarize what we have learned about the empirical validity of these perspectives from the extant research.

8. During the past three decades, there has been a persistent increase in U.S. incarceration rates. And yet, this increase has varied across different racial groups. Summarize the theoretical accounts that could be offered both for the overall increase and for the differences among racial groups, and summarize the state of empirical knowledge about why these patterns have occurred.