

**Theory Comprehensive Exam
Spring 2013**

Instructions: For this exam, you are to answer a total of four (4) questions. In particular, you are to answer one question from Section I and three questions from Section II. All responses are to be turned in at 4:00 p.m. You may contact Margarita if you have any problem requiring faculty attention.

Section I:

Directions: Please answer **one** of the three questions from this section.

1. Citing relevant literature, discuss the development of two (2) of the following four general theories of crime from inception to the present date. For each theory, present a detailed overview of a) how the theory explains offending, b) the major transitions/extensions of the early versions of the theory through today, c) recent literature testing varying components of each theory and d) the major critiques of each theory's ability to perform as a general theory of crime.
 - A. Learning theory
 - B. Strain theory
 - C. Deterrence theory
 - D. Labeling theory
2. Travis Hirschi has advanced two influential criminological theories. Discuss each of his theories in detail. Are the theories supported by empirical research?
3. Theoretical criminology often draws sharp distinctions between macro-level and individual-level perspectives. Indeed, many observers suggest that they are directed at explaining fundamentally different outcomes. Do you agree or disagree with this position? Explain and justify your position by, among other things, evaluating the arguments and logic of one macro-and one individual-level theory.

Section II:

Directions: Please answer **three** of the seven questions from this section.

4. Contemporary criminological theory and research has been dominated by sociological explanations. During the past decade, there has been a slight shift with more and more research examining the biosocial correlates to criminal behavior. Provide an overview of the biosocial perspective and discuss the literature examining the biosocial correlates to antisocial outcomes.

5. Immigration, crime and social control are increasingly topical in criminological inquiry. Picking either crime or social control, discuss the theoretical expectations that have been developed with regard to their relationship to immigration and then summarize what the empirical evidence suggests is the most likely nature of that relationship.
6. Discuss sex differences in crime by describing the extent of those differences and 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 crime differences between males and females. Be sure to provide a detailed description of empirical research that bears on this issue.
7. Offer a theoretical interpretation on the link between formal legal sanctions and offending. Which theories or theoretical framework best explain(s) the above association? Please cite relevant literature and studies.
8. America has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Drawing on the theoretical and empirical literature, explain why this appears to be the case.
9. What is the best theoretical explanation for criminal desistance? Systematically describe this theory, the relevant empirical evidence, and the key issues to be addressed in future research.
10. Steven Pinker has argued that we are today living in the least violent era of human history. Discuss the arguments he makes on this issue and the supporting evidence, emphasizing the historic trends that he sees as responsible for the decline in violence. Then discuss the ways in which this perspective can inform research in criminology.