

SURVEY OF CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORIES
CCJ 5606, Wednesday 11:00 a.m., Eppes 0214

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Office hours: Monday 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:

1. Chapters from the book *Criminological Theories* (7th edition) by Akers, Sellers, and Jennings (2017). This book is available at the FSU Bookstore and from online vendors.
2. The book *The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* (we'll discuss how to access this book on the first day of class).
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 and grades

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 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 under Files in Canvas.

There will be a total of 100 possible points. Your final grade will be based on how many points you earn during the session, with the following thresholds used to assign letter grades:

A/A+	93.00-100.00	B+	87.00-89.99	C+	77.00-79.99
A-	90.00-92.99	B	83.00-86.99	C	73.00-76.99
		B-	80.00-82.99	C-	70.00-72.99
D+	67.00-69.99	F	59.99 or below		
D	63.00-66.99				
D-	60.00-62.99				

Other policies and issues

1. Changes in the reading, schedule, or any other part of the course may occasionally be made. It is each student's responsibility to stay involved in the course and remain informed of any changes.
2. It is my expectation that all assignments will be turned in on time, and I do not anticipate accepting any late assignments. I therefore recommend that you stay on top of your assignments and avoid the practice of cramming right before a deadline. It is recognized, however, that in a very small number instances, unavoidable emergencies occur that may warrant accepting a late assignment. Under such circumstances, you need to contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation.
3. **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.
4. **Academic Honor Policy:** 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/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy>)

5. **Academic Success:** Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Dean of Students office to learn more.
6. **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Florida State University (FSU) values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet integral requirements of the course.

To receive academic accommodations, a student:

(1) must register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS);(2) must provide a letter from OAS to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and, (3) should communicate with the instructor, as needed, to discuss recommended accommodations. A request for a meeting may be initiated by the student or the instructor.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services 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

Office of Accessibility Services
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
oas@fsu.edu
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

7. **Confidential Campus Resources:** Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program
University Center A, Rm. 4100

(850) 644-7161
Available 24/7/365
Office Hours: M-F 8-5
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services
Askew Student Life Center, 2nd floor
942 Learning Way
(850) 644-8255
<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services
Health and Wellness Center
(850) 644-6230
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

[See the reading assignments and schedule on the next page]

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

January 11	Discussion of the course and preliminary issues
January 18	<i>The Jack-Roller</i>
January 25	Social control theory
February 1	Self-control theory
February 8	Deterrence and rational choice theories
February 15	Social disorganization and ecological theories
February 22	Differential association/social learning theory
March 1	Workshop on your term papers ***Theory-to-research assignment is due***
March 8	Labeling theory
March 15	[Spring Break—no class meeting]
March 22	Classic strain theory
March 29	Strain theory continued (with an emphasis on Agnew)
April 5	***In-class exam***
April 12	Life course
April 19	Life course (continued)
April 26	Research paper advising
May 2	***Term paper is due at 5:00 p.m.*** (submitted through Canvas)

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.

January 11. Discussion of the course, discussion of preliminary issues

Akers et al. 2017. "Introduction to Criminological Theory." Ch. 1

January 18. *The Jack-Roller*

January 25. 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).

*Sampson, Robert J., and John H. Laub. 1993. "The Family Context of Juvenile Delinquency." Ch. 4 from *Crime in the Making*.

February 1. Self-control theory

Akers et al. 2017. "Social Bonding and Social Control Theories." Ch. 6 (read the sections on self-control).

*Hay, Carter, and Ryan Meldrum. 2016. "Theories of Self-Control and Behavior." Ch. 2 from *Self-Control and Crime over the Life Course*.

Wright, Bradley R.E., et al. 1999. "Low self-control, social bonds, and crime: Social causation, social selection, or both?" *Criminology* 37:479–514.

February 8. Deterrence and rational choice theories

Akers et al. 2017. "Deterrence and Rational Choice Theories." Ch. 2.

Grasmick, Harold G. and Robert J. Bursik, Jr. 1990. "Conscience, Significant Others, and Rational Choice: Extending the Deterrence Model." *Law and Society Review* 24:837–861.

Jacobs, Bruce A. 2010. "Deterrence and deterrability." *Criminology* 48:417-441.

February 15. Social disorganization and ecological theories

*Kubrin, Stucky, and Krohn. 2009. "Social Disorganization Theory." Ch. 4 from *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*.

Sampson, Robert J. and W. Byron Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social Disorganization Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 94:774–802.

[Also see Sampson et al., 1997, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* 277:918–924.]

February 22. Differential association/social learning theory

Akers et al. 2017. "Social Learning Theory." Ch. 5.

Haynie, Dana L. and D. Wayne Osgood. 2005. "Reconsidering Peers and Delinquency: How Do Peers Matter?" *Social Forces* 84:1109-1130.

Pratt, Travis, et al. 2010. "The Empirical Status of Social Learning Theory: A Meta-Analysis." *Justice Quarterly* 27:765-802.

March 1. Workshop on your term papers, assignment due, no new reading

March 8. Labeling theory

Akers et al. 2017. "Labeling and Reintegrative Shaming Theory." Ch. 7.

Bernburg, Jon Gunnar and Marvin D. Krohn. 2003. "Labeling, Life Chances, and Adult Crime: The Direct and Indirect Effects of Official Intervention in Adolescence on Crime in Early Adulthood." *Criminology* 41:1287-1318.

[Also recent and relevant: Lopes et al., 2012, "Labeling and Cumulative Disadvantage...", *Crime and Delinquency* 58:456-488; Doherty et al., 2016, "Examining the Consequences of the 'Prevalent Life Events' of Arrest and Incarceration...", *Justice Quarterly* 33:970-99].

March 22. Classic strain theory

Akers et al. 2017. "Anomie and Strain Theories." Ch. 9.

Baumer, Eric P. and Regan Gustafson. 2007. "Social Organization and Instrumental Crime: Assessing the Empirical Validity of Classical and Contemporary Anomie Theories." *Criminology* 45:601-648.

March 29. Strain theory (continued, with an emphasis on Agnew's GST)

Agnew, Robert. 1992. "Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency." *Criminology* 30:47–87.

Agnew, Robert, Timothy Brezina, John Paul Wright, and Francis T. Cullen. 2002. "Strain, Personality Traits, and Delinquency: Extending General Strain Theory." *Criminology* 40:43-72.

April 5. Exam day

April 12. The developmental/life course perspective

Akers et al. 2017. "Developmental and Life-Course Theories." Ch. 14.

Nagin, Daniel S., and Raymond Paternoster. 1991. "On the relationship of past to future participation in delinquency." *Criminology* 29:163–189.

April 19. The developmental/life course perspective (continued)

Moffitt, Terrie E. 1993. "Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy." *Psychological Review* 100:674–701.

April 26. Research paper advising

May 2 . Final exam week

Term paper is due at 5:00 p.m. (submitted through Canvas)