
**SEMINAR IN THEORETICAL CRIMINOLOGY:
LIFE-COURSE CRIMINOLOGY**

Florida State University
CCJ 6920 • Spring 2023

Course Instructor: Sonja Siennick
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Office Hours: Tuesday 12-1 and by appointment

Course Description

Life-course criminologists study the onset, maintenance, and cessation of criminal and deviant behavior in the context of people’s lives—their school, work, and family transitions, their broader social contexts, and their biology and general aging processes. Since its importation into the field about 30 years ago, “life course” has become one of the dominant conceptual frameworks in criminology. We life-course criminologists have our own [division](#) within the American Society of Criminology, and that division has its own [journal](#). Our own College of Criminology and Criminal Justice faculty members regularly [publish](#) within the subarea of life-course criminology. The subarea is growing [in Europe](#), too.

This course is an in-depth survey of foundational issues in life-course criminology. In completing the course, you will:

- Evaluate the major theoretical perspectives in the area
- Synthesize the conclusions of foundational readings in the area
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of existing life-course data sources
- Develop a thesis on a topic relevant to life-course criminology

If you are interested in the paths people take and the choices they make; if you believe that life is messy, and that events in one life domain can have spillover effects into other domains; and if you are interested in why people change, and why they stay the same; then you will find much of interest in this course!

Required Book

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Harvard University Press.

All other readings are available electronically through the library or are linked in the course calendar. Please complete the readings before class.

Course Requirements

Paper (50%). The main course requirement is a 15-20 (double-spaced) page research paper due on the day of the last class meeting. This paper should have a clear hypothesis or research question, should draw on peer-reviewed theoretical and empirical works, and should include a proposed data source and measures that could be used to address the hypothesis or question. If you have taken graduate-level methods and statistics courses, you can also include a proposed design and analytical strategy. High-scoring papers will be well-reasoned and well-argued, will demonstrate knowledge of the topic, and will “read” like the background and methods sections of published articles. This assignment will also be discussed in class.

Topic statement (5%). Prior to the week 5 class meeting, you will submit a paragraph describing your planned research paper topic. I encourage you to read ahead in the assigned reading list if you think that one of the later themes might be of interest to you. Four to six sentences on the unanswered question that you want to write about, and a sentence on a data source that might be a good match to that question, will suffice.

Presentation (15%). In one of the last five weeks of class, you will give a 10-15 minute in-class presentation on your research paper. Your slides will be due before the week 11 class meeting. Treat this like an ASC presentation in that you want to demonstrate your knowledge of and thoughtfulness about your chosen topic, but you can remain open to feedback on your approach. High-scoring presentations will be professional quality and empirically based and will focus squarely on your paper’s hypothesis or question.

Cohort profile discussion leader (15%). In small groups, you will read an extra reading during one designated week (see the course calendar) and educate the class about that reading. The extra readings all concern datasets that are well-suited to answering questions in life-course criminology. Describe the data source to the class, tell us what is it and is not useful for, and encourage the class to come up with empirical uses for it. You do not need to prepare slides or handouts unless they would be helpful to you.

Participation (15%). You can earn these points by attending all class meetings, saying things that show you did the readings, asking thoughtful questions, raising new points, and otherwise being a productive group member. Note that simply attending won’t be enough to earn full credit here; speak up!

Grading scale (percentages and final letter grades)

94-100%: A	84-86: B	74-76: C	Below 60: F
90-93: A-	80-83: B-	70-73: C-	
87-89: B+	77-79: C+	60-69: D	

Course Policies

Missing and late work. With one exception (see below), missing or late work will receive 0s unless you are unable to complete or submit the item due to an excused absence (per the University attendance policy below). When you email me about your excused absence, please include any documentation (e.g., a doctor's note, a jury duty summons).

The University attendance policy is as follows: 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.

Here is the exception: You are allowed ONE undocumented absence in this course. This amounts to a free extension on any one assignment. To use your free extension, contact me. The due date for that assignment will be extended by one week. Exceptions include group assignments and assignments due during the last week of classes. If you have an emergency and must request an extension on those, please contact me immediately.

Technology. If you experience internet or Canvas problems while you are submitting something, please email me immediately and attach your assignment.

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>)

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 Department of Student Support and Transitions to learn more.

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>

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>

University Counseling
Center
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/>

Syllabus Change Policy. Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Course Calendar

January 12

Week 1: The life-course perspective

Elder, G. H. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. *Child Development*, 69(1), 1-12.

Shanahan, M. J. (2000). Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: Variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 667-692.

January 19

Week 2: The age-crime curve

Hirschi, T., & Gottfredson, M. (1983). Age and the explanation of crime. *American Journal of Sociology*, 89(3), 552-584.

Hirschi, T., & Gottfredson, M. (1985). All wise after the fact learning theory, again: Reply to Baldwin. *American Journal of Sociology*, 90(6), 1330-1333. (Can also see Baldwin's 1985 reply to H&G's original statement)

Sweeten, G., Piquero, A. R., & Steinberg, L. (2013). Age and the explanation of crime, revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(6), 921-938.

January 26

Week 3: Criminal careers

Blumstein, A., & Cohen, J. (1987). Characterizing criminal careers. *Science*, 237(4818), 985-991.

Nagin, D., & Paternoster, R. (2000). Population heterogeneity and state dependence: State of the evidence and directions for future research. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 16(2), 117-144.

Petras, H., Nieuwbeerta, P., & Piquero, A. R. (2010). Participation and frequency during criminal careers across the life span. *Criminology*, 48(2), 607-637.

February 2

Week 4: Childhood

Patterson, G. R., DeBaryshe, B. D., & Ramsey, E. (1989). A developmental perspective on antisocial behavior. *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 329-335.

Patterson, G. R. (1993). Orderly change in a stable world: The antisocial trait as a chimera. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61(6), 911-919.

Thornberry, T. P., & Krohn, M. D. (2001). The development of delinquency. In *Handbook of Youth and Justice* (pp. 289-305). Springer.

Tremblay, R. E. (2015). Antisocial behavior before the age–crime curve: Can developmental criminology continue to ignore developmental origins? In *The Development of Criminal and Antisocial Behavior* (pp. 39-49). Springer.

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: Sampson, R. J., Kirk, D. S., & Bucci, R. (2022). Cohort Profile: Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods and Its Additions (PHDCN+). *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 1-17.

February 9

Week 5: Adolescence

Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674-701.

Moffitt, T. E., Caspi, A., Harrington, H., & Milne, B. J. (2002). Males on the life-course-persistent and adolescence-limited antisocial pathways: Follow-up at age 26 years. *Development and Psychopathology*, 14(1), 179-207.

Moffitt, T. E. (2017). A review of research on the taxonomy of life-course persistent versus adolescence-limited antisocial behavior. In *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory* (pp. 277-311). Transaction.

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: Ahonen, L., Farrington, D. P., Pardini, D., & Stouthamer-Loeber, M. (2021). Cohort profile: The Pittsburgh Youth Study (PYS). *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 7(3), 481-523.

February 16

Week 6: Adulthood

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (2003). Life-course desisters? Trajectories of crime among delinquent boys followed to age 70. *Criminology*, 41(3), 301-339.

Eggleston, E. P., & Laub, J. H. (2002). The onset of adult offending: A neglected dimension of the criminal career. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 30(6), 603-622.

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: Welsh, B. C., Zane, S. N., Yohros, A., & Paterson, H. (2022). Cohort Profile: the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study (CSYS). *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*.

February 23

Week 7: Desistance

Bersani, B. E., & Doherty, E. E. (2018). Desistance from offending in the twenty-first century. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1, 311-334.

Rocque, M. (2021). But what does it mean? Defining, measuring, and analyzing desistance from crime in criminal justice. In *Desistance from Crime: Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice*. National Institute of Justice. (<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/301498.pdf>)

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: McCuish, E., Lussier, P., & Corrado, R. (2022). Cohort Profile: The Incarcerated Serious and Violent Young Offender Study. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 8(2), 315-335.

March 2

Week 8: Local life circumstances and role transitions

Choose three (those with comps in your future might want to include the first two among their three):

Horney, J., Osgood, D. W., & Marshall, I. H. (1995). Criminal careers in the short-term: Intra-individual variability in crime and its relation to local life circumstances. *American Sociological Review*, 60(5), 655-673.

Warr, M. (1998). Life-course transitions and desistance from crime. *Criminology*, 36, 183-215.

Kirk, D. S. (2012). Residential change as a turning point in the life course of crime: Desistance or temporary cessation? *Criminology*, 2(50), 329-358.

Pyrooz, D., McGloin, J., & Decker, S. (2017). Parenthood as a turning point in the life course for male and female gang members: a study of within-individual changes in gang membership and criminal behavior. *Criminology*, 55, 869–899.

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: Farrington, D. P., Jolliffe, D., & Coid, J. W. (2021). Cohort profile: The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (CSDD). *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 7(2), 278-291.

March 9

Week 9: Collateral consequences

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1997). A life-course theory of cumulative disadvantage and the stability of delinquency. In *Advances in Criminological Theory, Volume 7: Developmental Theories of Crime and Delinquency* (pp. 133-161). Transaction.

Siennick, S. E., Stewart, E. A., & Staff, J. (2014). Explaining the association between incarceration and divorce. *Criminology*, 52(3), 371-398.

Siennick, S. E., & Widdowson, A. O. (2022). Juvenile arrest and later economic attainment: Strength and mechanisms of the relationship. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 38, 23-50.

Read if this is your week to present a cohort profile: Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Nieuwbeerta, P., Beijersbergen, K. A., Bosma, A. Q., De Cuyper, R., Doekhie, J., ... & Wermink, H. (2018). Cohort profile: the prison project—a study of criminal behavior and life circumstances before, during, and after imprisonment in the Netherlands. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 4(1), 120-135.

March 23

Week 10: Age-graded social control

Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life, chapters 1 and 6-10

March 30

Week 11: AGSC, updated

Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (2003). *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives*. Harvard University Press. Chapters 2-3, 10 (7 may also be of special interest). Available electronically through the library

April 6

Week 12: Human agency and identity

Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, crime, and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(4), 990-1064.

Massoglia, M., & Uggen, C. (2010). Settling down and aging out: Toward an interactionist theory of desistance and the transition to adulthood. *American Journal of Sociology*, 116(2), 543-582.

April 13

Week 13: Linked lives

Wildeman, C., Schnittker, J., & Turney, K. (2012). Despair by association? The mental health of mothers with children by recently incarcerated fathers. *American Sociological Review*, 77(2), 216-243.

Siennick, S. E., & Widdowson, A. O. (2017). Incarceration and financial dependency during and after “youth”. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 3(4), 397-418.

Giordano, P. C., Copp, J. E., Manning, W. D., & Longmore, M. A. (2019). Linking parental incarceration and family dynamics associated with intergenerational transmission: A life-course perspective. *Criminology*, 57(3), 395-423.

April 20

Week 14: Future directions for life-course criminology

Osgood, D. W. (2012). Some future trajectories for life course criminology. In *The Future of Criminology* (pp. 3-10). Oxford.

Sampson, R. J. (2015). Crime and the life course in a changing world: Insights from Chicago and implications for global criminology. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 10(4), 277-286.

Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2020). Life-course and developmental criminology: Looking back, moving forward—ASC Division of Developmental and Life-Course criminology Inaugural David P. Farrington Lecture, 2017. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 6(2), 158-171.

April 27

Week 15: Other applications of life-course criminology

Laub, J. H. (2004). The life course of criminology in the United States: The American Society of Criminology 2003 presidential address. *Criminology*, 42(1), 1-26.

Mears, D. P., Cochran, J. C., & Siennick, S. E. (2013). Life-course perspectives and prisoner reentry. In *The Handbook of Life-Course Criminology* (pp. 317-333). Springer.