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## DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIFE-COURSE CRIMINOLOGY

Florida State University  
CCJ 4938 • Spring 2023

**Course Instructor:** Dr. Sonja Siennick  
**Contact Information:** ssiennick@fsu.edu

**Teaching Assistant:** Anneliese Kress  
**Contact Information:** ank18e@fsu.edu

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### 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. 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 provides an overview of the major issues in life-course criminology. You will learn the major theoretical approaches to the topic, read original research in the area, and apply your new knowledge to real-life scenarios.

Although life-course criminologists are unified by their topic of study, they work from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and have differing views on various policy issues. My highest priority is to help you gain knowledge that will help you express your own informed opinions on the development of crime over the lifespan. Many of the questions we will address remain controversial and do not have a single ‘right’ answer. Throughout the course, I encourage you both to express your point of view (in an educated and respectful manner, of course) and to remain open to others’ perspectives.

Upon successfully completing this course, you will know the following:

- The key elements of the life course paradigm
- The major theoretical perspectives within life-course criminology
- How the prevalence of crime and deviance changes across the lifespan
- The factors behind the early development of crime and deviance
- How major life-course transitions relate to criminal offending
- How offenders describe the process of stopping criminal offending
- The life consequences of engaging in crime and deviance

## Course Materials

1. **Required textbook.** Benson, M. L. (2012). *Crime and the life course: An introduction* (second edition). Routledge.

**This book is available electronically for free through the FSU libraries. You can search the library site for the book.**

2. Additional readings, as listed on Canvas.

Most weeks will feature a new course module, which may contain slides, readings, video or audio clips, and websites to visit. All of the materials you will need (besides the textbook) will be listed in that week's module. I recommend that you first complete the readings, and then view the slides and any multimedia components embedded in them.

You will need access to a computer that can stream audio and video. You will also need internet access. I will make every effort to post the readings (besides the book) on Canvas, but some electronic readings may need to be accessed through FSU's library.

## Course Requirements

Due dates and times are in Eastern Time.

**First Day Attendance.** By the third day of classes, please comment on the first day attendance discussion board post so that we can count you as present. This assignment is mandatory (so that we don't drop you) but ungraded.

**Essays.** You will write one of three short (2-3 page) essays in this course. This will be in response to a prompt that will be posted on Canvas. The prompt may require you to view outside sources or materials. Submit the assignment to Canvas before the due date and time. Grades will be based on:

- **Insight:** Is this a well-thought-out essay that demonstrates your understanding?
- **Evidence:** Does the essay incorporate the course material?
- **Mechanics:** Submit carefully proofread essays of the appropriate length. Essays that are markedly too long or short will lose some credit!

**Debates.** You will take part in two group debates, each spanning two weeks of the course. There are two parts to this requirement. First, together with your group members, you will write a 250-300 word argument in response to the debate prompt posted in that week's Canvas module, following the "original post" part of the prompt. Each group should submit one jointly written argument. Your argument should show us that you did the readings and understood the slides, though it can include your personal reactions to the material. That is, it should be scholarly and well-reasoned, but it does not have to be a formal essay and it can include some (just some!) opinion or conjecture. Post that argument to the discussion board before the due date and time.

Grades will be based on:

- **Insight:** Show us that your group has developed an informed perspective.
- **Evidence:** Show us that your group completed and understood the readings and slides.
- **Mechanics:** Submit carefully proofread arguments of the appropriate length. Arguments that are markedly too long or short will lose some credit!

Second, the following week you will respond to another group's argument, following the "response" part of the prompt. Your response should be approximately 100-200 words, and like your original argument should be scholarly and well-reasoned and should demonstrate your knowledge of the course material. Remember to be professional and respectful when disagreeing with others! Grades will be based on:

- **Insight:** Show us that your group used the course material to challenge or refute the other group's argument.
- **Mechanics:** Submit carefully proofread responses of the appropriate length.

Although these debates will take place on Canvas discussion boards, Canvas Support and I recommend that you compose your posts in a Word document and save them. This will protect you in the event of a Canvas failure.

*What if one of our group members doesn't contribute?* I've tried to choose interesting and engaging debate topics, so I anticipate that everyone will be very motivated to participate. However, in isolated cases groups may perceive that one of their members is not making meaningful and adequate contributions toward the debate. If you feel this way, please email me with a description of the issue. If each other group member independently reports that one member is not pulling their weight, I will take that into account when grading. To protect yourself, please keep written records of your personal contributions towards the debates.

*What if I miss the week of the debate due to an excused absence?* Please contact me for an alternate assignment.

**Papers.** You will write two papers, each approximately 5-7 pages in length. These papers are your chance to tackle the course material in greater depth. Don't just repeat the course material; instead, show us that you can apply that material to new situations. These papers should be formal essays and should include citations in APA format. If you use outside sources, please also include a reference list. Grades will be based on:

- **Insight:** Is this a well-thought-out paper that demonstrates your understanding?
- **Evidence:** Does the paper incorporate the course material?
- **Mechanics:** Submit carefully proofread papers of the appropriate length and with appropriate formatting. Papers that deviate from the length and style guidelines will lose some credit!

## Course Grades

Papers: 2 @ 30 points	60 points
Short essay: 1 @ 10 points	10 points
<u>Debates: 2 @ 15 points</u>	<u>30 points</u>
Total	100 points (%)

## Grading scale

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

I round according to conventional mathematical rules. I am glad to discuss your course grades in person, but to protect your privacy I cannot discuss grades over email.

## Course Communication

**How we will contact you.** Please check Canvas regularly for course announcements and changes. I strongly recommend that you set your Canvas notification preferences to ensure that you receive emailed versions of the course announcements as well.

**How you should contact us.** Please email us with any questions about the course material, requirements, or policies. Monday through Friday, we will respond to your email within 24 hours. We will try to respond promptly to emails sent on weekends and holidays, but may not be able to respond until the next business day.

## Course Policies

**Missing and late work.** With one exception (see below), missing or late work will receive 0s unless (1) you are unable to complete or submit the item due to an excused absence (per the University attendance policy below) and (2) notify me within 48 hours of the due date. When you email me, please include any documentation of your absence (e.g., a doctor's note, a jury duty summons). Forgetting about the post, assignment, or exam, needing to work late, being unable to get to a computer, and having an undocumented illness will not qualify as excused absences, so please plan accordingly and do not procrastinate.

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 non-group (i.e., individually completed) assignment. To use your free extension, contact the TA. The due date for that assignment will be extended by one week.

**Technology.** When you submit your work to Canvas, it is your responsibility to ensure that the submission was successful. If you experience internet or Canvas problems while you are submitting something, please email us immediately and attach your assignment. It is important that you contact us before the due date and time so that we know you did the work on time. You have a one hour grace period to contact us about technology-related problems. If you do not successfully submit a course requirement by the due date and time and we do not hear from you within an hour of that date and time, you will receive a 0 for that course requirement.

**TurnItIn.** This course will use Canvas's TurnItIn anti-plagiarism tool. Assignments receiving high similarity scores will be investigated according to College procedures.

**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](mailto: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.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**My assignment is shorter/longer than the length requirements. Is that okay?** We are fine with assignments that are a little too short or long (with normal spacing and margins). But, for the sake of your graders, please don't write an assignment that is double the requested length! Also, please don't submit assignments that are noticeably too short. This last guideline is to protect you; if your assignment is markedly too short, you are probably missing key content.

**Will you review a draft of my assignment before I submit it?** Yes! Please email your assignment to the TA by the Tuesday before it is due. Although they will not "pre-grade" your paper, they will tell you whether you have included enough course material and whether you are missing anything major.

**Why did I lose points on my assignment?** If you'd like more detailed feedback on your grade, please contact your grader.

**I got stuck at work/my car broke down/my loved one is ill and I missed the assignment deadline. What do I do?** You get one free extension in the course. To use it, simply email the TA to let them know that you will be turning your assignment in late. You will be given a one week extension on that assignment (exceptions are group assignments or assignments due during the last week of classes or finals week). After you use this freebie, to gain extensions on additional assignments, you will need documentation that those absences were excused under the policy described above.

**I am having trouble with Canvas and can't submit my assignment! Or, I swear I submitted it but it is not showing up! Help!** If it's before the deadline or within the grace period, please email it to us! If you believe that you submitted it but we have no record of that, send us a version of your assignment that was last saved before the assignment deadline, along with any screenshots or other evidence that you have.

**What is my current grade? Can I still earn a \_\_ in this class?** To calculate your current percentage grade, add up the total number of points you have earned so far, and divide that by the total number of points you have attempted so far. To determine how many more points you must earn to achieve a target final grade, look at the grading scale to see how many points you must earn to make that grade, and then subtract your total points earned from that number. If the result is less than the number of points remaining, then yes, you can still earn that grade!

**If I complete more than one essay, will you keep my highest essay grade?** Please complete only one of the three essay options. We will grade only the first essay that you submit.

**Can I complete an extra credit assignment to boost my grade?** Sorry, but there is no extra credit in this course. Your best bets for maximizing your grade are having the book and your notes open while you take the quizzes, ensuring that you have fully and thoroughly answered the assignment questions, contacting us early to ask any questions that you have about the assignments, and sending us drafts of your essays and projects by the deadline mentioned above.

**Will you write me a letter of recommendation?** If you do well in the course, probably, but make sure I can write you a strong one! I sit on an admissions committee, and letters that do nothing but rehash the grades that we can see on the transcript contribute little. A strong letter is more likely if you have taken several courses with me, have completed DIS or honors credits with me, or have worked on one of my research projects. I should be able to say something about you beyond your course grades. If we don't know each other well and you have interacted more with other faculty members, they might be better choices for this.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment
1	Introduction	None	None
2	The life-course paradigm	Benson Chapter 1 Elder Jr, G. H. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. <i>Social psychology quarterly</i> , 4-15.	None
3	The age-crime curve	Farrington, D. P. (1986). Age and crime. <i>Crime and Justice</i> , 7, 189-250. DeLisi, M. (2015). Age-crime curve and criminal career patterns. In <i>The development of criminal and antisocial behavior</i> (pp. 51-63). Springer, Cham.	Option to complete short essay 1 (must complete one essay this term)
4	Major theoretical perspectives	Gibson, C. (2010). Gottfredson, Michael R., and Travis Hirschi: Self-control theory. In F. T. Cullen & P. Wilcox (Eds.), <i>Encyclopedia of criminological theory</i> (pp. 393-399). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. Laub, J. H., Sampson, R. J., & Sweeten, G. A. (2017). Assessing Sampson and Laub's life-course theory of crime. In <i>Taking stock</i> (pp. 313-333). Routledge.	None
5	None	None	Debate 1 original post
6	Early development	Benson Chapters 2 and 3	Debate 1 response post
7	Adolescence	Benson Chapter 4 Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: a developmental taxonomy. <i>Psychological review</i> , 100(4), 674-701. Warr, M. (1993). Age, peers, and delinquency. <i>Criminology</i> , 31(1), 17-40.	Option to complete short essay 2 (must complete one essay this term)



8	Marriage and crime	Siennick, S. E., & Osgood, D. W. (2008). A review of research on the impact on crime of transitions to adult roles. In <i>The long view of crime: A synthesis of longitudinal research</i> (pp. 161-187). Springer, New York, NY. Craig, J. M., Diamond, B., & Piquero, A. R. (2014). Marriage as an intervention in the lives of criminal offenders. In <i>Effective interventions in the lives of criminal offenders</i> (pp. 19-37). Springer, New York, NY.	None
9	Work and crime	Uggen, C., & Staff, J. (2001). Work as a turning point for criminal offenders. <i>Corrections Management Quarterly</i> , 5, 1-16.	None
10	Parenthood, the military, and other transitions	Giordano, P. C., Seffrin, P. M., Manning, W. D., & Longmore, M. A. (2011). Parenthood and crime: The role of wantedness, relationships with partners, and SES. <i>Journal of criminal justice</i> , 39(5), 405-416. Craig, J. M., & Connell, N. M. (2015). The all-volunteer force and crime: The effects of military participation on offending behavior. <i>Armed Forces &amp; Society</i> , 41(2), 329-351.	Paper 1
11	None	None	Debate 2 original post
12	Desistance	Benson Chapter 5 Shover, N. (1983). The later stages of ordinary property offender careers. <i>Social problems</i> , 31(2), 208-218. Veysey, B. M., Martinez, D. J., & Christian, J. (2013). "Getting out:" A summary of qualitative research on desistance across the life course. In <i>Handbook of life-course criminology</i> (pp. 233-260). Springer, New York, NY.	Debate 2 response post

13	Collateral consequences: socioeconomic	Brayne, S. (2014). Surveillance and system avoidance: Criminal justice contact and institutional attachment. <i>American Sociological Review</i> , 79(3), 367-391. Visher, C., Debus, S., & Yahner, J. (2008). <i>Employment after prison: A longitudinal study of releasees in three states</i> . Washington, DC: Urban Institute.	None
14	Collateral consequences: personal and family	Christian, J. (2005). Riding the bus: Barriers to prison visitation and family management strategies. <i>Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice</i> , 21(1), 31-48. Comfort, M. (2016). "A twenty-hour-a-day job:" The impact of frequent low-level criminal justice involvement on family life. <i>The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> , 665(1), 63-79.	Option to complete short essay 3 (must complete one essay this term)
15	Wrap-up	Benson Chapter 8	Paper 2