
DEVELOPMENTAL AND LIFE-COURSE CRIMINOLOGY

Florida State University
CCJ 4622

Course Instructor: Dr. Sonja Siennick

Contact Information: 405 Criminology Building, ssiennick@fsu.edu

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Dequan Cowell

Contact Information: dcowell@fsu.edu

Course level number: 4000

Mode of delivery: Face to face

Credit hours: 3

Pre/co requisites: None

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. (2013). *Crime and the life course: An introduction* (second edition). Routledge.
2. Additional readings, as listed on Canvas. 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

Class Discussions and Debates. Nine of the Thursday discussion section meetings will feature class discussions or debates on that week's topic. For example, you will learn about the life course perspective during the week 2 lecture, and will discuss an application of that perspective during that week's discussion section meeting. A majority of your grade in this class will be based on your contributions to these Thursday discussion and debates. Each day, you can earn a maximum of six points towards this portion of your grade. A general rubric is below. To accommodate absences, three weeks will feature make-up discussion meetings. Make use of these if you need to; however, **you will only be graded on the first nine discussion meetings that you attend.** Thus, please do not attend extra meetings in an effort to raise your grade.

6 points (the maximum): Student contributes to their group or to the class discussion in a way that demonstrates clear understanding of and familiarity with the readings and lectures. Student is a group or discussion leader. Student participates multiple times, and the participation advances the class discussion.

4 points: Student contributes to the discussion and demonstrates their understanding of and familiarity with the readings and lectures. Student plays a supporting role in the group or class. Student participates only a few times, or the participation does not substantially advance the class discussion.

2 points: Student attends class but does not contribute much to the discussion, or student's participation suggests that the student has not attended the lectures or completed the readings.

0 points: Student did not attend class.

Papers. You will write two papers in this course. These will be in response to prompts that will be posted on Canvas. The prompts may require you to view outside sources or materials. Submit each assignment to Canvas before the due date and time. Grades will be based on:

- **Insight:** Is this a well-thought-out paper that demonstrates your understanding? Show us that you can think deeply and critically about the course material. People often lose points on this standard by offering little interpretation or extension of the material (e.g., by only including

definitions, by giving examples that do not relate well to the included course material, by giving only partial explanations of relevant concepts).

- Evidence: Does the essay incorporate the course material? Cite all relevant sources liberally—the more citations, the easier it is for us to see that you have kept up with the course. People often lose points on this standard by including few citations, by quoting instead of paraphrasing, and by citing only one or two things.
- Mechanics: Submit carefully proofread papers of the appropriate length. Papers that are markedly too long or short will lose some credit!

15 points (the maximum): The paper is well-researched, connects relevant illustrations or examples to several well-chosen course concepts, and includes many citations to a wide variety of course chapters, readings, and lectures. The student has clearly kept up with the course material and is performing at a level suggesting the ability to tutor others on the included concepts. The paper is the correct length and is proofread.

13 points: The student appears proficient in the included material, but some relevant concepts are omitted, some relevant sources are not cited, or the included concepts are discussed in less depth. The student has a good understanding of the included concepts, but could have benefitted from revisiting the material, spending more time on the paper, or similar efforts.

11 points: The student has only a surface-level understanding of the material, has omitted several relevant concepts or sources, or otherwise has created the impression that they are less familiar with the lectures and readings. Discussion of the course material is limited to definitions, quotes, or elements that are not good matches for the included illustrations or examples. The paper may appear rushed, and the student may have benefited from starting the paper earlier or from asking the TA for feedback on a draft prior to submitting it.

Lower scores: The paper falls short on multiple standards, indicates less familiarity with the course material, or has other more serious shortcomings.

Presentation. This requirement has three parts. First, choose an article that was published in the Journal of Developmental and Life Course Criminology. Be sure to choose one that involved a research study (i.e., that included a methods section). Second, prepare a 500-word summary and interpretation of that article. Include information about what was known previously, what the research questions or hypotheses were, what data were used, what the researchers found, and how the article relates to what we have covered in the course. Also include a citation in APA format (please include the DOI). Do not include any directions for future research. Third, create a short video in which you present your summary and interpretation to the class. Upload your summary and the video to Canvas by the due date and time. The summary will be worth 10 points, and the video 6 points. You will be graded on thoroughness, accuracy, knowledge of the course material, and thoughtfulness.

Course Grades

Class discussions/debates	9 X 6 points each	54 points
Papers	2 X 15 points each	30 points
Presentation	1 X 16 points	16 points
Total		100 points/%

Grading scale

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. 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.

Due to the nature of the in-class portion of the grading, there will be only three opportunities to make up any missed points for that requirement. Please plan accordingly.

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.

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/Academics/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 Dean of Students office 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 SCHEDULE

Bold week numbers/topics indicate credit-earning discussion section meeting that Thursday

Week	Topic	Readings	Take-Home 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.	None
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	None

		life-course theory of crime. In <i>Taking stock</i> (pp. 313-333). Routledge.	
5	Early development	Benson Chapters 2 and 3	None
6	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.	None
7	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.	Paper 1
Make-up discussion section available during Thursday's class. Must sign up in advance. Do not attend on Thursday if you do not need discussion points.			
8	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
9	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 & Society</i> , 41(2), 329-351.	None

10	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.	None
Make-up discussion section available during Thursday's class. Must sign up in advance. Do not attend on Thursday if you do not need discussion points.			
11	Collateral consequences	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. 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.	None
12-13		None	Article summary & presentation
14	Wrap-up	Benson Chapter 8	None
15	Make-up week		Paper 2
Make-up discussion section available during Tuesday's class. Must sign up in advance. Do not attend on Tuesday if you do not need discussion points. No class on Thursday.			