SOCIOLOGY 920
Advanced Issues in Socio-Legal Studies:
Contemporary Debates & Scholarship in the Sociology of Crime
Fall 2020

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Telephone: 613-533-2170
Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM Eastern Time on MSTeams
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Description

This seminar offers an overview of theoretical developments and empirical research in the sociology of crime. Each week we will examine readings that offer a combination of: (1) a definitive statement from an important theoretical tradition and (2) a critical empirical test of that theory. The principal goal of this course is to develop an understanding of the role of sociological theory and research in explaining crime.

Format of the Course

The class this semester is offered in a nonsynchronous online format. This means that we will not meet in person all at the same time. Instead, you will be expected to learn and complete your work through various technological resources. While we will not be meeting in person, there is a weekly class meeting. You can join the weekly meeting by clicking the MSTeams link posted on onQ. Participation in the weekly meeting is not mandatory but rather voluntary. These meetings will be held on Thursdays from 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM Eastern Time to offer students the opportunity to meet with the instructor and classmates and to discuss readings and course requirements. The instructor will also be available after 12:30 until 1:30 PM Eastern Time for individual meetings. Students may also request meetings outside of this time period by corresponding with the instructor via email.
Objectives

- The course will help you develop a more nuanced understanding of the dominant theoretical traditions in the sociology of crime. This knowledge is absolutely fundamental to teaching sociology of crime (or criminology) at the college or university level and to conducting original research in the area.
- I will help you work through selected empirical pieces by some of the very best criminology & sociology of law researchers. As you develop your own research style, it is beneficial to see how others have translated propositions into testable hypotheses, devised appropriate methodologies to test them, and presented the results to diverse audiences.
- The course will stimulate your thinking about questions at the intersection of social science and crime. These include how we produce our knowledge, its relevance to lives outside the academy, and the utility of sociological theories and academics themselves. Such big-picture considerations may help you to choose the level of abstraction at which you wish to work and the contribution that you can make as teachers and researchers studying the sociology of crime.

Caution

This course is not comprehensive. There are several definitive statements and a myriad of critiques and tests for many of these topics. To maximize the amount we can cover in a twelve-week term, I have selected work that I consider exemplary or at least representative. Nevertheless, there are areas in the sociology of crime that we will not explore in this course.

Course Requirements

Seminar Presentations: Students will be expected to make 3 seminar presentations worth 30% of their grade. Students will be asked on the first day of class (Sept. 10) to review the course readings (see below) and to submit their top 5 choices for presentations by (Sept. 11) and the instructor will strive to assign the student with one of their choices. Please select 5 choices across a range of at least 4 dates. The instructor will communicate the selection to the student by email. The presentation that the student is assigned will then be due before class on the date that the article will be covered in the class.
Format of the presentation

The article is to be obtained via the link provided on onQ. The structure of the articles used in the class follow the same basic structure. They have an introduction, a theory section, a previous research section, a section on methods, a section on results, and a summary section. The task of the student is to take the article and create a presentation that would best communicate the information of the article to an audience of their peers. To do this will require the student to construct a visual presentation using PowerPoint of the information and to provide (record) a verbal presentation (audio) on top of the visual information. The presentation should be approximately 20-25 minutes long. Beyond the information in the article, the student is expected to provide 4 questions for discussion. These questions may explore issues raised or not raised in the article. As a side bar, students should consider providing one possible answer to each of their questions. The presentations are to be submitted on onQ by 11:00 AM Eastern Time the day it is due.

Note: Other students will not see the presentations. Only the professor will see these productions.

Seminar Participation: Students not presenting material will be expected to have read the material and participate in the discussion on the discussion form for the week. Since the class is not offered synchronously, evaluation of participation will be based on contribution to the class discussion forum. Contributions can include: raising questions, commenting on theories and empirical findings raised in the articles, and answering the questions of classmates. Each student is expected to contribute by posting at least 1 question or comment on the readings per week and to respond to at least one question or comment posted by a classmate per week. The questions or initial comments will be due by the Tuesday prior to the class by 8 AM Eastern Time. The responses are due by Thursday 8 AM Eastern Time the day of the class. This form of class participation will represent 20% of the student's grade.

Term Paper: Students will also be required to submit a term paper for this course worth 50% of their final grade. Following the theme of this course, the paper should focus on the theoretical causes of crime and deviance. Students are expected to choose a type of crime or deviance, either broad (e.g., violent crime/property crime) or more specific, (e.g., robbery/break and enter), and utilize a number of the theoretical perspectives reviewed during the seminars to explain their topic (3 is optimal). In doing so, students will be expected to link or integrate their chosen perspectives together to provide a more complete explanation for the behaviour being examined. This integration will entail the identification and reconciliation of contradictions in the logic of these theories. It will also require the identification of weaknesses various perspectives have and the integration should help to address these shortcomings.
You should also provide some information about the type of behaviour being studied. For example, what does car theft look like, how has this behaviour changed over time, and who is involved? Further, how do the patterns of behaviour under study link with the theoretical positions you are forwarding. Thus, your theoretical explanations, in addition to being logically sound, will also have to fit an empirical reality.

In the term paper, there should be an introduction to your topic which will also outline what you intend to cover in your paper. You can then provide some empirical information about your chosen offense. You should then outline each of your theoretical perspectives in some detail (what you see as the strengths and weaknesses). You then begin the process of your integration. The paper should finish with a summary or discussion section.

In writing your paper you should go beyond the readings in the class to incorporate a more substantive literature. Remember the class readings are merely examples to introduce us to some of our topics. While there is not a standard expectation in terms of number of sources (e.g., 15 sources) since I find this often restricts students’ performances, in a graduate seminar class one should strive to use as many sources as required to complete a high quality paper. Further, the sources should be journal articles from sociology or criminology journals (see the range of journals used in this class for examples of appropriate journals) as well relevant books published by reputable academic presses (e.g., a University Press or a well-known commercial press). Encyclopedia articles, Wikipedia and blogs are discouraged.

The paper should be around 20-25 pages (12 Font) with 1-inch margins and follow ASA formatting. Students will be expected to submit the term paper on December 3 by 11:30 AM Eastern Time on onQ. A DEADLINE IS A DEADLINE.

Policies

- Students must complete all the course work in order to complete the course. Students will not be allowed to replace or supplement these assignments with alternative or additional work. Ten percent per day, including weekends, will be deducted each day, or part thereof, that essays are overdue. Delays regarding completing course assignments must be reported immediately to the professor.

- I will only give ‘incomplete standing’ in truly extraordinary circumstances. In almost every case, it is far better to turn in a "work in progress" than to delay your progress by taking an incomplete. Official written documentation is required for circumstances.
All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

**Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Course Average (Range)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>53-56</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Statement on Academic Integrity**

Queen’s students, faculty, administrators and staff all have responsibilities for upholding the fundamental values of academic integrity; honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments and their behaviour conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1), on the Arts and
Science website (see https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/students-at-queens/academic-integrity), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

- Please note that I have had issues in the past with unintended plagiarism in this course. Regardless of how and where you retrieve information, the principles of academic integrity apply. Please visit these helpful websites to help you make sure that you are able to write things in your own words:
  - https://www.queensu.ca/academicintegrity/students/avoiding-plagiarismcheating
  - https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/avoiding-plagiarism-paraphrasing

Accommodations for Disabilities

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/files/policies/senateandtrustees/ACADACCOMMPOLICY2016.pdf). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen’s Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/

Academic Consideration for Students with Extenuating Circumstances

Queen’s University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time. The Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances is available at http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.uslcwww/files/file
Procedures:

1. Graduate students request short term academic accommodation by completing the Request for Academic Consideration for Extenuating Circumstances (111kb-pdf) and submitting the form and any required additional documentation to the Department/Program Graduate Coordinator (or delegate).

2. The Graduate Coordinator (or delegate) shall make the decision to grant requests on a case by case basis and is responsible for following up with the requestor as soon as possible and no longer than 5 business days after receipt of the request. The Graduate Coordinator (or delegate) may consult with an Associate Dean of the School of Graduate Studies for advice.

Please refer to the instructions outlined in these diagrams for a step by step guide through the relevant processes.

If you need to request academic consideration for this course, you may be required to provide the name and email address of the instructor/coordinator. Please use the following:

Instructor/Coordinator Name: Dr. Stephen W. Baron
Instructor/Coordinator email address: barons@queensu.ca
Netiquette

In this course you will communicate with your peers and the instructor through electronic communication. You are expected to use the utmost respect in your dealings with your colleagues or when participating in activities, discussions, and online communication.

Here is a list of netiquette guidelines. Please read them carefully and use them to guide your communication in this course and beyond.

1. Make a personal commitment to learn about, understand, and support your peers.
2. Assume the best of others and expect the best of them.
3. Acknowledge the impact of oppression on the lives of other people and make sure your writing is respectful and inclusive.
4. Recognize and value the experiences, abilities, and knowledge each person brings.
5. Pay close attention to what your peers write before you respond. Think through and re-read your writings before you post or send them to others.
6. It’s ok to disagree with ideas, but do not make personal attacks.
7. Be open to be challenged or confronted on your ideas and challenge others with the intent of facilitating growth. Do not demean or embarrass others.
8. Encourage others to develop and share their ideas.

Required Readings

The required readings for the course are listed in the onQ site.
OUTLINE

Week 1 (Sept. 10): Welcome: Introduction, Goals, Orientation

Week 2 (Sept. 17): Rational Choice

Assigned Readings:


Week 3 (Sept. 24): Social (Dis)Organization & Neighborhood Context

**Assigned Readings:**


**Assigned Readings:**


Week 5 (Oct. 8): Micro Strain Variants

Assigned Readings:


Week 6 (Oct. 15): Strain Macro Variants; Social Control Theory

Assigned Readings:


Week 7 (Oct. 22): Self-Control & The General Theory of Crime

Assigned Readings:


Ward, Jeffrey T., Kathleen A. Fox, Marie Skubak Tillyer, and Jodi Lane. 2015. “Gender, Low Self-Control, and Violent Victimization.” Deviant Behavior 36: 113-129.


Reading Week (October 29 NO CLASS)

Week 8 (Nov. 5): Gender and Crime

Assigned Readings:


**Week 9 (Nov. 12): Labeling and Shaming**

**Assigned Readings:**


**Week 10 (Nov. 19): Race and Offending; Control Balance Theory**

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 11: (Nov. 26): Life-course, Desistance, Persistence and Abstention

Assigned Readings:


Week 12: (Dec. 3): Routine Activities/Lifestyle Exposure

Assigned Readings:


*NOTE: Essay due today.*