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

Winter 2020
Mondays 8:30 – 11:30

Professor: Dr. Stephen W. Baron
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Telephone: 613 533-2170
Office Hours: Mondays 1:00 to 2:00; Tuesdays 1:00 to 2:00 (or by appointment)
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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.

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 important areas in the sociology of crime that we will not touch.

Course Requirements

- Each student will be responsible to take the lead on a number of course readings. The number will depend on course enrolment. This includes summarizing and distributing a précis of the core reading and a list of open-ended questions about the materials prior to each class session. The précis is a detailed two-page single-spaced summary of the theory, data, methods, and argument of the reading.

- An original seminar project is required of all students. This essay consists of a synthesis and critical evaluation of a particular line of research or a substantive problem in the sociology of crime. The project should have some link to the theoretical material covered in the class. The project is due the last day of class (March 30).

- Seminars are constructed in interaction. I will provide a brief setup at each course meeting and strive to provide an environment in which everyone feels comfortable participating, but responsibility for the seminar is borne collectively. This means that you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings (preferably with written comments and questions of your own) and to have considered how the course materials will affect your work. I deliberately kept the reading requirements to a manageable volume so that you will have more time to seriously engage the articles.
Policies

- Your course grade will be determined by your written work and seminar participation. I intend to weigh précis and discussion leadership at 30%, seminar projects at 55%, and participation at 15%. *Active seminar participation is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to earning an "A" grade.*
- I will only give incompletes 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 medical or other 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>
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<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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<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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/files/policies/senateandtrustees/Academic%20Considerations%20for%20Extenuating%20Circumstances%20Policy%20Final.pdf

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

**Required Readings**

The required readings for the course are listed below. Each of the readings can be obtained online through the library webpage by the following steps. Begin by clicking on Library on the university homepage. Then click Databases. Then type in Web of Science. Click Web of Science. Here type in the appropriate citation to gain online access to each particular journal article.
OUTLINE

Week 1 (Jan. 6): Welcome: Introduction, Goals, Orientation

Week 2 (Jan. 13): Rational Choice

Assigned Readings:


Week 3 (Jan. 20): Social (Dis)Organization & Neighborhood Context

Assigned Readings:


Week 4 (Jan. 27): Social Learning/Differential Association

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 5 (Feb. 3): Micro Strain Variants

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 6 (Feb. 10): Strain Macro Variants; Social Control Theory

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 7 (Feb. 24): 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.


Week 8 (Mar. 2): Gender and Crime

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 9 (Mar. 9): Labeling and Shaming

**Assigned Readings:**


Week 10 (Mar. 16): Race and Offending; Control Balance Theory

Assigned Readings:


Week 11: (Mar. 23): Life-course, Desistance, Persistence and Abstention

Assigned Readings:


Week 12: (Mar 30): Routine Activities/Lifestyle Exposure

**Assigned Readings:**


*NOTE: Essay due IN CLASS today.*