



**CRIMINOLOGY**

Utah State University

Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology

SOC 3420, Section 001, Spring 2017, CRN 13226

Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 8:30 am-9:20 pm

Engineering, Room 203

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 Office: Old Main 224D  
 Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 12:30-2:00pm and by appointment  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

Our society is fascinated with crime and violence. As the media--including news, television, and movies--inundates us with information about fictional and non-fictional crime and criminals, it appears that everyone has an armchair explanation or "hunch" for why people offend. The purpose of this course is to provide a clear overview of the major academic explanations (or theories) that dominate criminology in an effort to clarify what is known about crime based upon empirical research. To this end, this course is designed to provide students with a basic understanding of historical and current criminological perspectives, as these are the foundations upon which both criminological research and public policy are based. The focus throughout the course will be on developing critical thinking skills when evaluating and critiquing theory, research, and policy related to crime, in an effort to develop a well-rounded understanding of criminology.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, and Wesley G. Jennings. 2017. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- Supplemental readings available via the Canvas classroom

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

Your course grade will be based upon two exams, a final paper, a series of quizzes, and weekly discussion. Exams are each worth 25 percent, the term paper is worth 25 percent, the quizzes are worth 20 percent, and class participation is worth 5 percent.

Exam #1	25%
Exam #2	25%
Paper Assignment	25%
Quizzes	20%
Class Participation	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**GRADING SCALE**

A 93 and above	A- 92-90	
B+ 89-87	B 86-83	B- 82-80
C+ 79-77	C 76-73	C- 72-70
D+ 69-67	D 66-60	F 59 and below

**EXAMINATIONS**

Both exams will be comprised of a combination of multiple choice answers and short answers.

**TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT**

As one of the goals of this class is to actually take these abstract theories and apply them to empirical realities, the paper assignment focuses on explaining the homicides detailed in HBO's true crime documentary miniseries *The Jinx* using the theoretical material learned in the course. After the second exam, we will focus entirely on the web series and your final assignment will be to discuss the criminal career of Robert Durst using one theory from earlier in the semester. In lieu of a final examination, a hard copy of your final paper is due in my office by **\*5pm Monday, May 1\***.

When presenting your argument, please try to use your own words, paraphrase major points, or, if you must quote directly from a text, acknowledge the material in quotations and reference the source and page number correctly using American Sociological Association (ASA) style (for in-text citations please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/02/> and for reference page formatting please see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/03/>.) If you copy material without citing it, you will get a zero for the exam and may also get a FF for the course.

**QUIZZES**

There will be five quizzes throughout the course of the semester, each of which will focus on a different collection of theories. Quizzes will be comprised of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank responses, and short answer questions, and will be administered during the first 20 minutes of class. If you arrive late, you will not be afforded more time. After each quiz has been collected, we will go over the answers in class.

Please note: your lowest quiz score will be dropped automatically, thus, only your four best grades will count toward your final grade. Because you will have an "extra" quiz, no make-up quizzes will be given.

**LECTURES AND CLASS DISCUSSION**

As this is a discussion-based course, class participation is a mandatory component in order to provide students with the most interactive experience possible. As the instructor, my goal is to guide your learning as much as I can. To this end, while my lectures will focus on the theories in the readings, I may expand the scope to include other information or narrow the focus to highlight only a few key elements. In this regard, students cannot just listen to my lectures and ignore the book, or vice versa, and still have exposure to all of the information necessary to complete this course.

**COURSE POLICIES**

1. The subject matter of this course is highly theoretical, which means that the material can be rather dense and difficult to understand at times. My role is to help clarify each theory, provide explanations and context that are not included in the readings, and answer any questions that you might have, but you are expected to read all of the assigned readings so that you can participate as fully as possible.

2. Please extend courtesy and respect to your fellow students in any discussion and avoid any overtly hostile or demeaning language when reacting to another student's ideas. Repeated disrespectful and rude behavior may be grounds for dismissal from the class.

3. Late assignments will not be accepted unless: (1) you notify me 48 hours \*before\* the assignment is due and (2) provide me with an acceptable reason for why the assignment will be late. I may request written documentation for the excuse if deemed necessary. If you do not follow this procedure then you will receive a zero on the assignment.

4. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated (see below).

5. This syllabus is not a contract. I reserve the right to modify this syllabus at any time throughout the semester and will give you ample notification beforehand via class-wide announcements. It is your responsibility to stay abreast of any changes made.

6. In line with university policy, students with disabilities who are in need of academic accommodations must (1) register with and provide documentation to the Disability Research Center (DRC) and (2) bring a memorandum from the DRC to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be accomplished within the first two weeks of the semester. Additional information can be accessed at [www.usu.edu/drc/](http://www.usu.edu/drc/)

7. In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), academic progress in this course will be kept private from all third parties unless waived by the individual student. This waiver, along with other information, can be found at <http://www.usu.edu/registrar/htm/ferpa>.

8. If you have a problem, please do not hesitate to contact me. It is easiest to reach me via email, although I do request that you include your \*first name\*, your \*last name\*, your \*A number\*, and the \*course number\* in all correspondence. I check my email account daily, so if you need to contact me, you can expect a response within 24 hours, but you should not wait until the last minute before deadlines to write to me with questions.

#### **CHEATING, PLAGIARISM, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. A single case of cheating can be the basis for a failing grade and/or dismissal from the University. Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1). The penalties for plagiarism are severe and may include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other appropriate disciplinary actions. If you have any questions concerning what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, feel free to ask me.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

### WEEK 1: Syllabus/Course Introduction (Monday, January 9)

#### What is a Theory? (Wednesday, January 11)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-13

#### The Social Contract, Free Will, and Deterrence (Friday, January 13)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 2, pp. 14-24

### WEEK 2: **\*\*NO CLASS\*\*** (Monday, January 16)

#### The Beginning of Biological Positivism: Early Biological Theory (Wednesday, January 18)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 44-49

#### The Beginning of Social Positivism: Social Disorganization Theory (Friday, January 20)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 8, pp. 166-172

### WEEK 3: Evaluating Social Disorganization Theory (Monday, January 23)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 8, pp. 172-181

#### More Social Positivism: Differential Association (Wednesday, January 25)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 83-85

**QUIZ #1 administered at the beginning of class**

#### Modern Differential Association: Social Learning Theory (Friday, January 27)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 85-94

### WEEK 4: Evaluating Social Learning Theory (Monday, January 30)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 94-117

#### More Social Positivism: Classic Anomie-Strain Theory (Wednesday, February 1)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 182-192

**\*\*NO CLASS\*\*** (Friday, February 3)

### WEEK 5: **\*\*NO CLASS\*\*** (Monday, Feb. 6)

#### Modern Anomie-Strain: Institutional-Anomie and General Strain Theory (Wednesday, Feb 8)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 192-202

#### Evaluating Anomie-Strain Theories (Friday, February 10)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 202-207

### WEEK 6: More Social Positivism: Control Theories (Monday, February 13)

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 6, pp. 118-128

**QUIZ #2 administered at the beginning of class**

**Control Theory: Social Bond Theory and Self-Control Theory (Wednesday, February 15)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 6, pp. 128-142

**Review for EXAM #1 (Friday, February 17)**

**WEEK 7: \*\*NO CLASS\*\* (Monday, February 20)**

**EXAM #1 (TUESDAY, FEB. 21)**

**More Social Positivism: Labeling Theory (Wednesday, February 22)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 7, pp. 143-151

**Reintegrative Shaming Theory (Friday, February 24)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 7, pp. 151-165

**WEEK 8: Conflict Theory and Crime (Monday, February 27)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 10, pp. 208-231

**More Conflict Theory: Marxist Theories (Wednesday, March 1)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 11, pp.232-248

Lilly, Cullen, and Ball, *Criminological Theory: Context and Consequences*, Chapter 8, pp. 179-185

**More Conflict Theory: Radical and Critical Theories (Friday, March 3)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 12, pp. 249-261

**\*\*SPRING BREAK\*\* (Monday, March 6 – Friday, March 10)**

**WEEK 9: Feminist Theory (Monday, March 13)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 13, pp. 262-272

**QUIZ #3 administered at the beginning of class**

**More Feminist Theory: Gendered Pathways Approach (Wednesday, March 15)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 13, pp. 272-287

**Return to Deterrence: Rational Choice and Routine Activities Theories (Friday, March 17)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 2, pp. 24-43

**WEEK 10: Return to Biological Positivism: Biosocial Theories (Monday, March 20)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 49-67

**Evaluating Modern Biological and Biosocial Theories (Wednesday, March 22)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 58-62

**Psychological Theories (Friday, March 24)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 4, pp. 68-82

**WEEK 11: Developmental/Life-Course Theories: Moffitt's Developmental Taxonomy (Monday, Mar 27)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 14, pp. 288-294

**QUIZ #4 administered at the beginning of class**

**More DLC Theories: Sampson and Laub's Age-Graded Theory of ISC (Wednesday, March 29)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 14, pp. 294-304

**Evaluating Theory Integration (Friday, March 31)**

Akers et al., *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 15, pp. 305-323

**QUIZ #5 administered at the beginning of class**

**WEEK 12: Review for EXAM #2 (Monday, April 3)**

**EXAM #2 (Wednesday, April 5)**

**\*\*NO CLASS\*\* (Friday, April 7)**

**WEEK 13: Introduction to Term Paper Assignment (Monday, April 10)**

***The Jinx* Episode 1 (Wednesday, April 12)**

***The Jinx* Episode 2 (Friday, April 14)**

**WEEK 14: Discussion of *The Jinx* (Monday, April 17)**

***The Jinx* Episode 3 (Wednesday, April 19)**

***The Jinx* Episode 4 (Friday, April 21)**

**WEEK 15: *The Jinx* Episode 5 (Monday, April 24)**

***The Jinx* Episode 6 (Wednesday, April 26)**

**Summary of Term Paper Assignment/*The Jinx* (Friday, April 28)**

**FINALS WEEK: TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT is due 5pm on Monday, May 1**