



Utah State University

CRIMINOLOGY

Utah State University

Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology

SOC 3420, Section 001, Spring 2016, CRN 23303

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

Engineering, Room 203

Professor: Stephen G. VanGeem, PhD
E-mail: stephen.vangeem@usu.edu
Office: Old Main 224D
Office hours: Monday/Wednesday 1:00-3:00pm and by appointment

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., and Christine S. Sellers. 2013. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 6th Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- 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%
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total	100%

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 homicide detailed in Netflix's online documentary *Making a Murderer* 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 explain Stephen Avery was arrested for murder using one theory from earlier in the semester. In lieu of a final examination, a physical copy of your final paper will be due by 5pm on Monday, May 2.

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/

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 11)

What is a Theory? (Wednesday, January 13)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-13

The Social Contract, Free Will, and Deterrence (Friday, January 15)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 2, pp. 14-23

WEEK 2: **NO CLASS (Monday, January 18)**

The Beginning of Biological Positivism: Early Biological Theory (Wednesday, January 20)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 41-46

The Beginning of Social Positivism: Social Disorganization Theory (Friday, January 22)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 8, pp. 160-165

WEEK 3: Evaluating Social Disorganization Theory (Monday, January 25)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 8, pp. 165-172

More Social Positivism: Differential Association (Wednesday, January 27)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 78-80

QUIZ #1 administered at the beginning of class

Modern Differential Association: Social Learning Theory (Friday, January 29)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 80-89

WEEK 4: Evaluating Social Learning Theory (Monday, February 1)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 5, pp. 89-111

More Social Positivism: Subcultural Theory (Wednesday, February 3)

Anderson, *Code of the Street*, Chapters 1-3, pp. 35-141

More Social Positivism: Classic Anomie-Strain Theory (Friday, February 5)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 173-183

WEEK 5: Modern Anomie-Strain: Institutional-Anomie and General Strain Theory (Monday, Feb. 8)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 183-192

Evaluating Anomie-Strain Theories (Wednesday, February 10)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 9, pp. 192-198

More Social Positivism: Control Theories (Friday, February 12)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 6, pp. 112-116

QUIZ #2 administered at the beginning of class

WEEK 6: **NO CLASS (Monday, January 18)**

Modern Control Theory: Social Bond Theory and Self-Control Theory (TUESDAY, FEB. 16)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 6, pp. 116-136

Review for EXAM #1 (Wednesday, February 17)

EXAM #1 (Friday, February 19)

WEEK 7: More Social Positivism: Labeling Theory (Monday, February 22)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 7, pp. 137-145

Reintegrative Shaming Theory (Wednesday, February 24)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 7, pp. 145-159

Conflict Theory and Crime (Friday, February 26)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 10, pp. 199-221

WEEK 8: More Conflict Theory: Marxist Theories (Monday, February 29)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 11, pp. 222-237

More Conflict Theory: Radical and Critical Theories (Wednesday, March 2)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 12, pp. 238-249

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

Feminist Theory (Friday, March 4)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 13, pp. 250-259

QUIZ #3 administered at the beginning of class

****SPRING BREAK** (Monday, March 7 – Friday, March 11)**

WEEK 9: More Feminist Theory: Gendered Pathways Approach (Monday, March 14)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 13, pp. 259-274

Return to Deterrence: Rational Choice and Routine Activities Theories (Wednesday, March 16)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 2, pp. 23-40

Return to Biological Positivism: Biosocial Theories (Friday, March 18)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 46-57

WEEK 10: Evaluating Modern Biological and Biosocial Theories (Monday, March 21)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 3, pp. 58-62

Psychological Theories (Wednesday, March 23)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 4, pp. 63-77

Integrating Criminological Theories (Friday, March 25)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 14, pp. 275-288

QUIZ #4 administered at the beginning of class

WEEK 11: More Theory Integration: Life-Course Criminology (Monday, March 28)

Akers and Sellers, *Criminological Theories*, Chapter 14, pp. 288-301

****NO CLASS**** (Wednesday, March 30)

****NO CLASS**** (Friday, April 1)

WEEK 12: More Theory Integration: More Life-Course Criminology: (Monday, April 4)

Evaluating Theory Integration (Wednesday, April 6)

QUIZ #5 administered at the beginning of class

Review for EXAM #2 (Friday, April 8)

WEEK 13: EXAM #2 (Monday, April 11)

Introduction to Term Paper Assignment/*Making A Murderer* Episode 1 (Wednesday, April 13)

Making a Murderer Episode 1 continued (Friday, April 15)

WEEK 14: *Making a Murderer* Episode 2 (Monday, April 18)

The Effect of Prison/The Labor Market after Prison (Wednesday, April 20)

Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*, Chapters 4-5

Making a Murderer Episode 3 (Friday, April 22)

WEEK 15: *Making a Murderer* Episode 4 (Monday, April 25)

Making a Murderer Episode 5 (Wednesday, April 27)

Summary of Term Paper Assignment/*Making A Murderer* (Friday, April 29)

FINALS WEEK: TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT is due 5pm on Monday, May 2