

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology 625: Seminar in Deviant Behaviour

Fall 2011

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor: Dr. Augustine Brannigan (220-7466; branniga@ucalgary.ca)
Time: M 13:00-15:50
Room: SS 921
Website: <http://soci.ucalgary.ca/brannigan>
Office: SS 1060
Office Hours: After class and by appointment

Course Outline

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the seminal *contemporary* debates in “classical theory” in criminology. Classical theory dates to the 1760s and the work on Beccaria on *Crime and Punishment (1763)*. It is a voluntarist perspective which views crime as an act of free will (unlike the Positivist School that dates to the period of Cesare Lombroso - *Criminal Man 1876*) in which crime is caused by biological factors, primarily *atavism*. A good overview of the development of criminological theory is given in Eugene McLaughlin, John Muncie and Gordon Hughes (editors), *Criminological Perspectives: Essential Readings*, Second Edition, London: Sage, 2003. This is recommended reading and contains many of the classic contributions to criminological theory. However, all our key readings that derive from the classical tradition are contemporary.

The assigned texts will include (1) Jack Katz, *The Seductions of Crime (1988)*. This is an attempt to explore the moral and emotional appeals to crime through the use of a phenomenological perspective in the tradition of Alfred Schutz. Katz focuses on the way that foreground factors, that are primarily emotional, attract people to criminal opportunities. Katz advocated an approach that explicitly rejected the role of background factors in the causes of crime. Katz’s actors have free will, but they often act in irrational ways. His work is an attempt to understand the rationality behind otherwise inexplicable acts of violence and deceit.

The second required volume is (2) Gottfredson and Hirschi’s *General Theory of Crime (1990)*. This volume superseded Travis Hirschi’s earlier classic, *The Causes of Delinquency (1969)*. Where TCD emphasized how social bonds insulated youth from the temptations of crime, the GTC argued that the key element in the rise of crime is low self-control. Actors still choose their courses of action but many do so compulsively, or do so in a social condition in which they are unrestrained. These actors do not have unique criminal appetites or special criminal motives, nor do they specialize in particular forms of crime. They engage in a variety of impulsive acts, many of which are illegal, because they permit the short-term attractions of crime to outweigh the longer terms costs

of consequences. This tendency tends to be persistent over the life course and is independent from the effects of gender and age.

The final volume is in part a response to General Theory, and was researched and written by two of Gottfredson and Hirschi's students: *Crime in the Making* was written by Robert Sampson and John Laub in 1993, and is based on a sophisticated re-analysis of one of the most complex data sets ever assembled in criminology. This was the Glueck and Glueck's Boston slum longitudinal survey of 500 delinquent boys and 500 non-delinquents. The data were collected starting in 1939 and the boys were followed until the mid-1960s. Sampson and Laub subsequently followed the men into their senior years in a second book, *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives, Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. (2003)—but we will not have time to examine it. In *Crime in the Making*, the authors offer both quantitative as well as qualitative evidence for their thesis of informal social control and social capital as determinants of delinquent involvement. They argue that these 2 factors are far more important in the explanation of delinquency than individual level attributes such as self-control or impulsiveness.

The supplementary readings open up the debate in new ways. Moffitt's "life course persistent delinquents" are control theory's impulsive offenders; the adolescent-limited are simply the results of the age-crime curve. However, Moffitt argues that impulsiveness originates from developmental injuries. Lehrer's analysis of Walter Mischel shows that the discovery of long-term individual differences by Gottfredson and Hirschi co-appeared at the same time as Mischel's exploration of individual levels of self-control among kindergarten children (1990) but it took him decades to realize the long-term significance of these differences. Hirschi's 2004 chapter is an attempt to bridge the chasm between self-control and social control.

These three seminal works—and the supplementary readings—offer students of crime with different and competing explanations of crime and delinquency. They are all general theories. Each proposes conceptions of actors with agency, and the capacity to make choices. Each marshals various sorts of evidence to advance its perspective. Intellectually, the objective of the seminar is to explore each approach thoroughly and to determine whether any one singular perspective, or any combination thereof, offers a useful perspective on crime as we look forward. The seminar also provides participants with an opportunity to develop an important academic contribution in criminology based on the course materials and the student's individual interests.

Recommended readings / reference materials

Eugene McLaughlin, John Muncie and Gordon Hughes (editors), *Criminological Perspectives: Essential Readings*, Second Edition, London: Sage Books, 2003.

Required Readings

1. Jack Katz, *Seductions of Crime: The Moral and Sensual Attractions of Doing Evil*, NY: Basic Books 1988

2. Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi, A General Theory of Crime, Stanford University Press, 1990.
3. Robert Sampson and John Laub, Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life, Harvard University Press, 1993.

Key supplementary readings

1. Moffitt, Terrie E. (1993) "Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy." *Psychological Review*, Vol. 100(4), 674-701. Online
2. Jonah Lehrer (2009) "Don't! The secret of self-control," *The New Yorker*, May 18th edition, [Walter Mischler's 'marshmallow' experiments] Online
3. Travis Hirschi (2004) "Self-Control and Crime," Ch 28 in Roy F. Baumeister and Kathleen D. Ross (eds.) *Handbook of Self-Regulation*, New York and London: Guilford Press. Online

Schedule of Readings

| Week | Date | Topic | Readings |
|------|---------|---|--|
| 1 | Sept 12 | Introductions; Katz and Phenomenology/existentialism; "Righteous slaughter" | Katz Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 |
| 2 | Sept 19 | Katz on Robbery | Katz Chapters 5,6 & 7 |
| 3 | Sept 26 | Cold-blooded murder; and generalizing theory | Katz Chapters 8 & 9 |
| 4 | Oct 3 | Thanksgiving Monday: No classes. Re-schedule on another day this week? | |
| 5 | Oct 10 | Gottfredson and Hirschi, A General Theory of Crime: The classical tradition and the nature of crime; versus biological positivism | Preface and Chapters 1, 2 and 3 |
| 6 | Oct 17 | Low self-control; individual traits and the social consequences of LSC | Chapters 5, 6 & 7 |
| 7 | Oct 24 | Methodological issues and policy issues | Chapters 11-12 |
| 8 | Oct 31 | Sampson and Laub, <i>Crime in the Making</i> | Chapters 1, 2 & 3 |
| 9 | Nov 7 | The family, the schools, the peers/siblings | Chapters 4, 5 & 6 |
| 10 | Nov 14 | ASC Meetings: guest lecturer | Supplementary readings (see above) |
| 11 | Nov 21 | Continuity over time; Exploring the life histories and the policy implications | Chapter 6-part of 7 (123-168); Chapters 9-10 |
| 12 | Nov 28 | Student presentations | |
| 13 | Dec 5 | Student presentations | |
| 14 | | | |

Assignments

1. Critique of Katz. Length: 5 pages (1,250 words). Due date: Wednesday, October 5th. 20 points. Paper copy. Font: Times 14.
2. Critique of Gottfredson and Hirschi. Length: 5 pages (1,250 words). Due date: Wednesday, November 2nd. 20 points. Paper copy. Font: Times 14.

3. Critique of Sampson and Laub. Length: 5 pages (1,250 words). Due date: Wednesday, November 30th. 20 points. Paper copy. Font: Times 14.
4. Student attendance, participation, and presentation. 10 points, including a formal presentation during the last 2 weeks of class. The reading schedule is demanding and requires that the materials be read by the participants *in advance* of the seminars. This will permit students to participate intelligently.
5. Final paper on a relevant topic on criminal behaviour to be identified in consultation with the instructor beforehand. Based on secondary research (no primary data collection) and the individual student's interests. Length: 15 pages minimum, 20 pages maximum, including references (250 words per page). Due December 19th *by email*.

Some clarification

The objective of the 3 critiques is to demonstrate (i) a solid grasp of the perspective on the authors based on a careful reading of the assignments, and (ii) an appreciation of *both* the strengths *and* the weaknesses of the views advanced. The critiques ought to pay attention to the theoretical, methodological and policy implications of the perspectives, since these 3 factors are usually inter-related. This gives the student of crime a good footing for the next task: the creation of an original contribution that comes from the student's interest, and based on what has been covered, and linking it to that literature. Ideally, the final paper assignment could form the basis for a conference presentation, a thesis proposal and/or a journal article.

Several papers by the instructor are posted to give the seminar participants some sense of the kinds of research that the instructor and his students have conducted in the past.

Emergency Exits: In case of the need for an emergency exit from the seminar room, everyone is advised to depart to the staircase immediately outside SS 921.

Ethics Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required. This will not influence this course as no research is required.

Academic Misconduct: cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor's office or the Department main office.

Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation. Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student’s responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.**