

Sociology 232 – Criminology

Summer 2008

M – F 103 Oglebay Hall, 12:00 – 2:20

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Office Hours 10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
Or by appointment

Logic of the Course

Crime: (noun)

- a. An act punishable by law, as being forbidden by statute or injurious to the public welfare.
- b. An evil or injurious act; an offence, a sin; *esp.* of a grave character.

Source: Oxford English Dictionary

There are few contemporary issues that generate opinions like crime. Images of crime and criminals dominate our media. Pundits and politicians debate the crime problem and pose wildly varying solutions. In criminology, we harness the tools of social science generally, and sociology in particular, to study crime. As a discipline Criminology focuses on several key topics.

1) **Definition & Measurement:** what constitutes crime? How do we know it when we see it? Criminologists craft careful definitions so that crime trends may be measured and studied. The first unit of this course will be concerned with these issues.

2) **Explanation:** Why do we have crime? What leads someone to kill, or steal, or get stoned? Criminology seeks to provide philosophically rigorous answers to these questions in the form of theory. Criminological Theory forms the second unit of the course.

3) **Types and Patterns:** How are crimes and the ways that we respond to them changing? I will argue that there are three distinct types of crime that bear little resemblance to each other:

- Acts of **violence** (crimes against the physical wellbeing of persons)
- Theft or destruction of **property** (crimes against material wellbeing of people, places, or things).
- Crimes against the **public/moral order** (crimes against an officially defined social order).

This course will expose you to the range of current scientific knowledge about crime. Please note that this perspective will often be contradictory to what is expressed by media personalities, politicians, and entertainment programming. Most crimes are both less sensational and more complicated than we are lead to believe by such sources. It is your instructor's objective that everyone completing this class will be a critical consumer of discourse about crime.

Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Understand how crimes are measured and identify policy implications
- Comprehend the key sociological theories of crime and differentiate between them
- Critically apply theoretical concepts to concrete case examples
- Recognize the patterned regularities of crime

Required Reading

(1) Barkan, Steven E. (2006). *Criminology: A Sociological Understanding*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

(2) Articles & Case material made available through ecampus (note: the materials in ecampus are not optional. While I could have constructed a reading package through a publisher, I opted to place these readings online to minimize your costs. If you do not have reliable access to the internet or a printer, please see me to make arrangements to get these materials.

I understand that the cost of the Barkan text at the WVU bookstore is \$100.80 for a new copy and \$75.60. For a used copy. I will place a copy of this text on closed reserve at the downtown library. This book was used by Dr. Weiss for the past two semesters, so there should be plenty of used copies available.

I assume that you have the textbook and are reading the assigned materials. **Failure to acquire a book will not garner you any sympathy with me** should not perform as well as you would like.

About Reading

You are responsible for all of the assigned reading on the day it is scheduled. That means, I consider every section, paragraph, and textbox, fair game for the exam (**even if we do not cover the material in class**). We will cover approximately 50 pages per class period. If you wish to do well in this class, I would strongly advise you to keep up with the reading.

A nickel's worth of free advice

Sometimes students ask me how they can maximize the chances of doing well in this class. The following general strategy served me well in school (I went from a 1.7 gpa in my first semester of college to the Dean's List my final two years by using these strategies).

1. Read & Outline the assigned reading BEFORE class.
 - a. Outlining is an active learning strategy which forces you to slow down and think about the reading.
 - b. Reading before class both flags things that don't make sense (so you can ask questions) and primes you for discussion. The purpose of discussion in class is to reinforce the important concepts which are introduced in the book.
2. Take notes in class and then re-write them after class. By re-writing your notes, you actively review them.
3. Review your reading outline & class notes at least once a week and preferably twice per week. This makes it much easier to study prior to the exam.
4. Ask questions in class. Try to answer the questions I put out. If something doesn't make sense, try to figure out what isn't making sense and then ask for clarification.

Grading & Evaluation

There will be three exams (worth 100 points each, held each Friday) and a variety of in-class exercises & participation that add up to 100 points, for a total of 400 points. I do not intend to offer extra-credit. Final grades will be based on the following point allocations

Grade	% of Points	Points necessary to achieve this grade
A	> 92	368
A-	90.00 – 91.99	360
B+	88.00 – 89.99	352
B	83.00 – 87.99	332
B-	80.00 – 82.99	320
C+	78.00 – 79.00	312
C	73.00 – 77.99	292
C-	70.00 – 72.99	280
D	65.00 – 69.99	260
F	< 65.00	368

I will post exam scores on Vista in a timely fashion. You can estimate your current grade at anytime by applying the scale above to your current percentage. Similarly, you can use this table to determine how many points you need on the final exam to achieve _____ (fill in the desired grade).

Makeup Exam Policy

The exams will be given on the dates listed in the course schedule. All students are expected to take the exam when scheduled. According to the University policy, “Students absent from regularly scheduled exams **because of authorized University activities** will have the opportunity to take them at an alternate time. Students meeting these criteria **should notify me immediately** and **supply official documentary evidence** of their circumstances. In order to be fair, the make up exams will involve additional essay questions, not asked on the main exam.

The division of Sociology and Anthropology has a clear make-up exam policy.

- All students must make up an exam **within one week** of the original exam time.
- Students **are only allowed one make up exam per course**.
- Students must show their id and sign in to take the make up exam.

I **will not** authorize make-up exams for vacations & travel schedules, job interviews, and other non-university recognized exigencies. If you have a vacation planned before June 29th, I advise you to drop this course.

Special Needs

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me **immediately** and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

Attendance

You are expected to attend **every** class and are responsible for what we cover. Accordingly, if you miss class for some unavoidable reason, please make arrangements to see someone’s notes. I will allow 3 unexcused absences without penalty. However, beginning with the **4th absence**, your participation grade will be reduced by 3 points for each absence. This means that if you miss 10 classes (fully 1/3 of the schedule), your participation grade can be no higher than 9. Missing 14 or more classes (1/2 the schedule) will result in a zero for the participation component of class.

Academic Honesty

I assume that I will never have reason to doubt your honesty. Scholastic dishonesty involves...

- misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another;
- submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without the written approval and consent of all instructor’s concerned;
- depriving another student of necessary course materials
- interfering with another’s work

These definitions are based on the West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog. Please see the section on Academic Integrity / Dishonesty for the full definition and discussion of these procedures.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Clear cases will result in an F and appropriate academic discipline. If you have any question about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help assure academic honesty, please talk to me.

Classroom Expectations

I assume that everyone who signed up for this course carries expectations about it. You expect to: (a) learn about the field of criminology, and (b) be stimulated, challenged, and perhaps even entertained by the subject matter. Similarly, I have some expectations of you. I write them on the syllabus to minimize confusion.

You should expect that I will be prepared and enthusiastic for every class. I do my best keep the content lively. (Note that the more actively that you participate in discussion, the easier it is for me to keep the material lively.) You should also expect for me to return your exams quickly (within 2 days). Should you have any questions about the course, your progress, or anything else related to Sociology & Criminology at WVU, I will be available to you during daily office hours.

I also have expectations for you. First, I expect that you will be present, prepared for class, on-time. We will meet everyday at 12:00 p.m. Of course, I do understand that occasionally there are legitimate reasons to be late. Should you find yourself in a situation that has led you to arrive at 103 Oglebav Hall after the start of class, please quietly find your way to a seat and let me know after class what happened.

Once class begins, I expect to have your attention. Most people find the content of Criminology to be interesting. We will discuss some controversial ideas that will challenge you. Engage these ideas; challenge them back. Ask questions and debate one another. Let's make our time together count.

There are several student behaviors that I've experienced over the years which strike me as rude and insulting. I will negatively call attention to (e.g., embarrass) anyone doing the following:

- Talking or typing on one's cell phone. When you come to class, please put your phone away. (It would be nice if you would also turn off the ringer, but we all forget to do that from time to time). Please don't use our class time to send text messages, play games, or update your blog).
- Reading the newspaper. I assure that what I have to say has more bearing on your grade in this course than the Daily Atheneum, the Dominion Post, or even the New York Times.
- Working on homework or materials for another class.
- Stage whispering conversations with your neighbor

- Overtly disrespecting other students. [Note, we should collectively anticipate disagreements. There are smart people in the field of Criminology who bitterly disagree with one another. I ask that we try to debate respectfully.]

Social Justice

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that statement and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Schedule¹

Note that we will not proceed through the Barkan text in a direct or linear fashion. As stated above, I assume that you will have read the assigned materials **before** the class.

#	Day	Date	Topic & Reading Assignments
1	Monday	5/19/2008	Introduction to Class, Understanding & Defining Crime - Criminology Morgantown Style (in-class handout) - B: 6-23
2	Tuesday	5/20/2008	The "Social Construction" of Crime - B: 28-53
3	Wednesday	5/21/2008	Measuring Crime - V: FBI Classifications - B: 58-91
4	Thursday	5/22/2008	Victims, Victim Precipitation, and Routine Activities Theory - B: 94-126
5	Friday	5/23/2008	Exam I

¹ B = Barkan (primary textbook). V= On Vista (now called ecampus)

Week 2

	Monday	5/26/2008	No Class – Memorial Day
6	Tuesday	5/27/2008	Philosophies of Crime – - B: 132-177
7	Wednesday	5/28/2008	The problem of Violence (Emphasis on Biology) B: 143-161 B: 263-298 Video shown in class (material will be on the test)
8	Thursday	5/29/2008	The Problem of Violence (Emphasis on Social Structure) B: 168-177, 189-191 V: Elijah Anderson, Tyree's Story V: Mass Murder: What Causes it? Can it be Stopped?
9	Friday	5/30/2008	Exam II

Week 3

10	Monday	6/2/2008	Property Crime (overview) Street vs. White Collar - B: 304-394 - B372-394
11	Tuesday	6/3/2008	Explaining Property Crime: Strain, Rational Choice & Opportunity Theory - B:137-139; 177-185 - V: Bilking the Elderly
12	Wednesday	6/4/2008	Crimes against the public and Moral Order - B: 434-465
13	Thursday	6/5/2008	Labeling & Critical Theories B: 230-257
14	Friday	6/6/2008	Exam III
