

SOCI 388 Crime

Winter 2023

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:05-2:25pm
Room TBD

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Office hours: Thursday, 3-4pm, Leacock Building 826

Please sign up online: <https://calendly.com/jandoering>

Teaching Assistant: TBD

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Office hours: TBD

Course Description

Our society is obsessed with crime, as any visit to a bookstore or an evening spent watching television easily confirms. Conversely, the study of crime is one of the most vibrant areas of social science. In this course, we will survey some major aspects of criminology, including causal explanations (the “etiology”) of crime, patterns of crime (in terms of age, race and ethnicity, gender, etc.), societal contexts of crime and criminalization, and societal responses to crime (including policing, punishment, and politics). The study of crime is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses psychology, sociobiology, anthropology, economics, political science, and more, but we will place particular emphasis on crime as a sociological phenomenon.

Learning Goals

After completing this course, you should:

- understand major theories that explain crime and delinquency.
- know key trends in crime rates.
- be able to apply criminological theories to interpret empirical cases.
- be able to critically analyze the political implications of various approaches to crime and criminal behaviour.

Readings

I expect you to read all of the assigned material. Reading only the assigned textbook will not suffice. Other required readings will be made available through *Perusall* and *MyCourses*. After the end of add/drop period (Tuesday, January 17), you will be asked to engage the readings that are not contained in the textbook on Perusall, a peer-based online reading tool. Please note that doing so is a course requirement and will constitute part of your grade (see “Assignments and Grading”).

Check the schedule at the bottom of the syllabus for reading assignments as well as notes on certain readings. Occasionally, the schedule identifies passages you can ignore.

Required textbook: Schmalleger, Frank and Rebecca Volk. 2021. *Canadian Criminology Today: Theories and Applications*. Seventh edition. Toronto, ON: Pearson.

NOTE: Prior textbook editions are very similar, with the obvious exception of reported crime rates. An older version may suffice for your studies, but I cannot guarantee this. Your safest option is to purchase the most recent edition. Two copies of the sixth edition (the last edition that appeared in print) are available on course reserve at the Humanities and Social Sciences and Library.

Assignments and Grading

A) Midterm exam: 35%

The midterm exam provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of all course content covered thus far, including the readings, lectures, and in-class exercises. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. The midterm exam will be held in class on Thursday, February 9. There will be no make-up exam option for the midterm. If you have to miss the midterm, its grade weight will be shifted to the final exam. If you are allowed to take your exam at the OSD and wish to do so, please make sure to register this intent with OSD several weeks before the exam.

B) Final exam: 40%

The final exam will test all course content covered in class thus far, including the readings, lectures, and in-class exercises. It may consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will be held in class on Tuesday, March 28. If you know that you cannot take the exam that day, please look for a different class. If you are allowed to take your exam at the OSD and wish to do so, please make sure to register this intent with OSD several weeks before the exam.

C) Perusall reading grade (average of pass/fail credit per assigned reading): 15% total

After the end of add/drop period (Tuesday, January 17), you will be asked to engage the readings that are not contained in the textbook by using Perusall, a browser-based, collaborative reading tool. Perusall enables you to discuss the readings together with other students. Perusall will grade your reading engagement for each single reading on a pass/fail basis. It considers the quantity and quality of comments and the degree to which your comments stimulate and contribute to student discussion.

In order to receive credit for completing a reading, you have to a) complete the reading in full before the course meeting for which it has been assigned (deadline: 1:00pm), and b) engage the reading by making substantial comments on passages, asking pertinent question, and addressing the comments and questions that other students have logged. Note that you won't receive credit if you complete your assignment late or if you do not substantially engage the reading by logging comments and/or questions on Perusall.

By the end of the course, your overall Perusall reading grade will be the simple average of your pass/fail grades for each assigned reading. For example, if I had assigned only four readings and you had received credit for three readings, your reading grade would be 75%.

D) Group work: 9%

Over the semester, we will do three group exercises (graded pass/fail, each worth 2% of your overall course grade). Assignments to groups will be strictly random—no reassignments will be made under any circumstances. The division of labour within your group is entirely up to you and your fellow students. If you are forced to miss a group exercise, you should therefore write your group members rather than the instructor.

Exercises are designed to take approximately 1.5 hours. You can complete them in class, but you can also do them remotely and/or outside of class if your group prefers working in a different environment or at a different time. It is up to you to coordinate this with your group members. For each exercise, your group must submit one written report via MyCourses no later than 48 hours after the exercise has been introduced. Late submissions will not be accepted.

To encourage everyone's participation, you will have the opportunity to evaluate your group members' contribution by the end of the class. Each student's peer evaluation grade will be computed as the simple average of the peer evaluations they receive and will constitute 3% of the overall course grade. Do not complain to me about your peer evaluation grade—I will not alter it. It is up to you to take a role within your group that ensures a good peer evaluation. Please note that submitting your peer evaluation grades is mandatory and late submission will not be accepted. If you do not submit a complete evaluation for all your group members by the deadline (to be announced), you will receive a zero for own participation grade, independent of the grades your group members may have given you.

E) Delinquency self-report: 1% ☺

During our Tuesday session in week 4, you will be asked to write and submit an anonymous self-report about a delinquent act you have committed. Details will be announced in class.

Course Policies and Statements

- **Land acknowledgment:** McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.
- **Inclusive learning environment:** As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009. If you are allowed to take your exam at the OSD and wish to do so, please make sure to register this intent with OSD several weeks before the exam.
- **Copyright and the reproduction of course material:** Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., lectures, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without the explicit permission

of the instructor. Specifically, you may not reproduce or place in the public domain lecture and course session recordings. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow-up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

- **Academic integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). If a student is caught engaging in fraudulent activity, the student may fail the assignment in question or the entire course, and I will report that student to the Dean of Students. Note that to support academic integrity, your assignments may be submitted to text-matching software to check for plagiarism.
- **Language:** In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.
- **Make-up policy:** There will be no make-up option for the midterm exam. If you have to miss the midterm exam, I will shift the weight to the final exam, which will then count for 75% of your final course grade. There are no make-up options for Perusall reading assignments or for group work components. If you have to miss group assignments, communicate with your group members rather than the course instructor.
- **Regrading policy:** You have the right to request that your exam be regraded. If you request a regrade, please note that I will regrade your entire assignment, not just specific passages that you may have flagged. Regrading may improve or lower your grade.
- **Attendance:** I do not take attendance. It is up to you to decide whether you want to attend course meetings or not. However, please note that exams and exercises will test not only the readings but may also include material covered only during course meetings. Furthermore, your group members may base their peer evaluation (see item "D" under Assignments and Grading) in part on whether you attended group work meetings.
- **Policy regarding extra credit and "rounding up" grades:** Regardless of circumstances, I never give extra credit, "round up" grades, or change the relative grade weight of assignments. I follow this policy because tailoring grades or grading procedures to individual students is fundamentally unfair to the other students. Please do not ask me to do so.
- **Course communication:** You have to regularly check your email and read course-related email communication. Before emailing me or the teaching assistant, please consult the syllabus for relevant information. If the answer to your question is on the syllabus, we reserve the right to ignore your email.
- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Schedule

Week 1. Thursday, January 5. Introduction (1).

Week 2. Tuesday, January 10. Introduction (2).

- Textbook chapter 1 (“What is Criminology”).
- Erikson, Kai T. 1966. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. Chapter 1 (“On the Sociology of Deviance”). New York: Wiley.

Week 2. Thursday, January 12. The emergence of criminology: The Classical School.

- Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Chapter 1 (“The body of the condemned”), pp. 3-16.
- Textbook chapter 5 (“Classical and Neoclassical Thought”).

Week 3. Tuesday, January 17. The emergence of criminology: Rational Choice Theory, Positivism.

- Feeney, Floyd. 1986. “Robbers as Decision-Makers.” Pp. 53-71 in Cornish, Derek and Ronald Clarke (eds.), *The Reasoning Criminal. Rational Choice Perspectives on Offending*. New York: Springer.
- Textbook chapter 6 (“Biological Roots of Criminal Behaviour”). Only pp.139-150 (to the end of “Twin Studies and Heredity”) are required. Read the rest of the chapter if you like.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. 1993. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York, NY: Norton. Chapter 4 (“Measuring Bodies: Two Case Studies on the Apishness of Undesirables”). Read pp.122-145. You can skim the rest.

Week 3. Thursday, January 19. The explanation of crime (1). NOTE: You are required to engage these and all subsequent non-textbook readings on Perusall.

- Textbook chapter 9 (“The Meaning of Crime: Social Process Perspective”).
- Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, Donna M. Bishop, and Barry C. Feld. 2011. “Social Learning Theory.” From *The Oxford Handbook of Juvenile Crime and Juvenile Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press. Read pp.1-8. You can skim the rest.
- Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Chapter 2 (“A Control Theory of Delinquency”), pp.16-34. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 4. Tuesday, January 24. Delinquency self-report exercise.

Week 4. Thursday, January 26. The explanation of crime (2).

- Textbook chapter 8 (“The Meaning of Crime: Social Structure Perspective”).
- Agnew, Robert. 1992. “Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency.” *Criminology* 30(1):47–88. Read 47-61. You can skim the rest.
- Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Chapter 5 (“The Nature of Criminality”), pp.85-120. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 5. Tuesday, January 31. First group exercise.

Week 5. Thursday, February 2. Crime over the life-course.

- Chambliss, William J. 1973. "The Saints and the Roughnecks." *Society* 11(1):24–31.
- Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 6 ("Why Some Offenders Stop"), pp.114-149.

Week 6. Tuesday, February 7. Review session (optional) for midterm exam.

Week 6. Thursday, February 9. Midterm exam.

Week 7. Tuesday, February 14. Crime and power (1).

- Textbook chapter 10 ("The Meaning of Crime: Social Conflict Perspective").
- Tombs, Steve and Dave Whyte. 2003. "Unmasking the Crimes of the Powerful." *Critical Criminology* 11(3):217–36.

Week 7. Thursday, February 16. Crime and power (2).

- Ferrell, Jeff. 1995. "Urban Graffiti: Crime, Control, and Resistance." *Youth & Society* 27(1):73–92.
- Hagan, John, John Simpson, and A. R. Gillis. 1987. "Class in the Household: A Power-Control Theory of Gender and Delinquency." *American Journal of Sociology* 92(4):788–816.

Week 8. Tuesday, February 21. Race and ethnicity (1).

- Maynard, Robyn. 2017. *Policing Black Lives : State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present*. Chapter 3 ("Arrested (In)justice"), pp.83-115. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Morenoff, Jeffrey D. and Avraham Astor. 2006. "Immigrant Assimilation and Crime: Generational Differences in Youth Violence in Chicago." Pp.36–63 in *Immigration and crime: Race, ethnicity, and violence*, edited by R. J. Martinez and A. J. Valenzuela. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Week 8. Thursday, February 23. Race and ethnicity (2).

- Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Stephen Raudenbush. 2005. "Social Anatomy of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Violence." *American Journal of Public Health* 95(2):224–32.
- Stuart, Forrest. 2020. "Code of the Tweet: Urban Gang Violence in the Social Media Age." *Social Problems* 67(2):191–207.

Week 9: Reading period—no class meetings or assignments.

Week 10. Tuesday, March 7. Drug crime and gangs.

- Bourgeois, Philippe. 2003. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Chapter 3 ("Crackhouse Management"), pp.77-113. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Felson, Richard, Jukka Savolainen, Mikko Aaltonen, and Heta Moustgaard. 2008. "Is the Association Between Alcohol Use and Delinquency Causal or Spurious?" *Criminology* 46(3):785–808.

Week 10. Thursday, March 9. Patterns and perceptions of crime.

- Textbook chapter 2 (“Crime Statistics”).
- Textbook chapter 3 (“Patterns of Crime”).
- Warr, Mark. 2000. “Fear of Crime in the United States: Avenues for Research and Policy.” Pp. 451–89 in *Criminal Justice 2000: Measurement and Analysis of Crime and Justice*, vol. 4, edited by D. Duffee. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

Week 11. Tuesday, March 14. Second group exercise.

Week 11. Thursday, March 16. Policing and social control (1).

- Moskos, Peter. 2009. *Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore’s Eastern District*. Chapter 5 (“911 Is a Joke”), pp. 89-110. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wortley, Scot, and Akwasi Owusu-Bempah. 2022. “Race, Police Stops, and Perceptions of Anti-Black Police Discrimination in Toronto, Canada over a Quarter Century.” *Policing: An International Journal* 45(4):570–85.

Week 12. Tuesday, March 21. Policing and social control (2). Movie screening: The Force.

Week 12. Thursday, March 23. Review session (optional) for final exam.

Week 13. Tuesday, March 28. Final exam.

Week 13. Thursday, March 30. Prosecution and punishment.

- Braithwaite, John and Stephen Mugford. 1994. “Conditions of Successful Reintegration Ceremonies: Dealing with Juvenile Offenders.” *British Journal of Criminology* 34(2):139-171.
- Frohmann, Lisa. 1991. “Discrediting Victims’ Allegations of Sexual Assault: Prosecutorial Accounts of Case Rejections.” *Social Problems* 38(2):213–26.

Week 14. Tuesday, April 4. Politics and policy.

- Textbook chapter 11 (“Criminology and Social Policy”).
- Western, Bruce. 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. Chapter 3 (“The Politics and Economics of Punitive Criminal Justice”), pp. 52-81. New York, NY: Russell Sage.

Week 14. Thursday, April 6. Third group exercise.

Week 15. Tuesday, April 11. Course wrap-up.