



Independent Study | in Idaho

CRIM 301
CRIMINOLOGICAL
THEORY

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Course Guide

Independent
Study | in Idaho

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Criminology 301 Criminological Theory

University of Idaho
3 Semester-Hour Credits

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CRIM 301: Criminological Theory 3 Semester-Hour Credits: U of I

Welcome!

Whether you are a new or returning student, welcome to the Independent Study in Idaho (ISI) program. Below, you will find information pertinent to your course including the course description, course materials, course objectives, as well as information about assignments, exams, and grading. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the ISI office for clarification before beginning your course.

Policies and Procedures

Refer to the ISI website at www.uidaho.edu/isi and select *Students* for the most current policies and procedures, including information on setting up accounts, student confidentiality, exams, proctors, transcripts, course exchanges, refunds, academic integrity, library resources, and disability support and other services.

Course Description

Review and assessment of common explanations of crime, deviant behavior and control. May include field trips. Prerequisite: CRIM 101

*12 graded assignments, 2 self-study practice exams, 2 proctored exams
Available online only.*

Students may submit up to 2 assignments per week. Before taking exams, students MUST wait for grades and feedback on assignments, which may take up to three weeks after date of receipt by the instructor.

ALL assignments and exams must be submitted to receive a final grade for the course.

Course Materials

Required Course Materials

Vito, Gennaro F., and Jeffrey R. Maahs. *Criminology: Theory, Research, and Policy, 5th edition*. Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2020. ISBN 9781284181784

Paternoster, Raymond, and Ronet Bachman. (2001). *Explaining Criminals and Crime*. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 9780195329933

Course Delivery

All ISI courses are delivered through BbLearn, an online management system that hosts the course lessons and assignments and other items that are essential to the course. Upon registration, the student will receive a *Registration Confirmation Email* with information on how to access ISI courses online.

Course Introduction

This course will provide an introduction to the theories of criminal and deviant behavior. Criminological theories have a fascinating and often-times disturbing history that can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the Age of Enlightenment. Over the centuries, they have evolved and become a key guiding force in contemporary criminal justice system policy and practice. This course will cover the historical

development of criminological theories, their basic premises and key concepts, and their application in today's world.

For each section of the course, you will be required to write short essays that are informed by the course textbooks and the material presented in the course guide. You will also be required to complete two non-cumulative multiple choice exams that will test your understanding of the subject matter covered in the course. Enjoy the class!

Course Objectives

- Learning and integration: students will gain an understanding of the history and development of criminological thought and how it has shaped policy and practice over time. Students should be able to apply and critique theoretical explanations for criminal and deviant behavior.
- Thinking and creating: students will comprehend the logic of theoretical undertakings and will be able to apply that logic to typical and non-typical behaviors, redefining their understanding of human motivation and action.
- Communication: students will articulate and convey the meaning of theory in historical and contemporary contexts across a spectrum of behaviors.
- Perspective: students will explore their own perspectives about crime and deviance in order to better understand the root causes of atypical behavior.
- Practicing citizenship: students will apply principles of empathic and informed objectivity in order to understand and respect the many factors that contribute to offending behavior.

Lessons

Overview

Each lesson includes lesson objectives, an introductory lecture, and a reading and writing assignment. Each written assignment is worth 10 points and consists of three essays. All answers are to be written in essay form using complete sentences. Students should write in their own words when referencing authorities and all quotations must include complete citations of the work from which they are taken. Do not copy from the textbook or any other book.

Each lesson may include the following components:

- Lesson objectives
- Reading assignments
- Important terms
- Lecture
- Written assignment

Study Hints:

- Keep a copy of every assignment submitted.
- Complete all reading assignments.
- Set a schedule allowing for course completion one month before your personal deadline. An *Assignment Submission Log* is provided for this purpose.
- Web pages and URL links in the World Wide Web are continuously changing. Contact your instructor if you find a broken Web page or URL.
- The assigned readings must be read thoroughly and completely. The exams will be based on material covered in your textbooks and the course guide.

- Please note that the Paternoster and Bachman textbook assigned for this course has subchapters within each chapter (there will be an introductory subchapter followed by one or more essays). You are expected to read all of the subchapters and essay in each assigned chapter.
- Follow the essay guidelines carefully. The written assignments comprise 50% of your final grade.

Essay Guidelines

Essays are evaluated on a number of factors. The best essays will directly address the topic being discussed, will incorporate the relevant material and, when appropriate, will demonstrate critical thought.

Font and spacing: Please use Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, and double spacing.

Page Heading and numbering: Each essay must include page numbering and a heading in the upper right hand corner that includes:

First and last name
Date of submission
CRIM 301
Lesson number

Essay length: There is no set length for the essays, but your essay should be long enough to fully address the essay prompt/question. This will most likely result in lesson submissions that are 2-3 pages in length (each lesson submission is comprised of three essays). Given that there is no in-class component to this course and, therefore, no opportunity to discuss the material as a group, your essays should demonstrate that you understand the material. Make sure to provide enough content in your essays to meet this expectation.

Please ensure that your essay is written using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. If your essay is difficult to read, it will be difficult to grade. Plagiarism will absolutely not be tolerated. If you are uncertain of what constitutes plagiarism, see the Student Code of Conduct policy at www.webs.uidaho.edu/fsh, the Faculty-Staff Handbook, Chapter 2: Student Affairs Policies, Student Code of Conduct, 2300, Article II, Academic Honesty.

Refer to the **Course Rules** in BbLearn for further details on assignment requirements and submission.

Exams

- You must wait for grades and comments on assignments before taking subsequent exams.
- Exams are closed-book. You will not be allowed to consult your textbooks or the course guide while taking the exam.
- For your instructor's exam guidelines, refer to the **Course Rules** in BbLearn.

Refer to *Grading* for specific information on assignment/exam points and percentages.

Proctor Selection/Scheduling Exams

All exams require a proctor.

To submit your *Proctor Information Form* online, visit the ISI website and select *Forms, Proctor Information Form*. Submit this form at least two weeks before your first exam. Refer to *Students, Assignments and Exams* on the ISI website for information on acceptable and unacceptable proctors.

Grading

The course grade will be based upon the following considerations:

Twelve lessons

Two exams

Twelve lessons	(10 points each)	50% of final grade =	120
Exam 1	(60 points)	25% of final grade =	60
Exam 2	(60 points)	25% of final grade =	60
			240 total possible points

Final Grade	Points Earned	Percentage Earned
A	216-240	90-100%
B	192-215	80-89%
C	168-191	70-79%
D	144-167	60-69%
F	0-143	Below 60%

Exams: There are two exams in this course, each worth 60 points or 25% of your final grade. Each exam will consist of 40 multiple choice questions (worth 1 point each) and four short answer questions (worth five points each).

Practice exams: Two practice exams are provided; one for exam 1 and one for exam 2. The answer key is located at the back of this course guide.

The final course grade is issued after all assignments and exams have been graded.

Acts of academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism, are considered a very serious transgression and may result in a grade of F for the course.

About the Course Developer

Omi Hodwitz is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Idaho. She received her Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland in 2015. Dr. Hodwitz's research interests include terrorism studies, theory construction and application, prison education, and research methods.

Contacting Your Instructor

Instructor contact information is posted on your BbLearn site under *Course Rules*.

Assignment Submission Log Template

Send the completed *Proctor Information Form* to the ISI office at least two weeks before taking your first exam.

Lesson	Projected Date for Completion	Date Submitted	Grade Received	Cumulative Point Totals
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 1.				
Exam 1				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 2.				
Exam 2				

Lesson 1

Introduction to Theory

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will understand and be able to explain the following:

- The meaning of theory
- How to evaluate theory
- The relationship between theory and policy
- The different schools of criminological thought

Reading Assignment

Vito & Maahs, ch. 1

Paternoster & Bachman, ch. 1

Important Terms

consensus perspective	criminology	unarticulated propositions
conflict perspective	tautology	cognitive validity
classical school	recidivism	empirical validity
Positive school	articulated propositions	Occam's Razor
falsifiable	cognitive validity	altruistic
tabula rasa	logically consistent	hedonistic
parsimony	scope	testable

Introductory Lecture

Theory helps us understand social phenomena such as criminal and deviant behavior. It provides an answer to the question "why": why do some people deviate while others conform? Theory not only guides our understanding of crime, it gives us insight into how to predict deviance; if we know why crime occurs we are better equipped to know when it is likely to occur. Theory also gives us guidance on how to control behavior, typically through the implementation and enforcement of policies; if we can identify the causes of crime, we can work to eliminate those causes.

Theories consist of a number of elements. They make explicit statements about the relationship between specific concepts. For example, some theories suggest that poor parenting causes crime; these theories are suggesting a causal relationship between the two key concepts of parenting and crime. Theories also consist of implicit characteristics, such as *assumptions of human nature*. For example, one theory may assume that we are born hardwired to be *altruistic* or basically good and, therefore, we need to explain why people offend, while another theory may assume that we are born *hedonistic* or self-interested and, therefore, we need to explain why people conform. A third perspective of human nature is that we are born *tabula rasa* (a blank slate) and our experiences and interactions determine whether we turn out altruistic or hedonistic.

There are also a number of characteristics that will determine whether a theory is "good" or not. For example, theories should also *testable* and *falsifiable*; we can operationalize key theoretical concepts, empirically assess whether these concepts behave the way that the theory predicts they will, and draw conclusions, some of which might be that the theory is not supported by the research. Along the same lines, a theory should be *valid*; it needs to fit the facts empirically and cognitively. A theory should be able to *explain* and *predict* behavior; it should tell us why crime occurs and when it is likely to happen again. A theory needs to have *policy relevance*. Theories inform legislators about the causes of crime and how to address those causes, thus providing direction on what policies should do. Not all policies are rooted in theory and many of those that are not theoretically-driven have been ineffective (e.g. the D.A.R.E program). In contrast, theoretically-oriented policies have, on many fronts,

demonstrated varying levels of success. Theories that are *parsimonious* are preferred, as are theories that are broader in *scope*. Parsimony refers to the simplicity of the theory. A key idea here is *Occam's Razor*; the simplest explanation is usually the correct one of "among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected." In other words, the more complicated the theory is, the less desirable it is for criminologists. Parsimony is often sacrificed for scope. Scope refers to the broadness of a theory. Theories with limited scope only explain a small amount of crime, usually for specific locations and groups (e.g. a theory may focus only on inner-city youth engaging in violence), while theories that are broad in scope will attempt to explain all crime all of the time (these are often called "general" theories). Parsimonious theories are often limited in scope and theories with broad scope are often anything but parsimonious. Theories also need to be *logically consistent*. A theory that is not logically consistent, for example, might claim that crime is sometimes committed by adults but also claim that crime is only committed by youth. This is not an exhaustive list of criteria (there are more covered in your textbooks), but these are some of the more notable characteristics that indicate the value of a specific theory. Theories that fall short on enough of these criteria will quickly be discarded and forgotten.

Criminological theories have a diverse and, at times, shady past. Some of the earliest explanations for deviance arose during the Spiritual Era or the Middle Ages (1200-1600). During that time, Western society believed that otherworldly forces controlled human behavior and, if someone engaged in criminal activities, it was assumed that he or she was possessed by evil spirits. Establishing innocence or guilt, therefore, consisted of exposing accused offenders to a series of brutal trials by ordeal (e.g. being boiled, burned, or drowned). If the individual survived and began to heal following the ordeal, it was assumed that God had intervened in order to protect the accused, thus illustrating his or her innocence.

The Spiritual Era was followed by the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century and the introduction of the Classical School of Criminology. Spearheaded by two key thinkers, Beccaria and Bentham, the Classical School was a sharp departure from the Spiritual Age's focus on the supernatural. Beccaria and Bentham believed that humankind possessed free will and, therefore, human behaviors were the result of choice. People, according to the Classical School, are rational, weighing the costs and benefits of any given action and choosing only those actions that minimize costs or maximize benefits. Deviance is simply a rational choice, similar to any other choice and, as such, individuals can be deterred from engaging in crime by making the costs (punishments) outweigh the benefits. According to these early theorists, punishments deter if they are certain, swift, and severe.

The Positive School followed on the heels of the Classical School. Positivists rejected the Classical premise that crime is the result of a rational deliberation and instead focused on factors that are outside of the individual's control, including biological, sociological and psychological factors. Early Positivists believed that criminals were different from the general population and, through empirical means, those differences could be identified and controlled. Biological Positivists focused on factors such as head size (phrenology), physical makeup (somatotyping and criminal anthropology), genetics, and neurotransmitters. Psychological Positivists looked for cognitive and developmental differences, while sociological Positivists focused on peer, familial, institutional, and structural factors that were believed to influence crime. The different branches of the Positive School have similar implications for policy; offenders suffer from unique circumstances and characteristics and, if we want to address crime, we need to isolate and eliminate those factors, often through rehabilitation.

Both the Classical and Positive School are still present in our criminal justice system. The classical school is evident in such policies as three strikes laws, minimum mandatory sentencing, and habitual offender laws. These are all designed to ensure a severe and certain punishment for specific offences. The Positive School is apparent in rehabilitative and treatment-based programs.

Written Assignment

Assignment: Answer the following three essay questions in 2-3 pages.

1. Identify and describe in detail the characteristics of a "good" theory covered in both of your textbooks and the course guide.

2. Provide a detailed explanation of the relationship between theory and policy and give examples of theory-driven policies.

3. How do we scientifically evaluate theory? Summarize the process involved.