University of Colorado Denver
School of Public Affairs
CRJU5120: Nature & Causes of Crime
Spring 2011

Professor: Dr. Deanna M. Pérez  
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Course Time: Mon 6:30-9:15pm  
Classroom: Plaza Building M204

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00-12:30 pm or by appointment

Course Description
This course provides a historical overview of criminological theory and an intensive review of the paradigmatic shifts and advances witnessed in contemporary theory. Empirical tests of the theories will be reviewed to assess the validity of differing perspectives on crime causation, as well as the way in which theory influences social policy.

Objectives
After completing this course, students should be able to:
1. Understand the history, function and assumptions of various criminological theories
2. Analyze and compare the limitations of different and competing theories
3. Critically apply theoretical ideas to individual behavior and criminal justice responses

Required Text and Reading Materials


There are additional reading assignments listed on the schedule that are not available in your text. These readings will be placed on Blackboard for you to access. All required readings should be read PRIOR to class so that you come prepared to participate in class discussion.

Assignments

Research Article Critique
You are required to write a critique of an empirical article related to criminological theory. After our library instruction meeting scheduled on January 31, each student will work with the professor to select an appropriate research article for this assignment. The purpose of this assignment is for you to become comfortable researching academic databases, reading scholarly research related to criminological theory (and distinguishing it from other types of literature, such as newspaper reports, novels, etc.), and independently reviewing and critically evaluating empirical tests of crime causation. Your assignment should also include a bibliography with 5
additional research articles. These sources must consist of recently published (from January 2000 to the present) independent research from a peer-reviewed academic journal. The written critique should be 3-4 typed, double-spaced pages in length and is due March 14. The research article assignment is worth 25% of your overall grade.

**Book Reaction Essay**
You are required to write a reaction essay to the assigned book *Monster: The Autobiography of an L.A. Gang Member*. The purpose of this assignment is for you to apply your knowledge of the criminological theories covered in class to explain the author’s criminal career. I will provide students in advance with a list of reflection questions to consider in writing your reaction essay. Papers must be approximately 5 typed, double-spaced pages of text (incorporated bibliographies do not count as part of the 5 pages). The paper is due at the beginning of class on April 18. I will deduct 10 points per day for papers turned in after the due date. Grades will be reduced for papers that do not meet the minimum page length requirement, papers with excessive typos and/or poor writing, and inadequate content. The book reaction essay is worth 25% of your overall grade.

**Group Discussion:** On the assigned date, class discussion will focus on the book. Each student will discuss their reaction essay as part of the group discussion. Points will be deducted from your overall writing assignment grade if you do not contribute to group discussion (e.g., do not attend class; do not participate in question-answer session). As this is a group assignment that requires the contribution of each member, make-up assignments are not given for group discussion. You must be in class on the day of the discussion to receive credit for this assignment.

**Final Exam**
The final exam will be a cumulative examination of the major theories of crime causation. The exam will be in short answer and long essay format. The exam will be given on the last day of class on May 9. The final exam is worth 40% of your overall grade.

**Attendance & Class Participation Policy**
Class attendance and participation is required! I will take roll every week. Students are expected to have read all of the assignments prior to class and be prepared to participate in class discussions. If you must be absent, let me know in advance why you will be out and provide documented evidence for your absence. If it is an emergency, let me know as soon as possible after the missed class. Attendance (including class participation) is worth 10% of your overall grade.

**Communication Policy**
In addition to announcements in class, I may need to contact you between classes, which I will do so through individual and group email messages. One of the requirements for this course is that you maintain a university email address, check it regularly for messages, and be sure it is working. You are responsible for any messages, including assignments and schedule changes, I send you via email. The best way to contact me is through email at my university address. I do not check my office voice mail on a regular basis. If you have any questions, send me an email to ensure a timely response. I will make every attempt to respond within 24-48 hours.
Office Hours: Let me encourage you to take advantage of the time set aside for office hours. During the spring semester, office hours are on Wednesdays 11:00-12:30 pm. If you have questions about assignments, grades, or just want to chat about the class, please stop by. If these times are inconvenient, feel free to make an appointment with me for another time. If you need to make an appointment, the best way to reach me is via email. If for some reason, I cannot be at office hours, I will try to let you know ahead of time and schedule alternate hours.

Academic Integrity
The principles of truth and integrity are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles and in so doing will protect the integrity of all academic work and student grades. Students are expected to do all work assigned to them without unauthorized assistance and without giving unauthorized assistance. There are certain forms of conduct that violate the university’s policy of academic integrity. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (i.e., cheating) is a broad category of actions that use fraud and deception to improve a grade or obtain course credit. Cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, and dismissal from the University. You are responsible for observing campus policies regarding academic honesty as stated in the Disciplinary Code of the University’s Student Code of Conduct, which can be accessed at the following link: http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/studentlife/studentlife/discipline.html

Access, Disability, Communication
The University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, FAX 303-556-2074. After you obtain approval from DRS, please provide me with a copy of their letter so that I can provide approved accommodations.

Classroom Conduct
Students should exhibit respect for the views of others, the professionalism of the instructor, and the goals of academic freedom. The University expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner. Disruptive and discourteous behaviors include (but are not limited to): arriving to class more than 15 minutes late, talking with a classmate while others are talking (including the professor), wearing headphones/listening to music, leaving class to answer a cell phone, text messaging during class, surfing the web on a laptop, and reading or working on materials other than those specifically dealing with the class. Students are asked to turn off cell phones during class. Disruptive behavior on the part of the student can result in dismissal from the classroom and filing of charges under the University’s Rules and Procedures. The Instructor has the sole discretion to determine if a student’s behavior is sufficiently disruptive to warrant dismissal from class.
Schedule of Topics & Reading Assignments

January 31  Library Instruction

What is scholarly/empirical research?
How to locate library databases appropriate to the study of criminology and related fields
How to search library databases for academic literature

Blackboard
“How to read a research article”

February 7  Reviewing a Research Article
Introduction to Criminological Theory

Blackboard
Pérez critique of Payne & Salotti article
Pérez critique of Freeman & Watson article

February 14  Deterrence and Rational Choice

C & A
Part I, Essay 1
Part X: Essay 32, 33

Blackboard

February 21  The Chicago School

C& A
Part III: Essays 7, 8, 9

Blackboard
February 28    Social Learning and Subcultural Theories

C&A
Part IV: Essays 10, 11, 12

Blackboard

March 7     Anomie/Strain

C&A
Part V: Essays 13, 14, 16

Blackboard

March 14    Control Theories
RESEARCH ARTICLE REVIEW DUE 3/14

C&A
Part VI: Essays 17, 18, 19

March 21    SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS

March 28    Biosocial/Psychological Theories

C&A
Part I: Essay 2
Part II: Essays 4, 5, 6

April 4    Labeling, Critical & Feminist Criminology

C&A
Part VII: Essay 20
Part VIII: Essays 23, 24
Part IX: Essays 28, 29, 31
April 11  Developmental Theories

C&A
Part XII: Essays 38, 39, 40

April 18  Theory Application


BOOK REACTION ESSAY DUE APRIL 18

April 25  Theory to Work: Guiding Crime Control Policy

C&A
Part XIV: Essays 48, 49, 50

May 2  FINAL EXAM