

San José State University
College of Social Sciences/Department of Justice Studies
JS 220, Criminological Theory, Spring 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Justin Strong
Office Location: MH 528
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3 pm
Zoom: [Here](#)
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays 4:30 pm
Classroom: HGH 221

Course Description

A critical review of classical and contemporary theories and research in criminology. Evaluation of contemporary criminal justice and its relationship to theories of criminal behavior.

Course Format

In-person seminar discussion. Students will need to access Canvas in order to submit assignments and final papers.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain in their own words major tenets and perspectives of criminological theory
2. Mobilize criminological theory to explore and understand social problems
3. Critically analyze the theoretical frameworks by which we understand the phenomenon of crime and criminal justice

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

Essential Criminology (2018), 4th Edition, Lanier, Henry, and Anastasia
ISBN 9780813348858

Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory (2009), Volume 15, Cullen, Wright, and Blevins
ISBN 9781412808569

Other Readings

Please see below. I will circulate readings to the class through Google drive.

Library Liaison

Nyle Monday, nyle.monday@sjsu.edu

Course Requirements and Assignments

Your course grade will be assessed based on seminar participation, weekly reading summaries, seminar facilitation, and a final paper.

Seminar participation (20%)

Seminar Participation will be based on your overall contributions to and engagement with the course. In regards to seminar, this is not based on the number of remarks you make, but the quality and thoughtfulness of your comments and responses, as well as the questions you raise during discussion.

Weekly Reading Summaries (20%)

You will submit weekly summaries of the readings the Monday before each class by midnight. These summaries can be free form, but should provide: 1. A very brief overview of that week's theoretical topic and what you read 2. Your thoughts on how the readings relate to each other (or not) 3. Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the theories discussed and 4. Your reactions/questions/concerns that you may have, either for the theory overall or for a particular reading. Late summaries will be assessed a point reduction.

Seminar Facilitation (20%)

Each of you will select a reading to present on and facilitate discussion throughout the course of the semester. You will provide a more formal presentation and overview of your selected reading that includes a summary and critical assessment of the arguments/interventions of the text, questions to prompt discussion, and specific passages that we might want to examine more closely together. I will leave it up to you to decide if you'd like to present individually or in pairs. Note that unless there are extenuating circumstances, your seminar facilitation cannot be rescheduled.

Final Paper (40%)

At the end of the semester you will turn in a final paper. The purpose of the paper is to take a deeper dive into one of the theoretical perspectives covered in seminar and apply it to a social issue related to crime, punishment, criminal justice policy or some other relevant topic of your choice. This is an opportunity for you to research and explore other key texts and elaborations of your selected theory in greater detail. I will provide more information on your final paper later in the semester, but note that these will be 8-10 pages double-spaced and should provide a concise overview of the selected issue in question, demonstrate comprehensive understanding of the theory and offer a thoughtful application as to how it can be applied to help us understand your social issue in new ways. The last two weeks will be devoted to presenting your social issue and selected theory to the class with the intention of receiving feedback from me and your peers to further develop your papers. Your final paper will be due Monday, May 22nd by midnight.

Note that "Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus."

Determination of Grades

1. Class participation – 20%
2. Weekly summaries – 20%
3. Reading facilitation – 20%
4. Final paper – 40%

A plus = 96-100%
A = 93-95%
A minus = 90-92%
B plus = 86-89%
B = 83-85%
B minus = 80-82%
C plus = 76-79%
C = 73-75%
C minus = 70-72%
D plus = 66-69%
D = 63-65%
D minus = 60-62%

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](#) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Week 2 – January 31th

Review syllabus

Introducing the problem of criminology

Essential Criminology, Chapters 1 and 2

Taking Stock, Introduction (skim)

Garland (2008), Disciplining Criminology

Koehler (2015), Development and fracture of a discipline: Legacies of the school of criminology at Berkeley

Week 3 – February 7th

Classical and neo-classical theories

Essential Criminology, Chapter 3

Taking Stock, The empirical status of deterrence theory

Nagin, Solow, and Lum (2015), Deterrence, criminal opportunities, and police

Topalli, Brezina, and Bernhardt (2012), With god on my side: The paradoxical relationship between religious belief and criminality among hardcore street offenders

Week 4 – February 14th
Biological and psychological theories

Essential Criminology, Chapters 4 and 5

Rose (2000), The biology of culpability: Pathological identity and crime control in a biological culture

Jefferson (2002), Subordinating hegemonic masculinity?

Mercan (2018), Doing criminological research: Affective states versus emotional reactions

Roberts (2015), “Can research on the genetics of intelligence be ‘socially neutral’?”

Week 5 – February 21th
Learning and Life-Course Theories

Essential Criminology, Chapter 6

Taking Stock, The empirical status of social learning theory of crime and deviance: The past, present and future
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Assessing Sampson and Laub’s life-course theory of crime

Sampson and Laub (2016), Turning points and the future of life-course criminology: Reflections on the 1986
Criminal Careers Report

Warr (1998), life-course transitions and desistance from crime

Week 6 – February 28th
Control and Labeling Theory

Essential Criminology, Chapter 7

Taking Stock, The empirical status of control theory in criminology

Pager (2003), The mark of a criminal record

Loader (2009), Ice cream and incarceration: On appetites for security and punishment

Week 7 – March 7th
Spatial Theory

Essential Criminology, Chapter 8

Taking Stock, Collective efficacy theory: lessons learned

Pattillo (1998), Sweet mothers and gangbangers: Managing crime in a black middle-class neighborhood

Harcourt and Ludwig (2006), Broken windows: New evidence from New York City and a five-city social experiment

Wacquant (2010), Urban desolation and symbolic denigration in the hyperghetto

Week 8 – March 14th
Anomie and Strain Theories

Essential Criminology, Chapter 9

Taking Stock, The present and future of institutional anomie theory

Young (2003), Merton with energy, Katz with structure: The sociology of vindictiveness and the criminology of transgression

Scott and Grosholz (2018), Unpacking the racial disparity in crime from a racialized general strain theory perspective

Week 9 – March 21th
Conflict and Radical Theories

Essential Criminology, Chapter 10

Liazos (1972), The poverty of the sociology of deviance: Nuts, sluts, and preverts

Platt (1974), Prospects for a radical criminology in the United States

Patten (2019), Criminogenic policy as a crime of the powerful: A case study on NAFTA's negotiation process

Roussell, Sexton, and Scheibler (2021), The dark footprint of state violence: A synthetic approach to the American crime decline

Spring Break

Week 11 – April 4th
Feminist Criminology

Essential Criminology, Chapter 11

Moore (2008), Feminist criminology: Gain, loss, and backlash

Chesney-Lind and Morash (2013), Transformitive feminist criminology: A critical re-thinking of the discipline

Chesney-Lind (2020), Feminist criminology in the era of misogyny

Rajah, Palmer, Duggan (2022), The personal is political and so is discomfort: Intersectional, anti-racist praxis in feminist criminology

Week 12 – April 11th

Theories of the carceral state

Except from *Golden Gulag* (Gilmore 2007), The prison fix

Except from *Punishing The Poor* (Wacquant 2009), Theoretical coda: A sketch of the neoliberal state

Hernández, Muhammad, and Thompson (2015), Introduction: Constructing the carceral state

Gottschalk (2015), Razing the carceral state

Rubin and Phelps (2017), Fracturing the penal state: State actors and the role of conflict in penal change

Week 13 – April 18th

Theories of racial control and violence

Hinton and Cook (2020), The mass criminalization of black Americans: A historical overview

Ward (2013), The slow violence of state organized race crime

Friedman (2021), Toward a critical race theory of prison order in the wake of COVID-19 and its afterlives: When disaster collides with institutional death by design

Martinot and Sexton (2003), The avant-garde of white supremacy

Week 14 – May 25th

Green Criminology

Ruggiero and South (2013), Green criminology and crimes of the economy: Theory, research, and praxis

South (2014), Green criminology: Reflections, connections, horizons

Brisman (2014), Of theory and meaning in green criminology

Crook, Short, and South (2018), Ecocide, genocide, capitalism, and colonialism: Consequences for indigenous peoples and glocal ecosystems environments

Week 15th – May 2nd

Abolition Criminology/Abolish Criminology
Paper presentations

Essential Criminology, Chapter 12

Brown and Schept (2016), New abolition, criminology and critical carceral studies

Moten and Harney (2004), The university and the undercommons: seven theses

Week 16th – May 9th
Paper presentations

