“At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal!”
~Cesare Lombroso, 1894

“What in the name of reason does this nation expect of a people, poorly trained and hard pressed in severe economic competition, without political rights, and with ludicrously inadequate common-school facilities? What can it expect but crime and listlessness, offset here and there by the dogged struggles of the fortunate and more determined who are themselves buoyed by the hope that in due time the country will come to its senses?”
~W.E.B. Du Bois, 1903

“People in a group commit acts of violence they would never dream of doing individually.”
~Jack Levin, 2011

Instructor: Alex Thompson

Office: ATLAS 1st floor study area outside the Pekoe coffee shop
Email: alex.thompson-1@colorado.edu (allow 24 hours for a response)
Phone: (507) 514-3423 (between 9am & 9pm for emergencies only)
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00am-10:45am and by appointment
Course Webpage: (D2L): https://learn.colorado.edu/
Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00am-12:15pm Humanities 1B80

Feel free to contact me at any point during the semester. However, please DO NOT email me with questions regarding your grades. University policy prohibits communication regarding grades over email. If I receive an email from you asking me to explain or change a grade, I WILL NOT reply. If you would like to discuss your grades, please make an appointment or visit me during my office hours.

Required Texts

- Additional readings will be posted on D2L. You are responsible for obtaining them from the “Content” section of the course page.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the sociological study of criminal behavior. Traditional sociological theories of crime causation – such as social disorganization, strain, social learning, social control, and labeling – will be covered. Special attention will also be given to contemporary interpretations of traditional crime causation theories, and to critical, feminist, and developmental/life-course theories of criminality. In an effort to understand why people commit behavior defined as “criminal,” we will apply these theories to various types of offending (e.g., theft, homicide) and consider empirical tests of these theories. Special attention will be given to the social policy implications in the criminal justice system.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

I do not grade on a curve. Your final grade is based on the points you have earned throughout the semester. To do well in this class, you will need to work hard and apply sustained effort over the course of the semester. That said, working hard does not guarantee an “A.” A’s are reserved for those students who demonstrate excellence. If you find that you are not doing as well as you would like in the course, please come talk to me as soon as possible. I will not give additional extra-credit at the end of the semester to boost low grades.

Methods of Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Every T &amp; Th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leadership Group Work</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>5/5 by 7:00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A (93-100%), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), C+ (77-79.9), C (73-76.9), C- (70-72.9), D+ (67-69.9), D (63-66.9), D- (60-62.9), F (0-59.9)

Class Participation

This is a collaborative course. Your active participation is not only desirable, but necessary. This includes doing the scheduled reading BEFORE each class, joining in-class discussions, occasional in-class writing, and giving brief group presentations. You are responsible for assignments and class content you may miss. (Get contact info from a couple of students.) In-class work includes the following two things.

1. For each week’s first class meeting (except week 1), be ready to write a question or comment about something specific in the reading for that day. This may be exchanged with another student so they can respond to you. These will then be handed in at the end of the class meeting. (70 POINTS POSSIBLE)

2. During SIX class meetings, you will get into small groups to discuss and answer a question together. You will support your answer(s) with examples from your experience or from a reading. Each time you do this, there will be a new “recorder” who will hand-write and report the group’s answer(s) to the whole class. If there is group disagreement the recorder will report the differing views. The recorder’s job is also to make sure that everyone contributes. If there are issues regarding group contribution, I expect the recorders to make note of it in their write-up. I will collect the recorder’s notes for grading participation. All notes handed in must have the names of all group members present for that discussion. (30 POINTS POSSIBLE)
**Discussion Leader Groups**

As we proceed through the assigned readings, we will have groups of six students serve as our discussion leaders on 12 occasions. Each group will be assigned a theory (or set of theories). As discussion leaders, students will be expected to: (a) demonstrate how the assigned theory explains offending behavior with the use of a fiction-based movie or television show and (b) engage the class in discussion about the theory and the example. Each group will have 45 minutes to present the project, should come to class with a well-designed visual aid or handout to share, and should have no more than 12 minutes of video.

***You will find a DLG Guidelines document on the course D2L page.***

**Final Research Paper**

Each student will prepare a research paper that methodically evaluates and critiques a major theory of crime causation and explores contemporary tests of the theory. The paper is to include the following:

1. *How does the theory explain criminal behavior?* A summary of the theory’s intellectual background, major assumptions, and core propositions.
2. *How has the theory been tested?* An analysis of at least three tests of the theory. Not more than one of the theory tests can be by the original theorist(s).
3. *How are the theory and the tests lacking?* Critique of the theory and theory tests.
4. *How can the theory be improved?* Specific suggestions for revisions to the theory.

***You will find a Final Research Paper Guidelines document on the course D2L page.***

The final paper is to be submitted only in the D2L Dropbox by 7:00pm on May 5th

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**COURSE POLICIES**

**Classroom Decorum**

It is my goal, as the instructor, to foster a comfortable learning environment where all members of the class can share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. While the sociological study of crime may elicit strong thoughts or offense from some, I ask that we all respect each other’s opinions and feelings when discussing issues presented throughout the course. It is entirely appropriate to disagree with ideas but it is not appropriate to personally attack those with whom you disagree. A respectful classroom environment will facilitate more lively discussions and in turn result in a richer learning experience for all of us. If you have an issue with me or another colleague, you will meet with me and we will discuss it privately. It is my responsibility to ensure that the environment in this class is conducive to learning. Therefore, immature and ignorant attitudes will not be tolerated.

We have a great deal of material to work through each class and thus we will generally need all available class time each day. You can expect me to begin and end class on time each day. I expect you to be prepared to start class on time, remain for the entire class, and to not pack your bags until our seventy-five minutes together have expired. If you have a conflict that requires you to arrive late or leave early, please inform me beforehand. All cell phones must be silenced and put away before class starts. Ringing or vibrating cell phones (or other electronics), texting, or other non-class activities are distracting to your fellow students and to me and will not be tolerated.
**Attendance**

My policy on attendance is simple: if you want to attend, then attend. However, if you want to learn the material, you **must** attend class. If you want to succeed in this class, you **must** attend class. If you must miss a class, please make arrangements to get the notes from another student. I suggest that you exchange phone numbers and/or email addresses with the people seated near you.

The **only** circumstance under which I will repeat lecture material during office hours (for students who have been absent from class) is when you can provide me with written documentation of a death in your family, an illness/medical emergency, a court date, a religious conflict, or your participation in a University-supported activity in which you must participate within **one week** of your absence.

I will be taking attendance at the start of each lecture but this is **not** for grading purposes. You are all adults and are paying **thousands** of dollars a semester for your education. It is up to you how much you want to get out of your investment. I take attendance purely in order to have an accurate record with which to provide the University, should the need arise for any reason. **However, as 40% of your grade is based on your class participation, it would be unwise for you to miss multiple class meetings.**

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**UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Classroom Decorum**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See polices at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

**Academic Misconduct**

It is a shame that the actions of past students have necessitated the addition of this section to the syllabus. By now you may have heard the standard line many times but it bears repeating for this class: **Do NOT plagiarize or cheat.** What you gain from engaging in such an action is the honor of automatically flunking the assignment or test and the excitement of dealing with University disciplinary action. Failure to understand what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is not a valid excuse for engaging in academic misconduct. For helpful information on how to avoid plagiarism, go to: [http://honorcode.colorado.edu/student-information](http://honorcode.colorado.edu/student-information)

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). For other information on the Honor Code, see [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) and [http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/)
Accommodations

- If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services within the first two weeks of class so that we can address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices

- Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please notify me early in the semester if religious observance will cause you to miss a class, test, or assignment. See full details at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

- If you are involved in University sponsored activities that will result in you missing more than one class, it is your responsibility to contact me within the first week of the semester.

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policies on Discrimination and Harassment (http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html) Sexual Harassment, and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. For information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment, see http://www.colorado.edu/odh

By remaining enrolled in this course, you are agreeing to the “terms” outlined in the syllabus. I hold the right to change the syllabus throughout the semester to respond to class concerns or situations. If you find any of this disagreeable, drop this course.
COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

This course schedule provides a tentative framework for the course, a general idea of the required readings and the dates of the three exams. This schedule is subject to change as the course progresses to adapt to our needs. Readings may be added periodically. To succeed in this class, you must read the material before class begins.

### Introduction to Criminology & Definitions of Crime and Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/13</td>
<td>Introduction to the Sociological Study of Crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  - Hagen: “Defining Crime: An Issue of Morality” (3)  
  - Beirne, Piers and James W. Messerschmidt. *Criminology: A Sociological Approach*  
  - Chapters 1 & 3 |

### Foundations: Methods and Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</table>
| 1/20 | Beirne & Messerschmidt  
  - Chapter 2  
  - Crutchfield et al.  
  - Messner et al.: “Locating the Vanguard in Rising and Falling Homicide Rates Across U.S. Cities” (116)  
  - Elliot and Ageton: “Reconciling Race and Class Differences in Self-Reported and Official Estimates of Delinquency” (126) |
| 1/22 | Crutchfield et al.  
  - Baumer et al: “Neighborhood Disadvantage and the Nature of Violence” (155)  
  - McNulty and Bellair: “Explaining Racial and Ethnic Differences in Adolescent Violence” (161)  
  - Hirshi, Travis and Michael Gottfredson: “Age and the Explanation of Crime” (167)  
  - Junger-Tas et al.: “Juvenile Delinquency and Gender” (171) |

### Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Routine Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1/27 | D2L Readings  
  - Cornish and Clarke: “Understanding Crime Displacement”  
  - Stafford and Warr: “A Reconceptualization of General and Specific Deterrence.” |
| 1/29 | D2L Reading  
  - Cohen and Felson: “A Routine Activity Approach”  
  - Crutchfield et al.  
  - Yar: “The Novelty of ‘Cybercrime’: An Assessment in Light of Routine Activity Theory” (92) |
Social Disorganization Theory

2/3 Beirne & Messerschmidt
   • Chapter 4, 81-89
D2L Reading
Crutchfield et al.
   • Shaw and McKay. “Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas.” ONLY 187-204

2/5 D2L Reading
Crutchfield et al.
   • Morenoff, Jeffrey et al. “Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence” (216)

D.L.G. #1: _________________________________________________________________

Anomie/Strain Theory

2/10 Beirne & Messerschmidt
   • Chapter 4, 90-98
Crutchfield et al.
   • Merton: “Social Structure and Anomie” (232)
   • Kim & Pridemore: “Poverty, Socioeconomic Change, Institutional Anomie, and Homicide” (238)

2/12 Crutchfield et al.
   • Agnew, Robert. “Foundation for a General Strain Theory of Crime and Delinquency” (339)
   • Broidy, Lisa M. “A Test of General Strain Theory” (348)

D.L.G. #2: _________________________________________________________________

The Learning Perspective

2/17 Beirne & Messerschmidt
   • Chapter 6, 142-149
Crutchfield et al.
   • Sutherland, Edwin H: “A Theory of Crime: Differential Association” (223)
   • Hochstetler et al.: “Differential Association in Group and Solo Offending” (226)
D2L Reading
   • Burgess and Akers: “A Differential Association-Reinforcement Theory of Criminal Behavior”

2/19 D2L Reading
   • Sykes and Matza: “Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency”

D.L.G. #3: _________________________________________________________________
Social Bond and Self-Control

2/25  Beirne & Messerschmidt
      ▪  Chapter 6, 150-156
Crutchfield et al.
      ▪  Hirschi: “Causes and Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency” (266)
      ▪  Huebner and Betts: “Exploring the Utility of Social Control Theory for Youth Development” (272)

2/27  Crutchfield et al.
      ▪  Gottfredson and Hirschi: “The Nature of Criminality: Low Self-Control” (303)
      ▪  Mitchell and MacKenzie: “The Stability and Resiliency of Self-Control in a Sample of Incarcerated Offenders” (307)

D.L.G. #4: _______________________________________________________________________

Life-Course

3/3  D2L Reading
      ▪  “Sampson and Laub’s Age-Graded Theory”
Crutchfield et al.
      ▪  Sampson and Laub: “Toward an Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control” (312)
      ▪  Sampson, Laub, and Wimer: “Does Marriage Reduce Crime?” (316)

3/5  D2L Reading
      ▪  Laub and Sampson: “Explaining the Life Course of Crime”

D.L.G. #5: _______________________________________________________________________

Cultural Adaptation

3/10 Crutchfield et al.
      ▪  Wolfgang and Ferracuti: “The Subculture of Violence” (252)
      ▪  Anderson: “The Code of the Streets” (365)

3/12 D2L Reading
      ▪  Sampson and Wilson: “Toward a Theory of Race, Crime, and Urban Inequality”

D.L.G. #6: _______________________________________________________________________

Societal Reaction/Labeling Perspective

3/17  Beirne & Messerschmidt
      ▪  Chapter 5, 127-135
Crutchfield et al.
      ▪  Schur: “Labeling Criminals” (281)
      ▪  Bernburg et al.: “Official Labeling, Criminal Embeddedness, and Subsequent Delinquency” (284)
3/19  D2L Reading  
   - Lemert: “Primary and Secondary Deviance”  
   - Becker: *Outsiders*, Chapter 1

**D.L.G. #7:** ___________________________________________________________________________________

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**March 23rd-27th: NO CLASSES: Spring Break**

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**Contemporary Critical Perspectives**

3/31  DeKeseredy, Walter S. *Contemporary Critical Criminology*, Chapters 1 & 2
4/2  DeKeseredy, Walter S. *Contemporary Critical Criminology*, Chapters 3 & 4

**D.L.G. #8:** ___________________________________________________________________________________

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**Class and Conflict**

4/7  Beirne & Messerschmidt  
     - Chapter 7  
   Crutchfield et al.  
     - Chambliss: “Crime and Structural Contradictions” (289)  
     - Jacobs et al.: “Vigilantism, Current Racial Threat, and Death Sentences” (296)

4/9  D2L Reading  
     - Quinney: “Crime Control in Capitalist Society”

**D.L.G. #9:** ___________________________________________________________________________________

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**Penal Effects**

4/14  D2L Readings  
   - Tannenbaum: *Crime and the Community* Excerpt  
   - Braithwaite: “Crime, Shame, and Reintegration”

4/16  D2L Readings  
     - Messner and Rosenfeld: “Strengthening Social Institutions and Rethinking the American Dream”  
     - Richards and Ross: “Introducing the New School of Convict Criminology”

**D.L.G. #10:** ___________________________________________________________________________________
Feminist Theories

4/21  Beirne & Messerschmidt
   ▪  Chapter 8, 185-195
   D2L Reading
   ▪  Adler: *Sisters in Crime*, “Changing Patterns”

4/23  Crutchfield et al.
   ▪  Hudson: “Beyond White Man’s Justice: Race, Gender, and Justice in Late Modernity” (380)

D.L.G. #11: _______________________________________________________

Masculinities Theory

4/28  D2L Readings
   ▪  Messerschmidt: “Masculinities and Crime”
   ▪  Martin and Hummer: “Fraternities and Rape on Campus”

4/30  D2L Reading
   ▪  Messerschmidt: “Assaultive Violence: Lenny and Kelly”

D.L.G. #12: _______________________________________________________

Final Paper Due: Tuesday, May 5th, 7:00pm in the D2L Dropbox