Criminology: CRIM 2200  
Spring 2016 Syllabus

Course information:  
Room: West Village G 102  
Time: Tuesdays & Fridays 9:50-11:30  
Course website on Blackboard (log in at: https://blackboard.neu.edu/webapps/login/).

Instructor information:  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 & Fridays 2:00-3:00 pm (or by appointment)

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 (or by appointment)

Course Catalog Description:  
Describes the nature and extent of crime, explains its causes, and examines the reasons for and effectiveness of society’s responses to it. Defines the topic of criminology by discussing the different types of crimes. Moreover, to establish the extent of crime in society, measurement issues are addressed. The second half of the course details different theories of crime causation.

Course Rationale/ Description  
“Criminology “is a required course for Criminology and Criminal Justice students and is intended as a complement to “Introduction to Criminal Justice” (CRIM 1100), though you need not have taken “Criminal Justice” prior to enrolling in this course. “Criminal Justice” primarily focuses on the institutions and actors involved in the formal response to crime: the criminal justice system. This class, by contrast, will largely focus on crime itself: its forms, its prevalence, and its causes. Of course, crime is an implicit topic in the “Criminal Justice” course, just as the institutions of the criminal justice system will be implicit (and sometimes explicit) topics in this course on crime. 
Crime is both a popular and controversial subject. Political debates (and stalemates) over the death penalty, drugs, “tough on crime” laws, inner-city violence, and white collar crime are regular newspaper fodder. Among domestic concerns, being “soft” on crime is one of the most damaging characterizations one can make of a politician. Crime is also a central cultural focus: we seem fascinated by movies and television shows focusing on criminals, criminal investigators, lawyers, and prisons.
This course serves as a general introduction to the study of crime, largely from a sociological perspective. The course might be summarized by a series of (seemingly) simple questions:  
• What is crime? How do we decide what is criminal?  
• How do we study or measure crime?  
• What causes crime?  
• How do we perceive crime? Why do these perceptions matter?  
• How do our reactions to crime affect future crime?  
The course has been designed to provide useful skills and knowledge for students with a variety of long-term interests and goals. For those interested in crime research, the course will provide a solid
foundation of criminological theory and an introduction to the methods used for studying crime issues. For those students interested in careers related to criminal/legal policy, the course will provide an understanding of how to read and evaluate criminology theory and research, and how theory and research can be applied to policy. For those interested in criminal justice practice either locally, nationally, or internationally, this course will provide a general overview of the state of our knowledge about the causes of crime, as well as a brief overview of some of the ways current criminal justice practices play both positive and negative role in the causation of crime. For all students, the course will provide a framework for critically assessing media and political discussions of crime and crime policy.

General Course Learning Goals
This is a short list of what I hope to achieve this semester:

• Provide you with an understanding of the practice of criminology.
  • Specifically:
    o How and why we create explanations for observed phenomena through theory.
    o How and why we evaluate these explanations through research.

• Provide you with an understanding of some of the major theories of the causes of crime.
  • Including theories about:
    o The effect of social structure on crime rates.
    o The effect of social influences on individual criminal acts.
    o How our reactions to crime may either deter or facilitate future crime.

• Make you a critical consumer of media reports on, politicians’ claims about, and media depictions of crime and crime policies.

What to expect in class/ What I expect of students:

Class time will be spent in a mixture of lecture and discussion. Often I’ll want to provide an introduction or context for a topic, or describe a concept not directly covered in the reading, but the majority of the time I will seek participation from members of the class to cover the day’s topic. While the discussions will center on the readings, we will often not have the opportunity to address every reading in great detail. I expect students to complete these readings and ask any questions they have about the readings either during class or by email to me (I will respond to questions of general interest either in class or by posting to Blackboard).

The class sessions will be most valuable to you if you complete the readings prior to class and then participate in discussions within the class. If I do not feel that a large enough portion of the class is regularly contributing, or if I suspect that many in the class have not been completing the readings, I reserve the right to institute “pop” quizzes. If instituted, these quizzes would count for up to 15% of your final grade (with the contributions of the exams and writing assignment shrinking accordingly).

I will not take attendance, though attending class is a good idea for several reasons. First, you may miss a “pop” quiz, which cannot be made up. Second, I will hold you accountable (via exams and the writing assignment) for information I present in class (I will regularly present material not directly covered in the readings). Finally, class provides an opportunity to make sure you understand the readings, for which you will also be held accountable via exams and the writing assignment.
Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:
Short writing Assignment  25%
Exam 1     22%
Exam 2 (semi-cumulative)  25%
Exam 3 (semi-cumulative)  28%

Grading Scale:
A     93-100%
A-    90-92%
B+    88-89%
B     83-87%
B-    80-82%
C+    78-79%
C     73-77%
C-    70-72%
D+    68-69%
D     63-67%
D-    60-62%
F     Below 60%

Exams:
“Cramming” for an exam is an extremely ineffective way to learn or think about the material presented in a class. When cramming, the class becomes no more than a series of abstract terms and concepts for which you memorize simplified definitions. Further, you are unlikely to remember anything you learned in the course three weeks from now, let alone a year or five years down the road. That makes this class a giant waste of your time, and, worse, a giant waste of my time.

However, if you have already read the material when the time comes to study for an exam, the process of studying is an opportunity to think about the material we covered in a broader sense (how did the material we addressed in one session relate to material we addressed in a different session? why would we be looking at this sequence of topics in particular?) and to review particular areas where you may have had more questions. In this class you will be required to read material and be prepared to discuss it at every class session, so by design your preparation for the exam should be more “studying” and less “cramming.” The exam, then, in addition to being a means for me to evaluate your level of understanding of the material, is also another opportunity (in addition to the class discussions and the writing assignment) to think about and learn from the material.

The course will include three exams. The exams will be semi-cumulative: each will predominantly address only the material from the preceding section of the course, but may also draw comparisons with material from earlier sections of the course. Each exam will have a series of short-response questions and longer “short answer” questions.

You will be allowed to bring one single-sided piece of 8.5”x11” paper to each exam covered in whatever kinds of notes you wish. The notes may be hand-written or typed. In addition, you may bring one completely blank piece of 8.5”x11” paper to each exam to jot notes or outline an answer before writing on the exam itself.

The first exam will be on Friday February 12th, in class.
The second exam will be on Friday March 18th, in class.
The third exam will be at the university-appointed time during exam week.
**Course writing assignment:**

The class includes one short writing assignment (2,000 word limit) due on Monday April 25th at 10pm EST. The assignment will be submitted to blackboard and will be automatically scanned for potential plagiarism issues (see the “Course Policies” section below). More detailed instructions on the paper will be posted on blackboard.

**Books/ Readings:**


There are two required texts for this course. The first is a collection of readings from important historical and recent criminological research. There are many such books available, and I chose this one for three reasons. First, the book includes many (but not all) of the pieces I wanted to assign for this course. Second, this relatively new edition contains recent articles that reflect what people are excited about in criminology right now. Third, the brief introductions to each theoretical section provide a nice frame for the readings that follow. The problem with collections of readings is that the overarching “story” of the text and how a particular reading is relevant to that story is not always clear. These introductions minimize the effort spent on why you’re reading a particular piece, allowing more time to concentrate on the substance of the piece.

The second text is a book reporting on ethnographic research by sociologist Elijah Anderson. In addition to providing the framework for a cultural theory of crime (which we will discuss), the book also addresses a number of issues central to the modern study of criminology including the intersection of race, class, gangs, the police, and violence. We will read this book in sections which will (approximately) fit in with the theoretical topics that frame the course. In addition, I will assign a number of readings that are not found in either required text. I will make some of these available electronically on our course website.

**Issues and Progress:**
The three exams and the short paper are each opportunities to alert you that you’re having issues in the class. Please come and see me as soon as you are concerned about your progress in the class. The class has a quick pace, and falling a bit behind can put you at a serious disadvantage if not dealt with quickly. Real life often intrudes and forces you to divert your attention elsewhere. This is not (necessarily) a problem, and if you come to talk to me as soon as you realize there is a problem, we should be able to find a way for you to continue to be successful in this course. If you wait until the end of the semester to let me know you have fallen behind, our options will be severely restricted. In addition to my office hours, I am regularly available by email often well beyond “standard business hours.”
Course Policies:

Plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, be sure to contact me and ask. In general, following these rules should work: If you directly quote OR paraphrase ANY source (another student, an internet site, an academic article, etc.), you must attribute the quote or paraphrase to that source. It should (but it won’t) go without saying that I expect every student will complete their own work.

For more information on this, Northeastern has an Academic Integrity Policy outlined on pages 36 and 37 of the Student Handbook (www.northeastern.edu/admissions/pdfs/UndergradHandbook.pdf). I encourage all students to review this policy and to contact me with any questions.

Students who miss exams will not be allowed to take a make-up exam without a documented medical or other emergency. Papers handed in late without a similarly documented medical or other emergency will be penalized for each day the paper is not received after the due date.

Technology. I allow the use of laptops to take notes in class or to refer to electronic copies of readings. Please do not use your laptop to surf the web, play games, or for any reason other than taking notes or referring to electronic copies of readings. If you use a machine with a vertical screen (laptop, etc.), and plan to display anything on that screen other than class notes or the class readings, please sit in the back row so that you do not serve as a distraction for other students. I reserve the right to ban computing devices at any point in the class if I believe they have become a distraction. There is never a valid use for cellphones during class time.

Accommodations. I am very happy to work to support and accommodate students in ways that will give them the best chance to succeed. If you will be requesting accommodations of any kind, please schedule a meeting with the DRC (http://www.northeastern.edu/drc/) if you haven’t already, and bring me the appropriate paperwork within the first few weeks of class. If you wait until the first exam is looming to notify me, there is a very good chance I will not be able to accommodate you.

Topics/ Readings List:

I have provided a detailed outline of the topics we will address each day of the semester in class on blackboard. It is likely there will be at least small changes to this throughout the semester, so be sure to check the syllabus on the course webpage for the most recent version (and watch for announcements). Each assigned reading is followed by its location in parentheses (either in the Crutchfield et al. reader, Anderson’s book, available via our class blackboard website). I hope that this detailed outline will serve to illuminate for you the structure of the class: what we’ve covered, where we’re going, and how they tie together. I have organized the course along the series of questions posed in the course description above.