Criminology and Public Policy I: Foundations
CRIM 7710
Fall 2016 Syllabus

Course information:
Room: Churchill Hall 301
Time: Mondays 10:30-1:00
Course website on Blackboard (log in at: https://blackboard.neu.edu/webapps/login/).

Instructor information:
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 and Thursdays 12:30-1:30 (or by appointment)

Course Catalog Description:
Provides detailed coverage of theoretical criminology and its implications for public policy. Approaches the understanding of crime from an interdisciplinary perspective, with special attention given to recent theoretical developments. Emphasizes evaluating theory in light of empirical research, understanding the implications of theory and research for programs and policies of crime prevention and control, and evaluating current approaches to crime prevention and control.

Course Rationale/ Description
“Criminology and Public Policy 1“is a required course for the PhD in Criminology and Justice Policy. Most will take it in their first semester. It is designed to be part of a sequence of required courses taken in the first year which collectively provide a general foundation of knowledge—in theory, the research literature, methods, and statistics—before the student begins developing more focused expertise in their chosen specialty areas.

The course is part of a two-course sequence on Criminology and Public Policy taken in the first year. This first class focuses on “foundational” ideas. Some of the ideas encountered are foundational in a chronological sense: they are the “classic” works that lay the groundwork for later thinking. Others ideas will be newer, but are foundational in the sense that they inform our understanding of other theories and ideas—for instance illuminating assumptions, rooting claims about social behavior in coherent understandings of cognitive processes, or developing plausible models of human action.

The course is specifically designed to help develop specific tools that will be useful in a career in research academia. One important tool in developing a research agenda is the identification of important “gaps in the literature”—places where you may be able to make a contribution to knowledge. Identifying these gaps is a necessary step in justifying a research agenda and in publishing research. It is possible to find many examples of published work for which identifying such gaps is the sole goal of the literature review and “front end” of the paper. In this class, however, we will focus on developing a different skill, one necessary for elevating research beyond narrow sub-field attention. In particular, we will focus on rooting research questions in broader ideas and debates.
The course will not serve as a simple survey of criminological theories or an introduction to the study of crime. Instead, we will mostly focus on broad ideas, often encountering several major theories relevant to these ideas as we discuss them. For those who have not previously taken an introduction to criminology at a lower level, an encyclopedia of criminological ideas may be useful on occasion. I recommend the recent “Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice” edited by Gerben Bruinsma and David Weisburd. You can access this electronically through Northeastern’s library (there is a link on blackboard).

**General Course Learning Goals**

This is a short list of what I hope to achieve this semester:

- A broad understanding of the psychological and social processes relevant to theories of crime and justice.
- An overview of classic questions and debates within criminology.
- An introduction to rooting research questions in broader ideas and debates.

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

The most important element of this class will be our class discussions. For the most part, discussions will be student-generated, though I will come to class with a list of topics I want to make sure are addressed and questions I want to make sure are discussed. Occasionally I’ll provide an introduction to or background on a topic in the form of a short lecture, but ideally I will keep these to a minimum.

Each day several students will be responsible for generating discussion questions. The rest of you will be responsible for completing the readings prior to the class such that you can act as the participants in the discussion.

**Blackboard:**

This course has a Blackboard site which houses the syllabus, readings, a discussion page where summaries of supplemental readings will be posted, and grades for assignments. I encourage you to check it regularly.

**Requirements, Assignments, and Grading:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion leading, course notes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
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**Summaries and discussion questions:**

Each of you will be assigned five classes in which you are responsible for co-leading the class discussion. I ask that you develop a few questions to stimulate discussion. One or two questions for each of the readings will suffice—these can include criticisms about the reading, questions about assumptions made by the reading, connections to other readings or topics, policy implications, etc. Please be prepared to answer your own question in class (or at least contribute an opening opinion to start the discussion).

Several students will be assigned each class period, but each will be responsible for independently generating summaries and questions about all the material. Class will proceed by addressing each reading individually and then opening up a discussion of general issues or connections between readings. I do not expect that this will entail a substantial amount of extra work relative to completing all of the readings in detail and taking notes on them (see below). In short: I expect everyone will complete all the readings for each class, but I expect the assigned discussants will have not merely
completed the readings, but also begun thinking about and engaging with the material. Please email me a typed copy of the questions by 10:30am on the day of the assigned class.

A second class assignment is largely for your benefit. You will end up reading a simply massive amount of literature of the course of your careers, much more than it is possible to simply remember (especially when it has been years or even decades since you last read a piece!). As such, it is very important to start building a system of notes you can later return to. Thus, for each class this semester, I will ask you to take notes on the major ideas proposed in each of the day’s readings. The notes can be basic, but they should be in a form and of a level of detail that you will find useful at a later date. Because these are meant to be useful to you, I leave it to you to determine what, exactly, they look like (though I would of course be happy to give you advice on this). Please submit the notes on blackboard before each assigned class (by 10:30am on the day of the class).

Class participation:
This largely covers days when you are not assigned to develop discussion questions. I expect everyone to complete the required readings and regularly take part in class discussions.

Course project:
An original paper is required of all students. In it, I will ask you to choose a substantive area you are interested in, and connect potential research questions in this area to broader ideas and debates in the field. In an ideal world, this paper could serve as the beginning of your work on a publishable paper, and would tie in with work you are completing in your other required courses this year. Note: the due dates for various stages are on Thursdays so as not to conflict with your preparations for class.

- A short proposal is due by October 6th.
- An annotated outline is due November 17th.
- The final paper is due on December 15th.

Books/ Readings:
The course will involve a substantial amount of reading, but most of this reading will be made available on the course blackboard website. Additionally, we will be reading slightly larger sections of two books that are available in the campus bookstore. The first book is a “new classic” on the race and class context of communities written by Ruth Peterson and Laurie Krivo. Ruth Peterson, the current president of the American Society of Criminology, will be giving a talk at our school on October 12th. The second book is a recent book by one of our own faulty: Simon Singer’s look at delinquency among an understudied group: middle-class kids in suburbia. The book won the 2015 Hindelang Book Award given by the American Society of Criminology for the book published in the preceding three years which makes “the most outstanding contribution to criminological research.”


In addition to the required readings, I also include a supplementary reading list for each day—I expect students to seek these out on their own. The supplementary readings are all essential parts of a criminological library and all are eligible to be covered on the foundations exam at the end of the year.

Issues, Progress, Accommodations:
Real life sometimes has a way of intruding upon your plans for a semester. Please inform me as soon as possible if you believe “real world” problems may affect your ability to do the readings, attend the classes, or complete assignments. I am very happy to make accommodations to address a variety of situations when students approach me about the issue well in advance.
Topics/ Readings List:
Below I have provided an outline of the topics we will address each day of the semester in class. On Blackboard, you will find a list of the required and supplementary readings assigned for each topic along with links to each of the required readings.

12-Sep WEEK 1: Introduction; Rooting Research in Broad Theoretical Ideas and Debates
19-Sep WEEK 2: History of Criminology: Assumptions, Theories, Policies
26-Sep WEEK 3: Laws, Crime, and Society
3-Oct WEEK 4: The Social, Economic, and Racial Structure of Society
10-Oct COLUMBUS DAY - NO CLASS
17-Oct WEEK 5: The Social and Economic Structure of Society; Mechanisms
24-Oct WEEK 6: Models of Human Social Action
31-Oct WEEK 7: Humans in Groups: Organization
7-Nov WEEK 8: Humans in Groups: Culture #1
14-Nov WEEK 9: Humans in Groups: Culture #2
21-Nov WEEK 10: Humans in Groups: Conflict and Group-ism
28-Nov WEEK 11: Punishment and Society