Criminology and Public Policy I: Foundations
CRIM 7710
Fall 2015 Syllabus

Course information:
Room: Churchill Hall 200
Time: Tuesdays 5:30-8:00
Course website on Blackboard (log in at: https://blackboard.neu.edu/webapps/login/).

Instructor information:
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Office: 433 Churchill Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Fridays 2:20-3:20 (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 collective 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 want to 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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion leading, supplemental summaries</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 responsible for two types of in-class assignments this semester. First, you will each be assigned five classes in which you are responsible for co-leading the class discussion. I ask that you develop brief summaries as well as questions to stimulate discussion. The summaries need not be more than a few lines capturing the key ideas for each reading. 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. 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. **You must email me a typed copy of the summaries and questions by 5:00pm on the day of the assigned class.**

Second, you will also be assigned to write summaries of the readings marked “supplementary.” Supplemental readings are divided into two categories: books and articles. For the articles students
should prepare a short abstract (~200 words) and be prepared to spend a few minutes describing the piece in class and then answering questions other students may have about the piece. For the books, students should prepare a slightly longer abstract (~400-500 words), and be prepared to give a slightly longer description in class (5-8 minutes). For both, please be prepared to talk in class about how the reading fits in with the other assigned readings for that day. **Abstracts are due to be posted on blackboard by 5pm the evening before the class in which it will be discussed.** Note: we will not be able to have summaries written for all of the material on the supplemental list.

**Class participation:**

This largely covers days when you are not assigned to write reading summaries or 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 this class, you will focus on developing and writing the theory and literature review sections of what will hopefully eventually be a published paper. The project is designed to be coordinated with the required statistics and methods courses taught by Professors Stowell and Zimmerman—the idea is that you will develop different aspects of the same paper in each of these classes.

- A short proposal is due on October 6th.
- An annotated outline is due November 20th.
- The final paper is due on December 15th.

**Books/ Readings:**

There are no required texts for this course. The course will involve a substantial amount of reading, but this reading will be made available on the course blackboard website. 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.

15-Sep  Introduction to the Course; Rooting Research in Broad Theoretical Ideas and Debates
22-Sep  History of Criminology: Assumptions, Theories, Policies
29-Sep  Laws, Crime, and Society
6-Oct   The Social and Economic Structure of Society
13-Oct  Social Context: Race and Class
20-Oct  Models of Human Social Action
27-Oct  Humans in Groups: Organization
3-Nov   Humans in Groups: Culture #1
10-Nov  Humans in Groups: Culture #2
17-Nov  Work on course paper
24-Nov  Humans in Groups: Conflict
1-Dec   Punishment and Society
8-Dec   Politics of Crime Policy: Power, Perceptions, Attributions