

SOCI 209: SOCIOLOGY OF CRIME¹

Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Spring 2016

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Tara Warner Lecture Times: Tues. & Thurs. 12:30 – 1:45pm
Office: 705 Oldfather Hall Lecture Room: 105 Teachers College
Email: twarner2@unl.edu Prerequisites: None
Office hours: Tues. & Thurs., 10:00 – 11:30am, or by appointment

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What *is* sociology?

“Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts.”

— American Sociological Association website (<http://www.asanet.org>)

What *is* criminology?

“Criminology consists of the study of the social problem of crime, including the processes of making and breaking laws as well as society’s reaction to the phenomenon.”

— J. Mitchell Miller (“Criminology as Social Science,” *Crime and Criminals*)

INTRODUCTION:

This course aims to provide you with a sociological approach to the study of crime and the field of criminology, including ways to think about and understand the social construction of crime and criminals. Thinking sociologically enables us to make observations and offer insights about crime that extend far beyond “common sense,” personal experience, or explanations that rely only on individual characteristics. This course is designed to introduce you to “the sociological imagination” and encourage you to develop this critical capacity to recognize and understand the social causes of criminal behavior, highlighting, in particular, the roles of race/ethnicity, social class, and gender. The lectures, readings, and assignments will focus on understanding basic social processes and their application to criminology.

REQUIRED TEXT (available in the campus bookstore or online):

Miller, J. Mitchell, Christopher J. Schreck, Richard Tewksbury and J.C. Barnes. 2015. *Criminological Theory: A Brief Introduction, 4th Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

****Other required readings will be available on Blackboard (under “Readings”).****

Although we may not discuss all of the readings in class, their purpose is to complement the text and lecture, provide additional examples, illustrate points, and stimulate critical thinking/discussion (students are encouraged to raise questions in class on any assigned reading for the day).

¹ Information in this document is subject to change throughout the course of the semester; please consult Blackboard for the most current version of the course syllabus.

Achievement-Centered Education (ACE) Designation: The University of Nebraska—Lincoln seeks to provide quality education to all of its students. To that end, it has designated certain classes as ACE certified. These classes provide and assess specific learning objectives. As an ACE class, Sociology of Crime (SOC 209) will facilitate Learning Outcome #6: using knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior. To meet this learning outcome, the objectives for this course include:

- defining criminology and crime, distinguishing criminology from criminal justice
- applying the sociological perspective to understanding the social context of crime
- emphasizing the role of social structure and inequality in generating and perpetuating crime
- demonstrating the application of sociological scientific methods
- discussing various theories of crime, differentiating between deviance and crime
- promoting critical thought about the social causes of criminal behavior

ACE learning outcomes in this class will be assessed by: exams, independent assignments, and participation in class discussions

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

(1) Independent Assignments (150 points; 5@30 points each)—

In order to grasp better the subject material, it is useful and important to apply the material *outside* the classroom. Further, such activity is consistent with the course objectives of applying the sociological perspective to understanding the social context of crime, and thinking critically about the social causes/consequences of criminal behavior. To accomplish this, students will complete 7 assignments over the course of the semester that will assess their understanding about crime and require them to apply concepts learned in class—the 5 highest-scoring assignments will be counted toward the final grade.

Formatting: Unless otherwise stated, all Independent Assignments should be **typed, double-spaced**, and **stapled** (when necessary; an exception is the film assignment which will be completed in class). If your assignment exceeds 1-page, please print double-sided if possible. Assignments that are not stapled will not be graded—these assignments will be assigned a score of 0. Please **do not** use a title page—type your name in the upper left corner. Margins should be 1-inch all around. Acceptable fonts (all should be 12 point) are limited to Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, and Garamond. *Failure to adhere to stated formatting guidelines will result in a deduction of points.*

Due dates for each assignment are listed below on the Course Outline and Schedule. Students are responsible for being aware of assignment due dates—you will not be reminded in class.

Assignments must be turned in **during class, in person**. Because the 2 lowest-scoring assignments are dropped from the final grade, I **do not** accept assignments late or outside of class. **No exceptions or excuses;** excuses include, but are not limited to, car trouble, illness, other course obligations, appointments, court appearances, arrest/incarceration, and computer/printer technical difficulties. Assignments e-mailed (either in advance or after the due date) will not be accepted.

Missed assignments are scored a 0 and cannot be made up under any circumstances. Assignments will not be handed back during class, but they can be collected from the course TA during office hours. Grade inquiries should be handled in person with Dr. Warner, during office hours (or an alternatively scheduled appointment).

(2) Exams (350 points; 2 mid-term exams@100 points, 1 final exam@150 points)—

Three exams, evenly spread throughout the semester, will test your understanding of the readings and lectures (including any in-class films or other activities). The format will be multiple choice and true/false questions. The mid-term exams are *not* cumulative, but the final exam IS cumulative.

The exams will be administered on-line at the Arts & Sciences Testing Center, 127 Burnett Hall.

There is a two-stage process for the two mid-term exams:

- 1) There is a three-day window during which everyone must take the exam
 - a) I will make every effort to review problem areas from the exam in the class period immediately following the close of this three-day window
- 2) During the week following the three-day window, students may re-take the exam up to two more times (*only* if you attempted the exam during the original three-day window)
 - a) Students are strongly encouraged to attend office hours during this week to discuss their exam performance

Only your highest scoring attempt (for each of the two mid-terms) will be counted toward your final grade (along with your final exam score).

The purpose of this two-stage process is to facilitate learning and alleviate test anxiety. After the second mid-term exam, students should be familiar with the exam content and format. Because of the significantly increased demands on the Testing Center during final exam week, **students have only one attempt at the final exam (final exam window listed below).**

Study guides will be available on Blackboard prior to each exam. These guides should assist you in preparing for the exam—they should be used to *supplement* not *replace* studying of your lecture notes, textbook, and readings. Study guides will not be collected or graded, but you are encouraged to see me (or the course TA) during office hours to discuss the study guide before the exam.

(3) Content Mini-Quizzes (70 points)—

There are up to 70 points available for attending class and keeping up with the assigned supplemental readings (on Blackboard). This will be assessed through a series of randomly distributed, unannounced, closed book/notebook mini quizzes. Students will be asked to answer 1-3 questions about the assigned articles posted on Blackboard (not the assigned textbook chapter)—these quizzes do not test minute details but are broad, overall content questions (if students read the article(s), they should be able to answer the questions successfully; most articles are 2-4 pages in length). Final grades will be based on the highest-scoring 75% of these quizzes (e.g., if there are 8 quizzes given, only your highest-scoring 6 will be counted). Because the lowest 25% of quiz scores are dropped, no make-up quizzes will be given.

(4) Classroom Conduct (30 points)—

I place the utmost premium on respectful conduct both in and out of the classroom, representing diversity, and acknowledging different experiences and opinions. To that end, there are 30 course points available for overall classroom conduct. Students will earn the maximum available Classroom Conduct points by (1) reading and acknowledging the Classroom Conduct Policy (available on BB under “Course Documents”; this should be done **before** the third week of class) and (2) engaging in behavior—throughout the semester—consistent with the terms of that Policy. Students may **lose** Classroom Conduct points for engaging in behavior that violates the Policy’s terms and/or that

otherwise undermines the classroom learning objectives. Students who demonstrate exceptional classroom conduct (e.g., regular and relevant engagement and participation) *may* be awarded additional Classroom Conduct points above the course maximum (at the professor's discretion). As such, students are encouraged to attend class and participate regularly.

Attendance: If you are absent, do not email the professor! Instead, you should ask your student contacts (see below) for copies of their notes, and discuss with them what you missed. If, after reviewing material with other students you require further clarification, please see me or the course TA during office hours.

Student Contacts: Knowing a few other students in class has the potential of being extremely beneficial for you—both academically and socially. To facilitate this, in the spaces below please record the first and last names of two of your classmates, along with phone numbers or e-mails (whichever they feel comfortable providing). Turn to whoever is sitting near you for this. If, during the course, you notice that your student contacts have dropped, please obtain contact information from 1-2 other students.

Name	Email address and/or phone #
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____

If you must miss class, you should contact these individuals to get missed material—you will not get missed class material from me (nor do I post these materials on Blackboard)!

Make-up Exams: Since students have a three-day window in which to complete the course exams, make-up exams are only allowed under extreme circumstances, and at the instructor's discretion. Students must provide documentation for medical emergencies. Make-up exams may be essay.

Athletes: If you are an athlete, and your game and/or practice schedule conflicts with an exam window, you must take the exam before the scheduled date on the syllabus—it is your responsibility to coordinate this with me at least two weeks prior to the scheduled exam window. If your schedule conflicts with the due date of an assignment, you must submit that assignment in class, in person before the scheduled date on the syllabus.

Tutoring: I am committed to students' success in this course. To that end, if, at any point during the semester, you feel inclined to seek the assistance of an outside tutor, I request that you please meet with me to discuss questions, concerns, options, etc. before doing so.

Grading:

Students will earn their final grade based on the following:

Independent Assignments (5@30 points each)	150 points
Mini-Quizzes	70 points
Classroom Conduct	30 points
Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Final Exam	150 points
Total points possible:	600 points

Here are the percentage totals used to assign final grades in this course:

To earn a(n):	students need \geq :	of the total points		
A+	97%		C	73%
A	93%		C-	70%
A-	90%		D+	67%
B+	87%		D	63%
B	83%		D-	60%
B-	80%		F	= < 60%
C+	77%			

These percentage cut-offs are absolute; I will **not** “round-up” final grades. Please put in sufficient effort to earn your desired grade, and please see me at any point during the semester for assistance with course content.

Extra Credit: There are two opportunities for earning extra credit, both of which are administered online, via Blackboard: (1) completion of the online mid-semester course evaluation, and (2) completion of the end-of-semester course evaluations (details will be announced in class).

Grade Check Requests: Grade checks/reports for student athletes, scholarships, Greek society memberships, etc. are **only** handled in-person during office hours. Please do not inquire about grade check requests before, during, or after class.

Students with Disabilities: It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration. Please contact the (SSD) office as soon as possible to have them advance the paperwork to the instructor in a timely manner.

Academic Misconduct: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. It includes, but is not limited to, any form of cheating or unapproved help on an exam or academic exercise/assignment, copying someone else’s written work without citation, or any unauthorized collaboration among students. Students should work independently on all assignments. In this class, academic dishonesty will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in any form is determined by the instructor, and may consist of a reduced grade (including F or zero) for the assignment, a reduced grade (including F) for the entire course, or other options as stipulated in the UNL Student Code of Conduct. Also, the incident will be reported in writing to UNL’s Judicial Affairs.

Laptop Computer Policy: Laptop computers, netbooks, tablets, etc. are allowed for note-taking; however, students wishing to take notes electronically **must** sign and submit to me (in class) an “In-Class Laptop Computer Use Contract” (available on BB, under “Course Documents”).

Course Outline and Schedule:

The following is a *tentative* reading list and schedule for the course. It is subject to change as the course progresses based on our movement through the material. All changes will be announced in class and a revised syllabus posted on Blackboard. Online supplemental readings may change in response to current events, student interest, etc. Please consult the most recent version of the syllabus (on BB) for current reading assignments. You are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to the first class for which it is assigned.

Lecture slides will not be posted on Blackboard—completing the assigned reading prior to the first class for which it is assigned, *and* taking notes while reading, should decrease the amount of note-taking necessary during lecture, allowing students to keep pace with my movement through the material during class.

Students are advised to manage their time, reading, and assignments accordingly. Failure to complete the assigned readings on time will quickly lead you to fall behind.

Reading assignment key:

“MSTB” = required Miller et al. text

“Author (Year)” = required newspaper/journal article (available in “Readings” on Blackboard)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
Part I: Sociology and Crime			
1	T 1/12	Course Introduction	
	R 1/14	Sociology basics: defining crime sociologically	Rank (2011)
2	T 1/19	Inequality and the sociological imagination	Crosley-Corcoran (2014); DeVega (2016)
	R 1/21	Public opinion on crime; <i>Read & acknowledge Classroom Conduct Policy</i> (on BB; by 1/24/16)	Felson & Boba (2010)
3	T 1/26	**Independent Assignment 1 due** Doing Criminology: Research methods	Mosher, Chapters 3, 5 (<i>skim</i>);
	R 1/28	How much crime is there?	Rashbaum (2010); Apuzzo (2015)
Part II: Explaining Crime			
4	T 2/2	**Independent Assignment 2 due** The good, the bad, and the social	MSTB, Chapter 1; Winchester (2010)
	R 2/4	Biological perspectives	MSTB, Chapter 3; Patton (2015)
5	T 2/9	Psychological perspectives	MSTB, Chapter 4; Chu (2015)
	R 2/11	Exam 1 (window W 2/10 – F 2/12) / retakes Sat 2/13 – Sat 2/20	
6	T 2/16	Classical and neoclassical theories: Rational Choice and Deterrence	MSTB, Chapter 2
	R 2/18	Neoclassical, cont.	
7	T 2/23	Social structural theories: Social	MSTB, Chapter 5

		Disorganization	
	R 2/25	Social structural theories cont.	Leonhardt (2013); Dewan (2013); Gallagher (2013)
	T 3/1	Social structural theories cont.: Routine Activities and Strain	MSTB, Chapter 7
8	R 3/3	**Independent Assignment 3 due** Social process theories: Learning & Cultural	MSTB, Chapter 6
	T 3/8	Social process theories: Learning & Cultural cont.	Auyero (2013); Anderson (1994)
9	R 3/10	Social process theories cont.: Control	MSTB, Chapter 8
	T 3/15	Social conflict theories	Skim MSTB, Chapter 9 pg. 163-178 ; Powell (2015)
10	R 3/17	Exam 2 (window W 3/16 – F 3/18) / retakes M 3/28 – M 4/4	
	T 3/22	Spring break—no class	
	R 3/24	Spring break—no class	
	T 3/29	In class film—Independent Assignment 4 distributed	
11	R 3/31	In class film— **Independent Assignment 4 due**	

Part III: Focus on Issues—Social Construction of and Responses to Crime

	T 4/5	Sociology of gender	MSTB, Chapter 9 pg. 178-182 ; Kimmel (1994)
12	R 4/7	Gender & violence	Felson (2006); Brush (2007)
	T 4/12	**Independent Assignment 5 due** The “tough guise”	DeVega (2015)
13	R 4/14	IPV & Campus sexual assault	Yoffe (2013); McDonough (2013)
	T 4/19	Criminal justice response and reaction: Policing & Arrest	Lykke (2014); Smith (2014); CSM (2015)
14	R 4/21	**Independent Assignment 6 due** Policing & Arrest, cont.	Wines (2014); Bouie (2014); Capehart (2015); Legum (2015)
	T 4/26	**Independent Assignment 7 due** Prosecution & Punishment	FAMM; JPI (2011)
15	R 4/28	Punishment & Consequences; <i>Final Exam Review</i>	Garland (2010); Reckdahl (2015)

*****Final Exam—Testing Center window: Tuesday 5/3 – Friday 5/6 (AT 12PM)*****

Spring Semester Hours at Burnett Hall: Mon. – Thurs. 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Fri. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sat. 1 p.m. – 5 p.m., Sun. 1 p.m. – 10 p.m.