

# **Society and the Criminal Mind**

**Sociology 3566  
Spring Semester 2013**

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3 Credit Hours  
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## **Course Overview**

Recent research findings suggest that “cognitive behavioral interventions” have been shown to be the most promising approach in changing criminal behavior. A fundamental premise of this approach is that certain thought processes and thinking patterns are causally related to criminal behavior.

This course will explore the etiology, development, and current practice of the criminal thinking approach. The course will begin with a brief overview of sociological and criminological theory as it relates to the criminal thinking perspective. The origin of this approach will be traced through the works of early contributors to the “criminal thinking perspective.” Specific criminal thinking patterns and errors will be discussed in accordance with the works of Samenow and Yochelson (*The Criminal Personality*, Vols I, II and III). More contemporary applications of the criminal thinking approach will be addressed in the context of the “Psychology of Criminal Conduct” perspective as detailed in the theories of Canadian criminologists James Bonta and Don Andrews.

The course will also provide an overview of the LSI-R (Level of Service Inventory-Revised), the Criminal Sentiments Scale, and the Hare Psychopathy Check List which are the most commonly used instruments to assess criminal thinking patterns and thought processes. Attention will be devoted to the strengths and weaknesses of these instruments as well as how well these instruments predict specific forms of criminal behavior.

Finally, the overall success of cognitive behavioral interventions will be discussed and assessed as a means of correcting criminal behavior. Specific approaches and directions for future research will be explored.

## **Objectives**

At the conclusion of the course the student should be able to:

- Understand the contributions of sociological and criminological theorists to the criminal thinking perspective
- Understand what is meant by the criminal personality

- Be able to define what is meant by the “Psychology of Criminal Conduct.”
- Critically evaluate the role of criminal profiling in solving criminal events
- Assess the value of the criminal thinking perspective in changing criminal behavior
- Understand how assessment instruments are used to detect and assess criminal thinking patterns

### **Topics to be Covered**

- An Overview of the Criminal Thinking Perspective
- A Review of Contemporary Sociological and Criminological Theory as it Relates to Criminal Thinking
- Specific Thinking Errors as Defined by the “Criminal Personality” (Samenow and Yochelson)
- Behavioral Thought Patterns of Criminal Thinking
- Psychopathic and Sociopathic Behavior
- Contemporary Applications of the Criminal Thinking Perspective
- Criminal Profiling: A Critical Examination
- Crime and the Life Course

### **Class Format**

Course material will be presented through lectures, assigned readings from texts and supplemental readings on E-reserve. Students will be expected to attend class on a regular basis, keep up with the assigned readings and come to class prepared to participate in class discussions guided by the instructor. While the overall format of the class is lecture oriented, videos and guest speakers will be used on occasion.

### **Required Text**

Texts: *The Criminal Mind – Revised Ed.* (Samenow) Crown Publishers  
*The Psychology of Criminal Conduct (Lexus-Nexus) 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.*

### **Grading**

The final grade will be based on three multiple choice exams and a class presentation. While there are no prerequisites for the course, a rudimentary background in research methodology will be beneficial to understanding some of the terms and concepts discussed as part of the subject material.

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	25%
Presentation	25%

Grading Scale: A (100-93) A- (92-90) B+ (89-87) B (86-83) B- (82-80) C+ (79-77) C (76-73) C- (72-70) D+ (69-67) D (66-63) D- (62-60) E (<60)

### **Class Presentation**

Students will be assigned to groups of 4-5 students and ask to complete the following assignment:

**Assignment:** The Utah Department of Corrections is in need of a program to help change the way offenders think. Your team is to come up with a program to address this objective. The proposed model should be based on a cognitive behavioral approach and draw on assigned readings, class discussions, and any other material you feel is appropriate. Your proposed model should be oriented towards an evidence-based approach. Assume that you have a grant from the National Institute of Justice for \$1,000,000 for development and implementation of the model for a one-year period of time. You should develop your model with the intent of implementing it in other correctional departments throughout the country at a later date.

Each team will be asked to make a short presentation (approximately 20 minutes) to the class. Please prepare a PowerPoint presentation of your model. You may also use overheads or any other audio/visual materials to present your model. The presentation constitutes 25% of your grade. Presentation will begin on March 15.

### **Expectation of Academic Honesty**

Unfortunately, academic dishonesty has become a serious problem on many campuses. The purpose for including the following statement is to prevent any misunderstanding about what constitutes academic dishonesty and what consequences will result if it is detected.

Academic honesty is expected. An act of academic dishonesty will result in a failing course grade of "E" and may result in a recommendation of additional disciplinary action. (The University of Utah Student Code provides for these sanctions and provides appeal rights.)

1. Cheating (as defined in Article XI of the Student Code) generally includes the giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance on any academic work.
2. Plagiarism, as defined in Article XI of the Student Code, is "the appropriation of any other person's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own work offered for credit."
3. Falsification. Any untrue statement, either oral or written concerning one's own academic work or the academic work of another student, or the unauthorized alteration of any academic record.
4. Original work. Unless specifically authorized by the instructor, all academic work undertaken in this course must be original, that is, it must not have been submitted in a prior course nor may it be submitted in a course being taken concurrently.

### **Special Accommodations**

In accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA), persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations to meet the expectations of the course are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructor as soon as possible. Written documentation of the disability should be submitted during the first week of the quarter along with the request for special accommodations. Contact the Center for Disabled Student Services (160 Union, 1-5020) to facilitate requests.