

Sociology 3566-001
Society and the Criminal Mind
Spring Semester 2013

Instructor: Larry L. Bench Ph.D.
3 Credit Hours
Days and Time: Mon-Wed-Fri 10:45-11:35 A.M.
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Appointment



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: Inside the Criminal Mind – Revised Ed. (Samenow) Crown Publishers
 The Psychology of Criminal Conduct (Lexus-Nexus) 5th 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	29%
Exam 2	29%
Exam 3	29%
Presentation	13%

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 National Institute of Justice 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 13% of your grade. Group presentation will begin on March 6th.

Weekly Schedule

Jan 7 Introduction to Class, Review of Criminological Theories

Jan 14 Samenow, Chaps 1 – 4; Review of Criminological Theories Continued

Jan 21 – Samenow Chap 5-8
No Class on Jan 21 – Martin Luther King Day

Jan 28 - Samenow Chap 9-12

Feb 4 - Samenow Chap 13-16

Feb 11 - Exam 1; Andrews and Bonta Chap 1
Exam 1 will include all material covered up through and including Feb 4.

Feb 18 Andrews and Bonta Chap 2
No class on February 18 – Presidents Day

Feb 25 Andrews and Bonta Chap 5

Mar 4 Andrews and Bonta Chap 6-7 **Group Presentations Begin on March 6**

Mar 11 – 15 Spring Break

Mar 18 Andrews and Bonta Chap 8

Mar 25 Exam 2 Andrews and Bonta Chap 11

Exam 2 will include all material covered from Feb 11 through and including March 18.

Apr 1 Andrews and Bonta Chap 12

Apr 8 Andrews and Bonta Chap 13

Apr 15 Andrews and Bonta Chap 15

Apr 24 Exam 3

Exam 2 will include all material covered from March 25 through and including April 22.

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 not 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 semester along with the request for special accommodations. Contact the Center for Disabled Student Services (160 Union, 1-5020) to facilitate requests.