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JUVENILE DELINQUENCY
Sociology 220
Fall 2016

Course Description

The course is divided into four sections, with each section being organized around one or more major questions about delinquency.

- I. The Nature and Extent of Delinquency. The first section focuses on the basic "facts" about delinquency: 1) What is delinquency and how does it differ from adult crime? 2) How much delinquency is there? 3) Is delinquency increasing?, and 4) Who is most likely to engage in delinquency (focusing on gender, age, class, race/ethnicity)?
- II. Theories of Delinquency. After answering the above questions, we focus on what is probably the most frequently asked question about delinquency: "What causes juveniles to break the law?" We will examine several major sociological theories or explanations of delinquency, including strain, social learning, control, and labeling theories.
- III. Research on the Causes of Delinquency. We will then examine research inspired by the above theories. This research examines the extent to which delinquency is caused by individual traits (e.g., low intelligence, negative emotionality), family factors (e.g., single-parent homes, poor discipline), school factors, delinquent peer groups and gangs, and other factors.
- IV. The Control and Prevention of Delinquency. In the final section of the course, we ask "How can we control and prevent delinquency?" We will spend the first part of this section examining what the juvenile justice system (police, juvenile court, juvenile correctional agencies) does to control delinquency. Several questions will guide our analysis: 1) How do these agencies operate -- what do they do to control delinquency? 2) How effective are these agencies and what can they do to be more effective? And 3) To what extent do these agencies discriminate against race/ethnic, class, and gender groups in their efforts to control delinquency? We will then examine four general strategies to control delinquency: the "get tough" strategies of deterrence and incapacitation and the strategies of rehabilitation and prevention.

Course Web Site

The Blackboard site for this course contains a copy of the syllabus, links to a range of sites related to juvenile delinquency and careers in criminology/criminal justice, **copies of old exams** (click on "old exams"), and **outlines for each class** (click on "class outlines"). Please let me know if you have trouble accessing this site.

Course Goals

There are three major course goals.

1. Introduce you to the major research on juvenile delinquency, as outlined above. This goal will be achieved primarily through the readings and class lectures and discussions.
2. Introduce you to the methods that criminologists use to study delinquency. How do criminologists determine how much delinquency there is, whether some factor such as media violence causes delinquency, or whether some program such as Scared Straight reduces delinquency? We will examine some of the methods that criminologists use to answer these sorts of questions. In particular, we will examine how criminologists estimate the extent of delinquency and trends in delinquency, how they determine whether various factors cause delinquency, and how they determine whether certain policies or programs reduce delinquency. A basic knowledge of these methods will prove invaluable to you, since they will help you evaluate the accuracy of many of the claims you hear about delinquency and other topics (claims from friends and family, politicians, the media, etc.).
3. Get you to apply course materials. It is not enough to simply memorize certain facts and theories about delinquency. Such facts and theories are useless unless you can apply them to your own lives and the larger community. In particular, the materials in this course can help you better understand your own behavior and that of the people around you; better raise your children if you decide to have children; better evaluate the claims you hear about delinquency from others; and better work toward the control of delinquency in your community. We will achieve this goal through class discussions, class exercises, and an optional assignment described below. This goal will also be emphasized on the exams.

Grading

Exams: There will be four exams, one for each section of the course. Exams will consist of short answer/essay questions. Old exams are on the course web site (click on “old exams”). I strongly recommend that you review them to guide you in your studying and test your knowledge of the course materials. Also, be sure to review the “Test Your Knowledge...” and “Thought and Discussion” questions at the end of each chapter in the text. Each exam is graded from 0 to 100 (93+=A, 90-92=A-, 88-89=B+, 83-87=B, etc.) and counts for 25% of your grade.

Extra Credit Option: You can have **up to 8 points** added to one of your exam grades by completing the following extra credit assignment. Give a **class presentation** that applies course materials to something you’ve seen or heard in the media – nonfictional or fictional -- such as a YouTube video, song, or newspaper article. The presentation should devote no more than 5 minutes to the media report (e.g., showing the video clip, playing the song, describing the newspaper article); then another 5 minutes to your application; followed by 5 minutes for Q and A. I’ll bring a sign-up sheet for the class presentations to class on **Thursday, Sept 1 at 8:20** (note: there are limited opportunities to present and the presentation must be given by the last day of class). The number of points you receive will be based on a) the media report you select (does it provide a good illustration of course materials, is it somewhat distinct from previously-presented media reports – in terms of content and/or the course materials it illustrates); b) the extent to which you provide an informed and creative application of relevant course materials; and c) the extent to which the presentation is well organized. Further information will be provided in class.

Make-Up Exam Policy. My permission is needed to take the make-up for Exams #1 -- #3 (NOTE: having another exam on the same day as our exam will not get you my permission). Individuals taking the make-up for Exams #1 – #3 should come to the first class after the regularly scheduled exam. We will try to work out a mutually convenient date for the make-up at this class (if we cannot, the date for the make-up will be determined by a vote of those present). The make-up will consist of a few medium- to long essay questions. If you are unable to take the make-up on the date we decide, your make-up will consist of a seven-page paper on a topic of my choice. Exam #4 will be given on the **final exam date, Friday, December 9, from 9-10:15**, and make-ups for this exam will only be given to individuals who have obtained permission from an academic counselor in the College Office.

Readings

Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control, FIFTH EDITION (2015), by Robert Agnew and Timothy Brezina (referred to as “Text” below). Available at the Emory Bookstore, Amazon.com, Oxford University Press website, etc.

A set of readings available through COURSE RESERVES (CR) on the Woodruff Library web site – the titles of these readings are indicated below.

How to Do Well in This Course

1. Come to class on a regular basis. I will describe the essential things you should get from the readings, elaborate on the readings, and present new materials. I will also "pull things together," describing how the different topics we're studying are connected. About half of all exam materials will come from class. If you miss more than a few classes you will experience serious difficulties, even if you borrow someone's notes. In particular, you will have trouble following the course organization and doing well on exams.
2. Come to class on time. If you come late, you may have trouble following the lecture. Also, other students and I find it distracting.
3. Do the text readings by their assigned date and take notes on each reading. In particular, read each chapter, highlighting key points. Then go back and write an outline of the chapter in your own words. This will dramatically increase your recall and comprehension of the chapter. Also, go over the questions at the end of each chapter. If you can answer these, you should do well on those exam questions dealing with the text. For the Reserves readings, focus on the major points being made and try to relate the readings to the text and the class discussions (most provide illustrations or extensions of text and class materials).
4. If something is unclear, ask me during or after class, during my office hours, or email me at bagnew@emory.edu. I encourage you to ask questions or make comments at any time.
5. Review the old exams on the course web site. Study with others for each exam -- asking each other questions and evaluating the answers. These questions should include those at the end of each chapter in the text (“Test Your Knowledge of This Chapter” and “Thought and Discussion Questions”).

Class Schedule

I. Nature and Extent of Delinquency

Aug. 25	Introduction and Survey	
Aug. 30	What is Delinquency?	Text, Chapter 1
Sept. 1	How is Delinquency Measured?	Text, Chapter 2
Sept. 6	How Much Delinquency is There? Is Delinquency Increasing?	Text, Chapter 3
Sept. 8-13	Who is Most Likely to Engage in Delinquency?	Text, Chapter 4 CR: Saints and Roughnecks; Code of the Street; Girls' Study Group

Sept. 15 **EXAM #1**

II. Theories of Delinquency

Sept. 20	How Do We Know If Something Causes Something Else?	Text, Chapter 5
Sept. 22	Strain Theory	Text, Chapter 6; CR: Social Change, Life Strain, and Delinquency....
Sept. 27	Social Learning Theory	Text, Chapter 7; CR: College Students and Binge Drinking
Sept. 29	Control Theory	Text, Chapter 8
Oct. 4	Labeling Theory	
Oct. 6	Applying the Theories	
Oct. 11	NO CLASS – Fall Break	

Oct. 13 **EXAM #2**

III. Research on the Causes of Delinquency

Oct. 18	Individual Traits	Text, Chapter 13
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Oct. 20	The Family	Text, Chapter 14; CR: Children Should Never, Ever Be Spanked...
Oct. 25	The School	Text, Chapter 15
Oct. 27	Delinquent Peer Groups and Gangs	Text, Chapter 16; CR: Fraternities, Athletic Teams and Rape
Nov. 1	Other Social Influences/ Pulling It All Together	
Nov. 3	EXAM #3	

IV. The Control and Prevention of Delinquency

Nov. 8	Determining Program Effectiveness	Text, Chapter 19; CR: Well-Meaning Programs.....
Nov. 10	The Police	Text, Chapter 20; CR: The Problem of Acquaintance Rape...
Nov. 15	Juvenile Court and Corrections	Text, Chapter 21
Nov. 17	NO CLASS – at ASC Meeting	
Nov. 22	Juvenile Court and Corrections, cont.	Text, Chapter 21
Nov. 24	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break	
Nov. 29	Does the Justice System Discriminate?	
Dec. 1	Deterrence and Incapacitation	Text, Chapter 23
Dec. 6	Prevention and Rehabilitation/ Summary	Text, Chapter 24
Dec. 9 (Friday)	EXAM #4, 9-10:15 in our classroom	