CONTROLLING CRIME
Sociology 585

Course Overview

This course is in three parts. The first provides an overview of the nature, extent, and causes of crime. Here we briefly focus on several basic questions about crime: What is crime (including delinquency)? How do we measure crime? How much crime is there? Is crime increasing or decreasing? And who is most likely to engage in crime (with a focus on age, sex, class, and race/ethnicity)? We then ask” what causes crime? We briefly review the major theories of crime, including strain, control, social learning, and labeling. We also examine certain of the research inspired by these theories, including research on the effect of individual traits, family factors, school factors, and peer groups on crime. We do not examine the causes in detail here, since this is the focus of another graduate course: Causes of Crime.

With this as background, the remaining two parts focus on controlling crime. A central theme of the course is that efforts to control crime are effective to the extent that they address the causes of crime. The second part begins by examining how researchers determine whether programs and policies are effective in controlling crime (evaluation research). We then briefly review the efforts of the police, courts, and correctional agencies to control crime. This review examines how these agencies operate, their effectiveness, and how they might increase their effectiveness. Special attention is devoted to several promising crime control strategies, including community policing, police crackdowns focused on “hot spots,” and restorative justice. Special attention is also devoted to the extent to which these agencies discriminate and the police use of deadly force.

The third section focuses on the four major strategies for controlling crime: the “get tough” strategies of deterrence and incapacitation, which have dominated crime control efforts in recent decades; and the strategies of rehabilitation and prevention, which have attracted increased attention over the last few years. We examine how these strategies have been implemented, their effectiveness, and what might be done to make them more effective.

Course Goals

The course has three major goals:
1. To introduce you to the major research on crime, particularly that associated with the disciplines of criminology and sociology. This will be accomplished largely through the readings and class discussions.

2. To equip you with the skills and knowledge to more thoroughly explore and keep abreast of the crime research. This will be accomplished through goal #1, by introducing you to the major information sources in criminology, and by having you make use of these sources.

3. To apply the course materials to your own research and to issues in the larger community (e.g., news events, the assessment of public policies, the statements of politicians and others regarding crime). This will be accomplished through class discussions, a series of class exercises, and the research project (see below).

Course Web Site

The course website is available through Blackboard (Soc_585 Criminology) and contains a copy of the course syllabus, certain other documents, and links to a range of criminology websites-including those listed in the course schedule.

Course Requirements and Grading

Leading sections in class XXX

Completion of a series of mini-assignments, described in the course schedule. These are designed to get you to apply course materials and make use of the various information sources in criminology. These assignments count for 20% of your grade.

A take-home essay exam. The exam will be passed out on August 28 and is due Oct. 9; it counts for 20% of your grade.

A final paper counts for the remaining 45% of your grade. The paper may be on any topic related to controlling crime, subject to my approval. It should be 15-25 pages long, typed, double spaced. It may involve original research, the analysis of secondary data, theoretical argument, or the discussion of substantive research. Papers receiving a grade of A will a) have a well-defined research question(s) or topic, b) be well organized and written, c) make good use of relevant course materials, d) make good use of the info sources described in class to find other relevant materials, e) make an original and significant contribution to the literature, and f) (if applicable) make use of appropriate research methods (taking account of your methodological background). The paper is due Dec. 18, 5 PM (you can email it to me or place it in my mailbox in Tarbutton 225).

Readings

There are two books for the class, all available at the bookstore (or sites such as Amazon.com):


Direct Reserves, There are a number of articles available through Direct Reserves (DR), some classic studies in the field and others contemporary works-many providing overviews of the research in an area.

Class Schedule

August 25  
**Introduction, Info Sources in Criminology, What Is Crime?**  
Readings: DR, Journals in Criminal Justice and Criminology (skim); website of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at http://www.ncjrs.gov/ (explore); website for the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics at http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/toc.html (explore).  
**Readings:** Agnew, Chapter 1; A Crime By Any Other Name…;

Sept. 11  
**How Do We Measure Crime? How Much Crime Is There? Who Is Most Likely to Commit Crime?**  
Readings: Agnew, Chapters 2-3; DR, Reconciling Race and Class Differences…; Explaining the Great American Crime Decline.  
**Assignment:** Focusing on one method of measuring crime (official statistics, victimization data, self-report data), describe the extent of crime and trends in crime in recent decades. Be sure to distinguish between different types of crime where necessary and possible (e.g., violent, theft, drug). Also, note limitations or biases in your data source when it comes to estimating the extent of and trends in crime. Prepare a short handout for class members, summarizing your key points (the handout may include tables or graphs if you like).

Sept. 18  
**Who Is Most Likely to Commit Crime?**  
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 4; DR, The Saints and the Roughnecks; Reconciling Race and Class Differences… (reread); The Northton Community; Girls’ Crime and Women’s Place; Girls Study Group. Optional: An Assessment of Recent Trends in Girls Violence.  
**Assignment:** Provide an oral update on your research project, and turn in a one-two page statement that describes the research question(s) or issue you want to address, provides brief background on it (e.g., what’s already known about it, why it’s
important), and briefly indicates how you plan to address it. (This statement will eventually become the introduction to your paper.)

**Sept. 25**

**What Causes Crime (individual-level theories)?**
Readings: Agnew, Chapters 5-9. **Assignments:** Select one of the theories and create a diagram that shows its central arguments and variables (bring copies for class members). Describe a media report dealing with crime and apply your theory to it (does not have to be written up).

**Oct. 2**

**What Causes Crime (theories continued)?**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 10-12; DR, Neighborhood Collective Efficacy; Economic Discrimination and Societal Homicide Rates; Market, Crime, and Community. Optional: Assessing Macro-Level Predictors. **Assignment:** Find a data set that will allow you to test or examine the research question(s) or issue in your research paper. Describe the data set, including the sample, how it was selected, and the major variables examined—especially those related to crime and its causes. Also, briefly describe one crime-related study that made use of the data set. Search for the data set on the ICPSR website at [http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/). Describe in class and turn in 2-3 page typed report.

**Oct. 9**

Readings: Agnew, Chapters 13-17. **Take-home exam is due today.**

**Oct. 16**

**How Do We Determine if Programs or Policies Are Effective?**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 19; DR, Randomized Experiments in CJ Policy…; Dealing with Design Failures in Randomized Field Experiments; The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale; Well-Meaning Programs Can Often Have Harmful Effects; Effect of Restrictive Licensing of Handguns on Homicide…; Targeting Guns, Methods of Research. **Assignment:** Find and critique an evaluation of some crime control program or policy (the NCJRS website and the journal *Criminology & Public Policy* are good places to start). You should briefly describe a) the program or policy, b) the goals of the evaluation, c) how the evaluation was done, d) strong and weak points of the evaluation, and e) ways in which the evaluation might have been improved. Give an oral presentation and turn in a 2-3 page written report.

**Oct. 23**

**The Police**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 20; DR, Newport News Tests Problem-Oriented Policing; Acquaintance Rape of College Students (skim); Pulling Levers: Getting Deterrence Right; General Deterrent Effects of Police Patrol in Crime ‘Hot Spots;’ **Assignments:** Provide an oral update of your work on the research paper; and turn in an outline of the paper, one-two pages, typed.

Oct. 30

**The Courts**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 21(1st part); DR, The Odyssey of Peter Randolph; The Fragmentation of Sentencing and Corrections in America; How Drug Treatment Courts Work; Cullen and Johnson, Chapter 6. **Assignment:** Visit at least two courtrooms holding criminal proceedings at the DeKalb County Courthouse (or another court) for at least two hours total. Orally describe your courtroom observations, relating them to the above readings where possible – including the readings on restorative justice and drug courts (does not have to be written up).

Nov. 6

**Corrections (Institutions and Community Corrections)**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 21(2nd part); Cullen and Johnson, Chapters 1, 2; A Profile of Georgia’s Sentencing Options; When Prisoners Come Home; Intensive Rehabilitation Supervision **Assignment:** Give a 15-20 minute presentation on your final paper, summarizing the work you’ve done and plans for further work (written report not required).

Nov. 13

**Deterrence and Incapacitation**
Readings: Agnew, Chapter 23; Cullen and Johnson, Chapters 4, 5

Nov. 20??

**Rehabilitation and Prevention**
Readings: Agnew, Chapters 24-25; Cullen and Johnson, Chapters 7, 8, 9. DR: Anger Management. **Assignment:** Give a 5-10 minute talk describing your recommendations for controlling crime in the US and the rationale for them (does not have to be written up).

Nov. 27

NO CLASS - **Assignment:** Attend two sessions at ASC meetings in Atlanta, Marriott Marquis, Nov. 20-23

Dec. 4

**Summary**
**Assignments:** Describe sessions at ASC; Provide a 15-20 minute overview of your final paper.

Dec. 18

Final papers due by 5 PM.