CONTROLLING CRIME
Sociology 555

Course Overview

This course examines efforts to control crime and delinquency, with a special focus on the criminal justice system (police, courts, correctional institutions, community-based correctional programs) and related agencies. The course is in four parts.

First, we briefly review a) the theory and research on the causes of crime/delinquency and b) the requirements for good evaluation research. A knowledge of the causes of crime is essential if we are to control crime, since the effectiveness of crime control programs is largely a function of the extent to which they address the causes of crime. Evaluation research allows us to determine whether programs are in fact effective at controlling crime.

Second, we examine the efforts of the police, courts, correctional institutions, and community-based correctional programs to control crime. We address four questions about these institutions: 1) What do they now do to control crime? 2) How effective are they at controlling crime? 3) To what extent do they violate the rights of individuals and groups? And 4) What might they do to more effectively control crime? Answering the fourth question will involve an examination of several recent trends in criminal justice, including community policing, sentencing reform, restorative justice, "get tough" legislation and the dramatic increase in prison populations, and the increased use of "intermediate sanctions" like restitution and boot camps.

Third, we examine four general strategies for controlling crime; strategies that involve all components of the criminal justice system to varying degrees. These strategies are deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and prevention. We ask whether these strategies are effective, why they are effective or ineffective, and what might be done to make them more effective.

Fourth, we examine certain more specific strategies for controlling crime; strategies that focus on particular causes of crime or types of crime. Our focus will be on efforts to control crime through increased surveillance, through sanctioning juvenile offenders as adults, and through strategies of your choice (e.g., the “war on drugs,” gang control, domestic violence interventions, juvenile curfews).

Course Web Site
The course web site contains a copy of the syllabus and links to a range of sites related to controlling crime. To get onto the course web site, first go to  Http://classes.emory.edu You then need to log in. Your username is the same as your university net id/username (ex. bagnew). Your password is your seven digit Emory Personal ID (ex. 0078902). You can change your password after you log in. Once you have logged in, click on courses. The web site for this class is Controlling Crime or SOC555_Agnew.

**Course Goals**

The course has three major goals. The first is to introduce you to the major literature in the above areas. The second is to equip you with the skills/knowledge to critically evaluate crime control efforts. Politicians and others often claim that some program is effective in controlling crime. Such claims, however, are often wrong, exaggerated, or without any basis in fact. The program in question often does little to address the key causes of crime and it often has not been properly evaluated (or proper evaluations suggest that it is ineffective). The third goal is to help you develop your own thoughts about how to best control crime.

**Course Requirements**

1. Active participation in class discussions. Also, I would like each of you to bring at least three written questions/comments about the assigned readings to class each week. Time permitting, I will ask you to present one or more of your questions/comments to the class for their reaction. Class participation is judged by the frequency and quality of your questions/comments. In particular, do your questions/comments reflect a knowledge and thoughtful consideration of the readings. Class participation counts for 17.5% of your grade.

2. Completion of a series of mini-assignments. The assignments are described in the course schedule. They are designed to get you to apply course materials and, in doing so, critically evaluate crime control efforts. The exercises count for 17.5% of your grade.

3. A midterm exam that counts for 25% of your grade. The exam will be closed book, open note. Sample exam questions will be given out three weeks before the exam.

4. A final paper counts for the remaining 40% of your grade. While I am open to all topics related to crime control, you might consider the following: Focus on a crime control program or policy of your choice. It may be a fairly specific program (e.g., Project Impact in DeKalb County, Drug Abuse Resistance Education throughout the United States), a closely related set of programs (e.g., mentoring programs, family training programs), or a more loosely related set of programs (the war on drugs, gun control). Describe the program/policy, including a discussion of its goals, its target audience, how it is implemented, and who implements it; describe why the program should or should not reduce crime, drawing on relevant theory and research; describe evaluations of the program, noting strong and weak points of these evaluations (or describe how the program might be evaluated); discuss any problems with the program, including problems in design and implementation; and discuss whether the program should be abandoned, revised (indicate how), or continued in its current form.
**Readings**

A number of articles and book excerpts are available through Direct Reserves (under Sociology 555, Controlling Crime).

**Class Schedule**

**Sept. 11**  
Introduction, Causes of Crime and Delinquency  

**Sept. 18**  
How Do We Determine if a Program/Policy is Effective in Reducing Crime?  

**Assignment:** Find and critique an evaluation of some crime control program. Several program evaluations are contained in the course web site (look under “External Links,” then look in the “Program Evaluation” folder). Program evaluations are also reported in criminology, psychology, sociology, evaluation research, and other journals (do a search using “Info Gateway” on ELUCID— the journal Criminology & Public Policy is a great source). Evaluations may also be found in technical reports from the government and other organizations (check out the web site for the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (www.ncjrs.org) and many of the government/organization web sites listed on Cecil Greek’s web site, such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention or OJJDP – see “External Links” on our course web site). Drawing on the above readings, you should briefly describe a) the goals of the evaluation, b) how the evaluation was done, c) strong and weak points of the evaluation, and d) any ways in which the evaluation might have been improved. Your critique should be about two pages in length, typed, double-spaced. Be prepared to give a brief overview of the evaluation and your critique in class.

**Sept. 25**  
The Police: What Do They Do to Control Crime? How Effective Are They? What Might They Do to be More Effective?

Oct. 2
The Courts.


Assignment: Visit at least two criminal courtrooms at the DeKalb County Courthouse (or another court) for at least two hours total. Orally describe your courtroom observations, relating it to the above readings where possible. A written report is not required.

Oct. 9
FALL BREAK- NO CLASS

Oct. 16
Correctional Institutions


Oct. 23
Midterm

Oct. 30
Community-Based Corrections


Nov. 6
To What Extent Does the Criminal Justice System Violate the Rights of Individuals and Groups in its Efforts to Control Crime?

Assignment: Begin serious work on your final paper.

Nov. 13  Deterrence and Incapacitation as General Crime Control Strategies


Assignment: Give a 15 minute presentation describing your final paper.

Nov. 20  Rehabilitation and Prevention as General Crime Control Strategies


Assignment: Determine the specific crime control strategy you will discuss in the Dec. 4 class (e.g., capital punishment, the “war on drugs,” Project DARE, zero-tolerance policies in the school system, neighborhood empowerment zones).

Nov. 27  Controlling Crime – Specific Strategies: Public Surveillance, Treating Juvenile Offenders As Adults


Assignment: Bring one or two readings to class dealing with your specific crime control strategy.

Dec. 4  Crime Control Strategies of Your Choice
Readings: To be assigned.

Assignment: Take about 20-30 minutes to present an overview of the specific crime control strategy you selected, describing the strategy itself, the rationale or theoretical justification behind the strategy, the extent to which the strategy has been implemented, evidence on the effectiveness of the strategy, any special disadvantages or advantages associated with the strategy (e.g., is it expensive, does it violate rights, does it have positive outcomes on other variables besides crime), and your recommendations regarding the continued use of the strategy.

Dec. 11  Pulling It All Together: Developing an Overall Crime Control Strategy

Assignment: Prepare a two page statement summarizing your major recommendations for reducing crime in the United States.

Dec. 18 Final Papers Due by 10 AM