

CRIMINOLOGY (SPRING 2022)

Sociology / Legal Studies 441

Monday / Wednesday 4:00 – 5:15pm

Sewell Social Sciences Building 5106

University of Wisconsin, Madison



Instructor: Michael Light, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology

Office: 8144 Sewell Social Sciences Building

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-2:00pm (in person or via [Zoom](#)); you can also set up an appointment

Email: milight@ssc.wisc.edu

Instructional Mode: Face-to-Face

Canvas site: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/291697>

Teaching Assistant : Nathan Shelton

Office: On Zoom <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/5557634699> (In-person available by request)

Office Hours: Tuesday 6:00-7:00pm

Email: nshelton@wisc.edu

Sections: Tuesday (**301**: 11:00-11:50am Van Hise 205); (**302**: 12:05-12:55pm Van Hise 205); (**303**: 1:20-2:10pm Van Hise 205); (**304**: 2:25-3:15pm Van Hise 205)

Credits: 4. This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall/spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, etc) for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period. There is also a 50 minute discussion section required for this course. The syllabus includes more information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Course Description

“Every cobbler thinks leather is the only thing, and for better or worse, I am a sociologist.”

– C. Wright Mills (1959)

“We are compelled to admit that ‘criminology’ as traditionally conceived is a bastard science grown out of public preoccupation with a social plague.” - Thorsten Sellin (1938)

This course is intended to be a broad introductory overview to the study of crime and to the field of criminology. The course is divided into three major sections. The first part of the class focuses on basic definitions and the empirical understanding of crime and crime trends. The second and largest section details theories and research on the causes of criminal behavior. The final section focuses on three contemporary controversies at the fore of criminological inquiry: the death penalty, policing, and gun control.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will develop an empirically grounded understanding of crime and criminal justice outcomes and be able to analyze criminological patterns through the application of theory in the social sciences.
2. Students will engage major theoretical debates in criminology. Why do people break the law? Do our peers affect whether we break the law? Why is crime higher in some

neighborhoods and not others? Does the death penalty deter crime? Do police prevent crime?

3. Students will competently interpret representations of data and critically analyze study design in published research on crime and punishment.
4. Through engagement with course readings and class discussion, students will establish a foundation for critically assessing the often controversial issues surrounding crime and the administration of criminal justice.

Required Texts

Akers, Ronald L., Christine S. Sellers, Wesley G. Jennings. 2020. *Criminological Theories: Introduction, Evaluation, and Application*, 8th Edition. Oxford University Press.

- This will be the main text for our course, however, there will be other required readings throughout the semester uploaded to Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Your grade for this course is based on three exams, a course paper, a debate, and participation in both lecture and discussion sections.

Exam I	15%
Exam II	25%
Exam III	20%
Paper	20%
Debate/Section Part.	10%
Lecture Part.	10%

Grading: The standard UW grading scale will be used.

Total Percent	Grade	Total Percent	Grade
93-100	A	70-76.99	C
87-92.99	AB	60-69.99	D
83-86.99	B	<60	F
77-82.99	BC		

Exams: There will be three exams in this course. You are responsible for all material from lectures (including media) and the assigned readings for the exams. The exams will be some combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay. The exams will not technically be cumulative, but there are concepts that will carry over from the previous parts of the course for which you will be responsible. There will be *no makeup exams* without a valid, documented excuse.

Participation: Your participation is gauged by your attendance. You are allowed to miss **three classes** without penalty. More than three unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. We will be using the **Acadly** to take attendance. This is a free app you will need to download to your phone. **The join code is HE6QZB.** It is also VERY important that you do the readings and

participate in class. The class size is ideal for generating good discussions and I will count on you all to be able to speak knowledgeably about course materials. Obviously, if you are experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms, please stay home and this will count as an excused absence.

Course Paper: The course paper asks you to engage **one** of the current controversies in criminology. You can choose to write on any **one of the three** following topics:

- (1) **Death Penalty:** The death penalty remains a controversial issue both within the United States and across the globe. Drawing from criminological theories and research in this area, discuss the following two issues: 1) what are the trends in the use of the death penalty in the U.S., and 2) should the U.S. increase or decrease the use of death penalty?
- (2) **Defund the Police:** The topic of police reform, and even police abolition, reached a fever pitch during the summer of 2020 in the wake of the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor killings (among other African Americans shot or killed by police). Drawing from criminological theories and the research on policing, answer the following question: should police forces be significantly reduced? Why or why not?
- (3) **Gun Control:** In the wake of multiple mass shootings, the topic of gun control has become a divisive social and political issue. Drawing from criminological theories and research in this area, discuss the following two questions: 1) does the U.S. have an issue with gun violence, and if so, 2) are stricter or more lenient gun laws potential solutions? Why or why not?

Paper Requirements: The paper must be 11 or 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced w/ 1" margins, stapled w/ name on each page. Do not use a cover sheet or plastic report cover. The essay should be approximately 5-7 pages (not including citations). Your final paper will be due **Monday May 2nd**. Late papers will be deducted one full letter grade per day. In support of your argument I want you to draw from in-class readings and **at least two outside sources from peer-reviewed, scholarly books or articles**. Be sure to properly cite all supporting material. If you have questions about your sources, feel free to ask me or the TA. The journals below are appropriate examples, but certainly not exhaustive.

- *Criminology, Law & Society Review, American Sociological Review, Social Forces, Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, American Journal of Sociology, Quantitative Criminology, Justice Quarterly, Social Problems, American Journal of Public Health, Journal of Law & Economics*

Debates: Each of you will participate in one of the three debates. The topics for the debates are the same as the paper topics above (Death Penalty, Defund the Police, and Gun Control). **We will assign you to a debate topic and team** (e.g. pro-gun control). The format of the debates will be detailed later in the semester and the debates will take place during your discussion section. Your grade for the debates will be based on two criteria: 1) your involvement and level of preparation, and 2) the feedback from your teammates regarding your contribution. I encourage the use of presentations (PowerPoint, Prezi, graphs, handouts, etc.) in addition to written remarks. The goal is to communicate effectively on a complex and controversial topic.

COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Lecture	Required Readings
Section I: The Empirical Reality of Crime and Punishment in America		
Jan. 26 th	Introduction: What is Criminology?	No readings
Jan. 31 st	Sociological Criminology: A brief History	Barkan pp. 2-12 (available on Canvas)
Feb. 2 nd & 7 th	Measuring Crime & Crime Patterns	Barkan Ch. 3 & Walker Ch. 1 (available on Canvas)
Feb. 9 th & 14 th	Responses to Crime: Punishment in America	Western Ch. 1 & Sabol (2019) (available on Canvas)
Section II: Explaining Criminal Behavior		
Feb. 16 th & 21 st	Introduction to Theory & Rational Choice Theories	Akers et al. Ch. 1 & 2
Feb. 23 rd & 28 th	Biosocial and Psychological Theories	Akers et al. Ch. 3 & 4
March 2 nd	Exam I	
March 7 th & 9 th	Social Learning Theory	Akers et al. Ch. 5
March 14 th & 16 th	SPRING BREAK!	No readings
March 21 st & 23 rd	Social Bonds and Control Theories	Akers et al. Ch. 6
March 28 th	Life Course Theory	Laub and Sampson Ch. 2 & 3 (available on Canvas)
March 30 th	Social Disorganization Theory	Akers et al. Ch. 8
April 4 th	Anomie and Strain Theories	Akers et al. Ch. 9
April 6 th	Labeling Theory	Akers et al. Ch. 7
April 11 th	Catch Up and Review for Exam II	No readings
April 13 th	Exam II	
April 18 th & 20 th	Debate preparation (No class)	No readings
Section III: Crime and Controversy		
April 25 th	The Death Penalty	Hickey pp. 244-265 (available on Canvas)
April 27 th	Defund the Police?	Sharkey & Stoughton et al. (available on Canvas)
May 2 nd	So is it More or Less Guns? (Course Paper Due)	Hickey pp. 266-297 (available on Canvas)
May 4 th	Catch Up and Review for Exam III	
May 8 th	Exam III at 5:05pm	

PRIVACY OF STUDENT RECORDS and the USAGE of AUDIO RECORDED LECTURES

See information about [privacy of student records and the usage of audio-recorded lectures](#).

Usage of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement

Lecture materials and recordings for SOC 441 are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor's express written permission. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

STUDENTS' RULES, [RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community.

UW-MADISON [FACE COVERING GUIDELINES](#)

While on campus all employees and students are required to [wear appropriate and properly fitting](#) face coverings while present in any campus building unless working alone in a laboratory or office space.

Face Coverings During In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be [worn correctly](#) (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason.

Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office.

Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#) and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy. An instructor may cancel or suspend a course in-

person meeting if a person is in the classroom without an approved face covering in position over their nose and mouth and refuses to immediately comply.

QUARANTINE OR ISOLATION DUE TO COVID-19

Student should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Student should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

Digital Course Evaluation (AEFIS)

UW-Madison now uses an online course evaluation survey tool, AEFIS. In most instances, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester when your course evaluation is available. You will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID where you can complete the evaluation and submit it, anonymously. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR & RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

- See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Course Policies and Friendly Reminders

- **Classroom Civility.** The study of criminology requires discussing sensitive and often controversial topics that may be uncomfortable for some students. I encourage both good discussions and critical assessment of issues, however, I require that students will respect their peers and inflammatory remarks will be dealt with accordingly. The University of Wisconsin is committed to fostering diversity and inclusion and welcomes individuals of all ages, religions, sex, sexual orientations, races, nationalities, languages, military experience, disabilities, family statuses, gender identities and expressions, political views, and socioeconomic statuses. Behaviors that threaten, harass, discriminate or that are disrespectful of others will not be tolerated. Inappropriate behaviors will be addressed with disciplinary action, which may include being referred to the Dean of Students Office. Please visit UW's Nondiscrimination policy for more information:
<https://oed.wisc.edu/statement-of-non-discrimination.htm>.
 - seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation
 - uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise
 - forges or falsifies academic documents or records
 - intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others
 - engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance
 - assists other students in any of these acts.
- **Other Issues.** It is important that YOU stay on top of issues as it relates to the class. The worst thing you can do is come to me at the end of the semester and bring up issues that happened weeks and months earlier.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [University Health Services](#)
- [Undergraduate Academic Advising and Career Services](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)
- [Office of Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Dean of Students Office](#)

Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights. The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors and teaching assistants near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science.

Department learning objectives. Beyond the specific substantive and methodological content described above, the course is designed to achieve the following instructional objectives designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:

Critically Evaluate Published Research. Sociology graduates will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.

Communicate Skillfully: Sociology majors write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.

Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes: Sociology graduates can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.