

# CJFS 3750: Theories of Criminal Behavior

Dr. Ryan Larson

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## Instructor

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## Class Information

Classroom: EAST 316A

Class Hours: 8:00-9:30 a.m. TTh

Class Canvas: <https://canvas.hamline.edu/courses/15192>

## **Course description**

What is crime? Why do people commit crimes? What social contexts are more criminogenic than others? What can society do to reduce it? This course will survey theories of crime etiology and the effectiveness of society's response to crime. This course will begin with a discussion of the fundamentals of criminology including definitions of crime and criminology, crime measurement, and trends in crime across space and time. Next, the course will delve into schools of criminological theory: classical rational choice models, biological and psychological trait theories, and sociological theories. Throughout the course we will focus not only on the criminological theories and their societal implications, but also the methodological and empirical foundations underpinning the social science of crime. At the conclusion of the course, each student will have an understanding of criminological theory, how theory is researched and tested, the policy ramifications of these theories, and their associated empirical foundation.

## Objectives

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1. Learn the history and current state of criminological theories.
2. Be conversant in the empirical status of criminological theories.
3. Be able to read, digest, and explain empirical research articles.
4. Understand the connections between theory, data, and policy.
5. Explain how researchers use data and statistical evidence to develop criminological insights.

### Hamline Plan Objectives

This course is a [Hamline Plan](#) Writing (W) course and therefore upon completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Employ writing process strategies appropriate to the writing task and audience.
2. Demonstrate analytical insight and depth.
3. Articulate a compelling central idea or purpose.
4. Establish a clear and logical organizational structure.
5. Provide appropriate evidence and support for ideas.
6. Use stylistic strategies appropriate to audience, genre, and purpose.
7. Control the mechanics of readable sentences.

### Required Texts

1. Kubrin, Stucky, and Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*.
2. Various empirical journal articles found on the class Canvas page.

## Course Requirements

### “Scholarly Attitude”

Some faculty members evaluate participation as a part of students’ course grades. But mere participation – how much you do or don’t talk, sit up or fall asleep – isn’t really what most of us want from our students. Instead, most of us hope to see students accept our invitation to “the life of mind” by adopting a “scholarly attitude.” Having a “scholarly attitude” involves developing intellectual curiosity and a genuine engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Students with a scholarly attitude take the student role seriously and demonstrate their commitment to academic pursuits by actively engaging in the material, reflecting deeply on the readings, raising thoughtful questions and comments in class, bringing unsolicited materials to share that are directly relevant to the topics being covered, come early and/or stay late to raise their own questions about the material, and generally go above and beyond the requirements of the course. Students who lack a scholarly attitude passively complete the readings and requirements, only occasionally engage in other activities during lecture, and are primarily concerned with obtaining a particular grade in the course.

Another exemplary aspect of having a “scholarly attitude” is how you handle a situation when you must be absent from class. A scholarly way to handle this will be to notify me of any potential absences, as well as to take initiative to catch up on any material missed by reading the lecture slides, getting notes from a fellow student, or coming to office hours.

The main idea here is to be actively engaged with the class material we will read this semester, and to display a genuine curiosity towards learning about crime. This portion of your grade is necessarily subjective, so please come see me if you have any questions or concerns about this part of your grade.

### Empirical Article Worksheets

In each theory we will discuss, there will be an exemplary empirical journal article assigned on Thursday in concerns with each particular theory. For each of these readings, you will fill out a simple worksheet that guides you in reading and making sense of the research articles. This will a) allow you to distill often complex, scientific writing into your own observations, b) gain insight into how criminologists actually “test” the theories we are discussing, and c) be prepared with critical thoughts and reflections for our weekly discussion session at the end of Thursday’s lecture. We will spend time early in the semester discussing how to read empirical journal articles, which is an essential skill to have as a social science student. These worksheets will be primarily graded for completion, but lower scores can be obtained if the worksheets are not filled out satisfactorily or to completion. **Each empirical article worksheet is due at 8am (before class) on the due date.**

### Exams

There will be both a midterm and final exam, each of which cover material previously covered in each half of the semester respectively. The exams will cover ideas and topics from the class lecture, course readings, and class discussions, and will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The class period before each exam will consist of a review day and study period, where we will review the relevant material for the exam. Students are expected to come to the review/study day with questions, concerns, and ideas, and we will “study together” before each exam. I know exams can bring about worry and anxiety, and I know that you will likely have exams in other classes to study for as well. However, there will be no “trick” questions on the

exams, and students who come to lecture and actively participate in class should be well situated for the exams. Please come prepared for each review/study day, as it is likely other students have the same or similar questions that you do. More details about each exam will be discussed in class. In general, the exams cover the broad ideas discussed in lecture and in our readings, and do not ask about specific empirical findings. **Dates for the midterm and final exam, as well as the study days, can be found on the tentative course schedule below.**

## Research Paper

In order to delve deeper on a criminological topic of interest (and because this course is writing intensive!), you will write a research paper in the style of a mini social science review article. The idea here is relatively simple: pick a criminological question of interest, work to find relevant research articles that answer parts of your research question, apply the criminological theories to your question of interest, and write a “review” of the studies that help answer your question of interest. Integral to this paper is to pick a question where the dependent variable, or outcome, is some sort of crime, broadly defined, as this will allow you to apply criminological theory to your research question. The purpose of this assignment is to learn 1) to ask a good criminological question, 2) to formulate and support a clear and sophisticated thesis, 3) gain skills in finding appropriate and valid research to support your thesis, and 4) to go deeper on a criminological topic and theories of interest. In the early weeks of the semester, do some thinking about what *truly* interests you within criminology, and then you’ll write a paper about it over the course of the semester!

Example research questions could include, but are certainly not limited to:

- How do monetary sanctions (fines, fees, etc.) impact crime?
- Does cybercrime follow the predictions made by criminological theory?
- What is the relationship between sport participation and crime?
- How does racial discrimination impact crime?
- What is the relationship between gender and crime?
- What are the causes of mass shootings?

The research paper should have the following sections:

1. *Abstract* - a summary of your paper and its structure in approximately 150 words.
2. *Introduction* - including clarification and exposition of the central question, important subsidiary questions, and general framing for the reader.
3. *Literature review* - summarizing and synthesizing the main findings of at least 8 studies that have been done on your topic or a related one. What do these studies have to say about your research question? How does criminological theory apply to your research question? How do these studies use/test criminological theories we have engaged in class?
4. *Conclusion* - Overall, what do these studies conclude about your research question? What questions remain unanswered? How might future research study these remaining questions?
5. *References* - all citations (including in-text) should be in ASA format. - [Purdue OWL ASA In-Text Citation Guide](#) - [Purdue OWL ASA References Page Formatting](#)

Each topic will be chosen, and approved, in consultation with me and I will help guide you towards relevant research and ideas throughout the semester. We will **work together** to learn how to find relevant research articles and how to read and digest them. Google Scholar and the Bush Library Website will be integral sources for finding relevant theoretical and empirical scholarship.

We will discuss how to use these tools and strategies for searching in class, as well as how to identify quality primary and secondary sources.

In order to produce high quality papers, you will write, workshop, and revise your papers over the course of the semester. The initial sub-submissions will be graded for completion, and will allow an opportunity for me to give everybody feedback on their papers step-by-step, without the specter of grades. The final submission will be graded as a normal paper. This process hopefully will split the workload across the semester and mitigate any end of the semester time crunch, as well as allow you to improve your ideas, sources, and papers over the semester to produce high-quality papers! Thus, the following due dates apply:

- 2/14 - Research Question Synopsis. 10 pts.
- 3/7 - Annotated References. 10 pts.
- 4/13 - Draft of Research Paper (4-6 pages). 10 pts.
- 5/2 - Final Research Paper (4-6 pages). 70 pts.

All writing assignments are **due at 11:59pm on each respective due date** and must be typed, stapled, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, and have 1-inch margins. The assignments should also have the student's full name, and date. More detailed descriptions of each subcomponent will be discussed in advance of each due date, and a more detailed rubric can be found on the class Canvas site.

### **Extra Credit**

For extra credit in this course you may attend an event (e.g., lecture, movie, play, concert, art exhibit), wither in person or online, that is related to theories of criminal behavior and write a 1-2 page reaction paper about the event. In the paper you must discuss how this event is related to theories of criminal behavior generally and how it is related to particular topics discussed in class. Next, critique the substance of the event based on what you know; is it an accurate depiction of theories of criminal behavior? Finally, include reactions to the event: did it reaffirm knowledge you gained in class or previously held beliefs or did it challenge your current knowledge and beliefs? To get credit for this assignment, you must get approval from the professor for the event or video over email. Multiple departments across campus offer opportunities, and the University of Minnesota's Sociology Workshop Series is another place to keep an eye on. In addition, there are plenty of online scholarly lectures about criminological topics (e.g., YouTube). Keep in mind that completion of this extra credit opportunity requires timing, and likely cannot be completed last minute. The extra credit is worth 10 pts. upon completion. **The extra credit opportunity is due 5/4 11:59pm.**

## Course Policies and Information

### General

First and foremost, welcome to CJFS 3750! I am so excited to go on this criminological journey and meet all of you! I find questions surrounding the causation of crime to be truly fascinating, and they speak to more broad social questions around how/where we draw social boundaries, what drives violations of those boundaries, and how we react to violations of those boundaries. I hope we can have a great time this semester exploring these criminological ideas. Given this is an upper-level class, many of you will have already developed strategies that help you be successful in the college classroom. However, I also have some tips that will be useful in this class and the others you may be taking:

### General

- Come to class as much as possible! This will allow you to keep up to date with everything, and really engage with the class material.
- Take notes! Either electronically or the old fashioned way with pen and paper, take notes during lecture and discussion. These will help you when you are studying for exams and writing your papers. I structure my lecture slides to be notes, and they will be available
- Ask questions! **Please, please, please**, ask questions whenever you have them. They can be simple logistical things or in depth questions about the class material. *Grappling with class material is what college is all about*, so I encourage you to ask questions whenever you find something confusing or fascinating! I'm happy to answer any questions as I am able, no matter how big or small. If I don't know the answer to something, I will work with you to find the answer!
- Come to office hours! Faculty members love when you come to see them. Take this time to get to know me and your other professors, which I personally found to be one of the most rewarding experiences of a liberal arts college experience as an undergraduate student. I am paid and am here to be a resource for you, and expect to serve in that capacity for your learning.
- Use a calendar! Whether it be your Google calendar or a planner book, write out all the relevant dates for the course: assignment deadlines, exam dates, class times, my office hours, etc. This will help you stay a bit organized and keep tabs on what's to come in the semester.

Please make use of this syllabus and the class Canvas site. They will both give a guide to what's coming next, and Canvas is also the hub for all assignment submissions. All supplementary class reading materials and other resources will also be posted to the class Canvas site.

### Grading and Absences

Overall, I'd love for everybody to not worry about their grades and instead spend that energy with the readings and engagement in class. If you do so, I am *confident* that the grades will follow, and I want everybody in the class to succeed however you define that for yourself. With that being said, keeping up to date on the readings and class material will be *essential* to obtaining a high grade in this class. Keep in mind that grades **do not** define your worth as a person, nor as a student.

The grading breakdown, course requirements, and letter grade distributions are listed below. Please come see me if you have any questions related to grading or general course expectations.

All assignments are due at just before midnight of the night they are due unless otherwise noted (11:59pm due date). Emailed assignments are not accepted unless otherwise arranged, and all submissions will take place via Canvas.

Late assignments are deducted one letter grade if they are turned in within 24 hours of the due date and an additional letter grade for each additional 24 hours beyond this; assignments will not be accepted more than 1 week after the due date or all assignments are graded (whichever is later). Incompletes will not be granted except in rare or extraordinary circumstances and cannot be given without prior written agreement.

If you have questions about how you have been graded on a particular assignment, I have a general policy for handling these situations: please briefly put in writing your thoughts or comments on the grading and see me in the next available office hours. We will then discuss your grade(s). Any requests must be submitted within one week of the date the grades for that assignment are distributed.

If you miss a class, please ask a classmate to share their notes with you (in advance, if possible). If you are uncomfortable asking another student, please let me know and I will find a volunteer to share notes. **We are in this together!** Note that while attendance is not strictly required, multiple absences without proper notice and adequate reasoning will be reflected in your “scholarly attitude” grade.

You must notify me in person, e-mail, in writing, or by phone **prior** to missing an assignment due date or exam for me to consider giving you a makeup or extension. Exams may not be made up except in the rare event of an excused absence.

I know your lives are busy and hectic, and this class is likely not going to be the most important thing in your life (and it probably shouldn't be!). The key here is to **be in communication with me** when you are going to be gone or would request an extension, and I will do my best under the circumstances to work with you to find a solution.

Grade Distribution:

Grade	Range
A	93+
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	63-66.99
D-	60-62.99
F	< 60

**Assignment Weighting:**

Item	Weight	Points
Scholarly Attitude	16.67%	50 pts.
Empirical Article Worksheets	16.67%	50 pts.
Research Paper	33.33%	100 pts.
Exams	33.33%	100 pts.

**Communication**

The best way to reach me is by email or come in-person to office hours. I will attempt to return email within 24 hours M-F and within 48 hours over the weekend. There will be times I cannot respond within 24 hours. If you wait until the last minute to email me with questions, I may not be able to respond in time. However, I will do my best to respond to all email inquiries in a timely fashion. I will also often be available after class to chat about any issues/questions you may have.

**Inclusivity**

Hamline University values diversity and inclusion; we are collectively committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. My goal is to welcome everyone to the fascinating world of criminology. As your professor, I hold the fundamental belief that everyone in the class is fully capable of engaging and mastering the material. Our classroom should be an inclusive space, where ideas, questions, and misconceptions can be discussed with mutual respect for others' ideas, beliefs, and experiences. There is usually more than one way to see and solve a problem and we will all be richer if we can be open to multiple paths to knowledge. This course will cover topics of a sensitive nature such as but not limited to class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, violence, victimization, and criminality. These are sensitive social topics, and I expect each of you to broach with maturity and scholarly curiosity. In addition, I expect students to show respect toward the subjects of our study, particularly those who have engaged in crime, as well as to treat your classmates and myself with respect and dignity at all times. Because I cannot possibly know each student's life history and what you may/may not find distressing (although, I certainly hope to learn about you throughout the semester!), I am unable to alert the class to each possibility. Thus, this is a trigger warning of a sort for the entire course. If you have concerns over a particular topic/issue, please review the syllabus and if there is a concern, please let me know.

**Office Hours**

Please come to office hours! This is a dedicated time set aside for **you**, the student, to:

- Ask questions or get clarifications on topic that weren't clear in the lecture or readings
- Get caught up to speed should you miss a day of lecture
- Get feedback on assignments and papers
- Just talk "shop": research, criminology, etc.
- Talk about concerns you have inside or outside of class
- Get to know me! It also lets me get to know you as well, which is one of the best parts of my job.

I'm excited to meet and get to know each of you personally, and office hours are a great time to do that. Feel free to stop by anytime during office hours. If my usual office hours do not work with



your schedule, please email me to schedule an office hours appointment and I will find a time that works with your schedule. I'd love the opportunity to learn about you, what is bringing you to study criminology, and how I can help you in your future studies/research/career. My office hours and location can be found near my picture at the top of this syllabus. Please don't hesitate to stop by and chat!

### **Academic honesty**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, making multiple submissions, fabricating information, using materials in an unauthorized manner, misrepresenting academic records, and facilitating academic dishonesty. A student found guilty of academic dishonesty can receive failure for an assignment, failure for the entire course, or academic suspension or expulsion. For more information on the Honor Code, please visit the [Honor Code website](#).

Discussion of class material and readings amongst students is encouraged, and helping each other out is encouraged! However, you are expected to work independently on assignments, papers, and exams. When in doubt, please come see me.

### **Preparedness**

I promise to be prepared, engaged, and as helpful as I can be in each class period, as well as outside of class time. We will be wrestling with new and difficult topic matter during the course of the semester, and I understand it can seem daunting especially given your other responsibilities on and off campus. All I ask is that you give your best effort on each assignment, reading, and class period and I promise to reciprocate.

## **Campus Resources and Policies**

### **Accessibility**

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Steve Anderson ([sanderson65@hamline.edu](mailto:sanderson65@hamline.edu), West Hall 108) as soon as possible to discuss accommodations. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disability Resources, please ensure submission of your accommodation letter within the first two weeks of class. Accommodations will only be provided after the letter is submitted to me and with sufficient lead-time for me to arrange testing or other accommodations. Although I will receive the letter electronically, I am available to chat privately during office hours about your accommodations if you wish.

### **COVID-19 policy**

Any requirements for use of face masks on campus will be determined by the [Hamline University COVID-19 shift plan](#). See [Hamline's Mask Policy](#) for more information.

In general, if you were exposed to COVID-19, please follow the recommendations as follows from the CDC. Please keep the safety of your fellow students as well as faculty and staff at Hamline at the forefront in your decision making.

- [What to Do If You Were Exposed to COVID-19](#)
- [What to Do If You Test Positive for COVID-19](#)

## Writing Assistance

The ability to communicate effectively in writing is an important skill that will be required all classes at Hamline University and in life outside of the University. While we will workshop papers throughout the semester and you will receive feedback before your final submission, there are also resources on campus to assist you with your writing.

There is free student writing support at the [Writing and Communication Center](#). The writing center can assist you in all stages of the writing process and I encourage all students to take advantage of this valuable resource. To schedule an appointment call (651) 523-2026 or visit the [Hamline University Writing and Communication Center Website](#)[Hamline University Writing and Communication Center Website].

## Mental health

Mental health is important to be a successful university student, and aspects of university life can be stressful and can negatively impact mental health. Hamline University Counseling and Health Services provides confidential, free counseling and crisis intervention services to students. More information can be found at the [Counseling and Health Services Website](#).

## Sexual Assault, Relationship Violence, and Stalking

Hamline University also provides academic and other accommodations to students who have experienced sexual assault, relationship violence (physical, emotional, or other form of abuse by a dating or other intimate partner), or stalking. For more information about Hamline's policy and the resources available to you, consult [Hamline's website](#) or contact our Title IX Coordinator and Associate Dean of Students, Patti Kersten, (651) 523-2421, [pkersten01@hamline.edu](mailto:pkersten01@hamline.edu).

## Final thoughts

I am excited to discuss the causes of crime with you this semester, and I hope you all find this class to be interesting and engaging! This class will be challenging on two different fronts: 1) challenge your preconceived notions of the nature and causes of crime, as well as that of the causes and effects of punishment, and 2) delve deep into criminological theories and their empirical foundation. This second challenge will present new, sometimes terse, terminology, complex theoretical relationships, as well as discussion of methodological and statistical issues (e.g., causality). Despite these challenges, you are not alone in this endeavor. We will work through these challenges **together** this semester!

**If this document is updated, a copy will be supplied to you via Canvas and changes will be announced in class.**

## Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Week	Lecture	ToDo
2023-01-24	1	Intro to Criminology	Google Form
2023-01-26	1		Kubrin Ch.1
2023-01-31	2	Deterrence Theory	Kubrin Ch.2
2023-02-02	2		Sherman 1992; WS DUE
2023-02-07	3	Trait Theories	Kubrin Ch.3
2023-02-09	3		Moffit 2011; WS DUE
2023-02-14	4	Social Disorganization	Kubrin Ch.4; RQS DUE
2023-02-16	4		Sampson 1997; WS DUE
2023-02-21	5	Strain Theories	Kubrin Ch.5
2023-02-23	5		Burt 2012; WS DUE
2023-02-28	6	Social Learning	Kubrin Ch.6
2023-03-02	6		Kreager 2007; WS DUE
2023-03-07	7	Midterm Exam	Study Day 1
2023-03-09	7		Midterm Exam
2023-03-21	9	Control Theories	Kubrin Ch.7; AR DUE
2023-03-23	9		Sampson & Laub 1990; WS DUE
2023-03-28	10	Labeling Theory	Kubrin Ch.8
2023-03-30	10		Chiricos 2007; WS DUE
2023-04-04	11	Conflict Theory	Kubrin Ch.9
2023-04-06	11		Legewie 2016; WS DUE
2023-04-11	12	Paper Workshop	Workshop
2023-04-13	12		NO CLASS (NCUR); DRP DUE
2023-04-18	13	Integrated Theory	Kubrin Ch. 10
2023-04-20	13		Levin & Madfis 2011; WS DUE
2023-04-25	14	Consequences of Crime	Sharkey 2018
2023-04-27	14	Conseq. of Punishment	Larson 2021; WS DUE
2023-05-02	15	Tying Up Loose Ends	Workshop 2; FRP DUE
2023-05-04	15		Study Day 2; EC DUE
2023-05-08	16	Final Exam	7:45-9:45 a.m.