

PSYC 3815 -- THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME

Spring 2012
Mondays, 15:00 – 17:50 hrs.
AH-118

Instructor: Martin Lalumière (D854)
Office Hours: Wednesdays 13:00-16:00

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Course Description

This course provides an overview of recent advances in the study of antisocial behaviour, aggression, and criminal behaviour. In the first part of the course we will identify individual and social factors that seem to increase people's likelihood of engaging in antisocial and criminal behaviour. We will pay particular attention to developmental continuity, examining factors that lead to persistence or desistence. In the second part of the course we will examine such special topics as female offenders, psychopathy, the assessment of risk to reoffend, and psychological treatment. The main goals of the course are to outline a general theory of crime and to think critically and scientifically about the causes of crime and its remediation.

Recommended background: PSYC 2030 & 2800.
Prerequisite: Any two 2000-level psychology courses.

Readings

Capote, T. (1965). *In cold blood*. New York: Random House.

French, D. C., & Dishion, T. J. (2003). Predictors of early initiation of sexual intercourse among high-risk adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 23, 295-315.

Hilton, N. Z., & Simmons, J. L. (2001). The influence of actuarial risk assessment in clinical judgments and tribunal decisions about mentally disordered offenders in maximum security. *Law and Human Behavior*, 25, 393-408.

Jaffee, S. R., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., & Taylor, A. (2004). Physical maltreatment victim to antisocial child: Evidence of an environmentally mediated process. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 113, 44-55.

Lipsey, M. W. (1995). What do we learn from 400 research studies on the effectiveness of treatment with juvenile delinquents? In J. McGuire (Ed.), *What works: Reducing reoffending: Guidelines from research and practice* (pp. 63-77). London: Wiley & Sons.

- Martino, S. C., Ellickson, P. L., Klein, D. J., McCaffrey, D. & Orlando Edelen, M. (2008). Multiple trajectories of physical aggression among adolescent boys and girls. *Aggressive Behavior*, 34, 61-75.
- Maughan, B., Taylor, C., Taylor, A., Butler, N., & Bynner, A. (2001). Pregnancy smoking and childhood conduct problems: A causal association? *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines*, 42, 1021-1028.
- Moffitt, T. E., & Caspi, A. (2001). Childhood predictors differentiate life-course persistent and adolescence-limited antisocial pathways among males and females. *Development and Psychopathology*, 13, 355-375.
- Rutter, M., Giller, H., & Hagell, A. (1997). *Antisocial behavior by young people* (chapter 7). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Serin, R., Forth, A., Brown, S., Nunes, K., Bennell, C., & Pozzulo, J. (2011). *Psychology of criminal behaviour*. Pearson Canada.
- Seto, M. C., & Barbaree, H. E. (1999). Psychopathy, treatment behavior and sex offender recidivism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14, 1235-1248.
- Tiihonen, J., Isohanni, M., Räsänen, P., Koiranen, M., & Moring, J. (1997). Specific major mental disorders and criminality: A 26-year prospective study of the 1966 Northern Finland Birth Cohort. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 154, 840-845.
- Wambaugh, J. (1973). *The onion field*. Random House.
- Wrangham, R., & Peterson, D. (1996). *Demonic males: Apes and the origins of human violence* (chapters 1 and 7). New York: Mariner Books.

The books by Capote (1965) and Wambaugh (1973) are for the Book Report. The book by Serin et al. (2011) provides background information for the course and for class presentations. None of these books are required. The articles and book chapters will be discussed in class and will be assigned by the instructor as needed. Other articles may be assigned.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on a mid-term exam (15-45%), an end-of-term exam (15-45%), a term paper (0-30%), a book report (0-30%), and a group presentation (0-15%). Students determine for themselves the percentage of each evaluation component, within the range provided. Obviously, the total must be 100%. The determination of percentages is revealed to the professor at the time of submission of the evaluation. Only the two exams are compulsory.

The **exams** (February 27 and April 21) will consist of definitions, short-answer questions, and long-answer questions based on class lectures and discussions, group presentations, and on the readings assigned for particular topics. They will encompass all material covered in prior weeks, with a focus on the more recent material (i.e., cumulative).

The **term paper** will consist of an eight to ten page exploration of a topic relevant to the study of crime (excluding title page, references, tables, or figures). Students can select any topic they want, as long as it is related to the topics discussed in class; it is quite all right to select the same topic as the presentation topic (if you do a presentation). The focus of the paper will be on an empirical article relevant to the topic, with a discussion of the study methodology and findings. Other empirical articles (and review articles, if appropriate) should also be discussed and cited. Quality of exposition and formatting (APA) will be taken into account in grading the paper. Papers should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor in class on or before March 12, 2012. Papers submitted after the deadline or longer than ten pages will not be graded.

The **book report** will be based on either *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote (1965) or *The Onion Field* by Joseph Wambaugh (1973). The stories in these two books provide good illustrations of many of the concepts covered in class. The book report should be no longer than six pages (excluding title page, references, and appendices) and should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor in class on or before April 2, 2012. Reports submitted after the deadline or longer than six pages will not be graded. The report should reflect what you learned in this course, and not your personal feelings about the story or about crime. There is no need to attempt to include all that you learned in class in the report, only what you think is the most relevant information. The goal of this exercise is to demonstrate what you have learned in this course by discussing it in the context of one of these crime stories. Quality of exposition and formatting (APA) will be taken into account in grading the book report.

The in-class **presentation** will be 15 min long, plus a few minutes for questions. The goal is to learn about a particular topic through library research and to teach other students a synthesis of what you learned. A scientific (empirical) paper will be the focus of your presentation. The topics should be approved by the instructor at least two weeks prior to the presentation. There can be only one presentation per topic. The instructor will provide examples of topics if necessary. The end-of-term exam will cover material presented by the students. Groups can include two to four members. Scheduling and choice of topic will be done on a first-come basis.

Evaluation Timeline:

February 27	Mid-term exam
March 12	Term Paper
April 2	Book Report
April 16	Presentation
April 21 (9am-12pm)	End-of-term exam

If you cannot be present for an evaluation you must contact the instructor as soon as possible before the date in question. Medical reasons must be supported by a statement that performance would be affected, with the physician's name, address, and phone number included in the statement. Non-medical reasons must also be supported by appropriate documentation. Failure to notify the instructor prior to the date of evaluation will result in a mark of zero.

The following ranges will be used to convert percentage marks to a letter grade:

A+	90-100	A	85-89	A-	80-84
B+	77-79	B	74-76	B-	71-73
C+	68-70	C	65-67	C-	61-64
D+	56-60	D	50-55	F	0-49

Course Content

The topics for the lectures are listed below (not necessarily in order), along with the relevant readings in parenthesis. Some lecture slides will be circulated in the form of handouts before the lectures. We may not cover all of the topics listed.

Introduction and a Brief History.

The Fundamental Data. What a general theory of crime must explain. Age, sex, the 5% rule, varying rates over time and places, desistence and persistence, specialization, adolescence-limited versus life-course persistence (Moffitt & Caspi, 2001).

Animal Behaviour. Many crimes have behavioural equivalents in the animal world (Wrangham & Peterson, 1996).

Behavioural Genetics. Are people more or less likely to engage in antisocial behaviour because they have different genes, or because they have been exposed to different environments (Jaffee et al., 2004)?

Early Development. Events that occur very early in life can have long-term impacts (Maughan et al., 2001).

Social Environment. The family may promote or hinder antisocial tendencies. Are there characteristics of neighbourhoods that affect crime? How do peers influence antisocial behaviour? How does one know whether a social factor is a cause of antisocial behaviour (Rutter et al., 1997)?

Psychopathy. Who are psychopaths? What accounts for their unique characteristics (Seto & Barbaree, 1999)?

Sex and Delinquency. What is the link between sexual behaviours and crime? What explains it (French & Dishion, 2003)?

Female Delinquency. Do we need a special theory for female delinquency (Martino et al., 2008)?

Mental Illness and Crime. Does having a mental disorder increase the chance of committing a violent criminal (Tiihonen et al., 1997)?

Assessing Risk to Reoffend. Can clinicians accurately predict future violence (Hilton & Simmons, 2001)?

Psychological Treatment. What are the features of the most effective treatments for antisocial behaviour (Lipsey, 1995)?

Postscript

The instructor does not like email (except for distributing files and to make general announcements) and does not look at his inbox on a regular basis. If you have questions for him, please ask them before, during, or after class, or during the office hours. Thank you for understanding.