SOCI 388 Crime
Winter 2018

Monday and Wednesday: 2:35-3:55pm
Rutherford Physics Building 112

Instructor: Dr. Jan Doering
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Office hours: Friday, 3:00-4:30pm, Leacock Building, room 826
Please sign up online: https://calendly.com/jandoering

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Office hours: TBD

Course Description

Our society is obsessed with crime, as any visit to a bookstore or an evening spent watching television easily confirms. Conversely, the study of crime is one of the most vibrant areas of social science. In this course, we will survey some major aspects of criminology, including causal explanations of crime, crime over the life course, societal contexts of crime and criminalization, as well as policing, punishment, and the politics of crime. We will place particular emphasis on crime as a social phenomenon.

Learning Goals

After completing this course, you should:

• understand major theories that explain crime and delinquency.
• know key trends in crime rates.
• be able to apply criminological theories to interpret empirical cases.
• be able to critically analyze the political implications of various approaches to crime and criminal behaviour.

Readings

I expect you to read all of the assigned material. Please note that reading the assigned textbook will not suffice. Other required readings will be made available through MyCourses. In some cases, the syllabus highlights passages that you should focus on. Occasionally, we may work with the readings in class. In these cases, I will ask you to bring the course material to class.


NOTE: Prior editions of the textbook are similar, with the obvious exception of reported crime rates. An older version may suffice for your studies, but I cannot guarantee this. The safest thing is to purchase the most recent edition. Copies of the fourth edition are on reserve at the library.
Assignments and Grading

Your grade will be based on a midterm exam, a final exam, a final quiz, four in-class exercises, and a peer evaluation.

A) Midterm exam: 35%

The midterm exam will consist of a list of course concepts that you will be asked to explain in a few sentences. It will be held in class on Monday, February 12 (week 6). Make-up exams will be available only to students who can present proof of a medical emergency.

B) Final exam: 40%

The final exam will consist of a list of course concepts and one or more short essay questions. It may include any material covered in class up to that point. The exam will be held in class on Wednesday, March 28 (week 11). Make-up exams will be available only to students who can present proof of a medical emergency.

C) Final quiz: 10%

A quiz will be held during the final course session on Monday, April 16 (week 14). It will test only the material covered after the final exam.

D) In-class exercises: 10%

Over the semester, we will do several group-based, in-class exercises. The exercises will usually require you to apply course concepts to an empirical prompt, such as a set of newspaper articles. By the end of the class session, your group will submit one written report via MyCourses. These reports will be graded simply on a pass/fail basis with the option of extra credit for exceptionally good reports. Late submissions will not be accepted. This means that you will have to collaborate effectively with your group members and use your time efficiently. Assignments to groups will be strictly random—no reassignments will be made under any circumstances.

E) Peer evaluation: 5%

To encourage everyone’s participation during the group exercises, you will be given the opportunity to evaluate your group members’ contribution. Each student’s peer evaluation grade will be computed as the average of the grades that group members assign to that student. Do not complain to me about your peer evaluation grade—I will not alter it. It is up to you to take a productive role within your group that ensures a good peer evaluation. Note: If you do not submit peer evaluation grades for one or more of your fellow group members by the deadline, you will receive a zero for your own peer evaluation grade, independent of the grade your group members may have assigned to you.
Policies

• **Inclusive learning environment:** As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/), 514-398-6009. If you want to write your midterm and/or final exams at the OSD, you have to contact OSD several weeks in advance of the exam so the necessary arrangements can be made.

• **Academic integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). If you are caught engaging in fraudulent activity, you may fail the assignment in question or the entire course, and I may report you to the Dean of Students.

• **Language:** In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

• **Attendance:** I do not take attendance. It is up to you to decide whether you want to come to class or not. However, please note that exams and exercises will test not only whether you have done the readings, but will also include material covered only in course lectures and in-course exercises. Neither the teaching assistant nor me will make this material available to you through alternative channels. If you attend class, please ensure that you arrive in time and that you do not have to leave early in order to avoid disrupting class. Furthermore, note that your group members may base their peer evaluation in part on whether you were present during group exercises.

• **Make-up policy:** Exams will take place in class on the following days: February 12 (midterm), March 28 (final), April 16 (post-final quiz). If you have a conflicting commitment on either of these days (Model UN, athletics tournament, etc.), do not take this course because no make-up exam will be offered to you. An exception can be made only in case of a medical emergency that clearly prevents you from taking the exam. You must provide me with evidence in the form of a valid doctor’s note issued on the day of the exam. I reserve the right to reject your request for a make-up exam if I am unconvinced that you had to miss the exam. Make-up exams will usually take the form of an oral exam.

• **Extra credit policy:** Aside from extra credit for exceptionally good group reports, I never give extra credit as a matter of principle.

• **Regrading policy:** You have the right to request that your exam be regraded. However, in order to request this, you must submit a written notice that explains and justifies your grievance in detail. A printed copy of this notice must be submitted within a week of the date that we first returned the exams or papers. Please note that I will regrade your entire exam or paper, not just specific passages that you may have flagged. Regrading may improve or lower your grade.

• **Course communication:** You have to regularly check your email and read course-related email communication. Before emailing me or the teaching assistant, please consult the
syllabus for relevant information. If the answer to your question is in the syllabus, we reserve the right to ignore your email.

Schedule


- Textbook chapter 1 (“What is Criminology”).

Week 2. Jan. 15 and 17. The emergence of criminology: the classical school and positivism.

- Textbook chapter 5 (“Classical and Neoclassical Thought”).
- Textbook chapter 6 (“Biological Roots of Criminal Behaviour”). Only pp.139-148 are required. Read the rest of the chapter if you like.

Wednesday session: in-class exercise.


Week 4: Jan. 29 and 31. The explanation of crime (2): anomie, strain, and routine activity theory.
Wednesday session: in-class exercise.

Week 5: Feb. 5 and 7. Crime over the life-course.
Wednesday session: review for midterm exam.


Monday session: midterm exam.


Week 7: Feb. 19 and 21. Crime, inequality, and power (2)


Week 8: Feb 26 and 28. Patterns and perceptions of crime.
Wednesday session: in-class exercise.

- Textbook chapter 2 (“Crime Statistics”).
- Textbook chapter 3 (“Patterns of Crime”).

March 5-11: No classes (study break).
Week 9: March 12 and 14. Policing and the police.

- Selection of newspaper articles.

Week 10: March 19 and 21. Gangs and their environments

Wednesday session: review for final exam


Week 11: March 26 and 28. Drugs

Wednesday session: final exam.


Week 12: April 4 only. Politics and policy

No class on April 2 (Easter Monday).

- Textbook chapter 11 (“Criminology and Social Policy”)

Week 13: April 9 and 11. Prosecution and punishment

Monday session: in-class exercise.


Week 14: April 16 only. Post-final quiz.