

Advanced Criminology: Biosocial Criminology

The University of Texas at Dallas

CRIM 3302, Spring 2012

Tues/Thurs, 10am – 11:15pm

Room: GR 2.302

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Office hours: Tuesday 11:30am – 1pm; Thursday 2pm – 4pm; or by appointment

Course Description

Criminology has traditionally been dominated by sociologically oriented theories of crime causation. This focus has underscored the importance of environmental factors while, at the same time, dismissing the importance of biological and genetic factors. Indeed, most criminology textbooks give only a cursory overview of biogenic research into antisocial behavior, suggesting that these factors are unimportant. This conclusion, however, stands in contrast to a large body of research which identifies biological and genetic factors to be important in the etiology of criminal behavior.

This course will introduce the student to biosocial criminology, an emerging paradigm in the criminological discipline. Biosocial criminology encompasses several subfields that seek to unpack the association between genes, biology, the brain, the environment, and different types of antisocial behaviors. The course will unfold in three interrelated sections. The first part of the course will present an overview of some of the more popular criminological theories. During this portion of the class, we will discuss some of the reasons mainstream theorists have overlooked biosocial criminology. The second portion of the course will introduce students to concepts, findings, and theories germane to the biosocial focus. This part of the course presents research that will be new to most students. The final section of the course will consider the myriad ways in which biosocial research can and does inform theory and practice. In other words, we will discuss how biosocial research can be used to generate better theories and policies.

Reading

Required

1) Beaver, Kevin M. 2009. *Biosocial Criminology: A Primer*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. (ISBN-10: 0757558763)

2) Walsh, Anthony and Kevin M. Beaver. 2009. *Biosocial criminology: New directions in theory and research*. New York: Routledge. (ISBN: 9780415989442)

3) Research articles (see Course Schedule below)

Recommended

1) J. Robert Lilly, Francis T. Cullen, and Richard A. Ball. 2010. *Criminological theory: Context and consequences* (5th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2) Vito, Gennaro, and Jeffrey R. Maahs. 2012. *Criminology: Theory, research, and policy*. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett.

3) Vold, George B., Thomas J. Bernard, and Jeffrey B. Snipes. 2002. *Theoretical criminology* (5th Edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be determined based on your performance on two (2) examinations. The exams may contain a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Exams may also include essay questions. Each exam will be worth 50 points. Your final grade will be based on the sum of your scores on the two exams. More details will be provided as the examination dates approach. Grades will not be curved and I do not offer extra credit.

Grading Scale

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|----|---|----------|----|---|---------|---|---|--------|
| A+ | = | 97 - 100 | C+ | = | 77 - 79 | F | = | 0 - 59 |
| A | = | 93 - 96 | C | = | 73 - 76 | | | |
| A- | = | 90 - 92 | C- | = | 70 - 72 | | | |
| B+ | = | 87 - 89 | D+ | = | 67 - 69 | | | |
| B | = | 83 - 86 | D | = | 63 - 66 | | | |
| B- | = | 80 - 82 | D- | = | 60 - 62 | | | |

Course Policies

Attendance is required if you wish to receive a passing grade. If you miss a class, I strongly encourage you to borrow one of your classmate's notes and then talk with me if you need additional clarification. I do not provide students with my notes nor will I post notes/slides to the internet.

If you miss an exam you must: (1) notify me within 24 hours AND (2) provide me with an acceptable excuse. Note that I may request written documentation. If you do not follow this procedure you will receive a zero on the examination.

Technical Support & University Policies

If you experience any problems with your UTD account you may send an email to: assist@utdallas.edu or call the UTD Computer Helpdesk at 972-883-2911.

University policies can be viewed at: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

Part 1: Introduction

- 1/17 *Course overview & thinking like a scientist*
- 1/19-1/24 *Review of criminology theory & aversion to biosocial criminology*
 -Beaver Foreword & Chapter 1
 -Udry (1995)*

Part 2: Biosocial Criminology

- 1/26-1/31 *Development over the life course: childhood→adolescence*
 -Dobbs (2011)*
 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 1
- 2/2-2/7 *Development over the life course: adulthood*
- 2/9-2/14 *Intro to biosocial criminology & evolutionary psychology*
 -Walsh & Beaver Foreword, Preface, Chapter 1, & Chapter 5
- 2/16-2/21 *Biological Criminology*
 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 10
- 2/23 *Review*
- 2/28 **EXAM 1**
- 3/1-3/8 *Behavior genetics*
 -Beaver Chapter 2
 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 2
- 3/12-3/17 **SPRING BREAK**
- 3/20-3/29 *Molecular genetics*
 -Beaver Chapter 3
 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 3
- 4/3-4/10 *Gene-environment interplay*
 -Beaver Chapter 5
- 4/12-4/17 *The brain & neurotransmission*
 -Beaver Chapter 4
 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 11

Part 3: Theory, Policy, and Future Directions

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|-----------|--|
| 4/19-4/24 | <i>Integrating criminology with biosocial criminology</i> -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 4 |
| 4/26 | <i>Policy implications</i> -Beaver Chapters 6 & 8 -Walsh & Beaver Chapter 13 |
| 5/1 | <i>Future directions (epigenetics)</i> |
| 5/3 | <i>Review</i> |
| 5/10 | <u>FINAL EXAM (8am GR 2.302)</u> |

*Posted to eLearning

Note: This schedule is not a binding contract. I reserve the right to make changes at any time and it is your job to stay abreast of these changes.