Course Description

A life-course approach to the study of human behavior is an increasingly important perspective in social sciences. This approach has been applied to the study of criminal and delinquent behavior over the past 30 years. Unlike most traditional criminological theories and research, life course criminology is about systematically describing and explaining the onset, continuity, and change in criminal offending and its consequences across the life-span.

In this course we will first explore research that led to a life course perspective in criminology including a.) theoretical perspectives in sociology and developmental psychology; b.) empirical research on career criminals and criminal careers, and c.) longitudinal research design and its importance for studying how individuals change and persist in their criminal involvement. Second, we will dissect key life-course criminological theories that claim to account for onset, continuity, change, and desistance from criminal involvement. Third, we will discuss research on the various developmental stages, including genetics and biology, across the life course from early childhood to late adulthood. The course concludes by examining how this approach can be used to develop prevention and intervention strategies for crime.

Required Text


Note: Students will also be responsible for reading additional articles that I will assign and post on e-learning.
Course Objectives

The material covered in this course will facilitate the following objectives:

1. Understand the empirical distribution of criminal behavior and dimensions of criminal careers (e.g., onset, stability, and desistance

2. Understand the different developmental factors that influence criminal careers

3. Apply life-course concepts and terminology to criminal offending

4. Learn life-course theories of criminal behavior and the research that supports and refutes those theories

5. Explore the interconnectedness of behavioral trajectories, transitions and turning points across the life course

6. Understand how biological, neuropsychological, and genetic factors contribute to our understanding of criminal behavior

7. How context (e.g., neighborhood) shapes the development of offending behaviors.

8. Understand how prevention and intervention strategies can reduce the risk of antisocial and criminal behavioral trajectories

Most of the material you will encounter in this course will be new. I encourage you to read everything closely, maybe even more than once, and pay close attention in class, as some of the lectures will overlap with readings and others will not. Life-course criminology is a broad interdisciplinary perspective that encompasses research from many scientific domains. Further, some material presented in lecture will challenge your conception of human behavior, so be prepared.

Expectations

What can you expect from me?

* Be interested and passionate about the course and the material.
* Help you understand the applicability of criminal career and life-course research
* Challenge you to think about course topics
* Give you assistance when stumped or confused
* Start and end class on time.
What will I expect from you?

*Attend class and be on time.
*Be prepared for the lecture and ready to discuss material when called upon
*Finish reading assignments prior to class and take complete notes
*Complete all assignments on time

Policies and Suggestions for Course Success

1. You are expected to be here for each class and to participate frequently. Missing class can have an impact on your grade and, more importantly, on your understanding of the material.

2. Do not fall asleep, eat, smoke, chew tobacco, read other papers/books/newspapers, or do anything that is distracting to me or to others. Silence in response to questions is not acceptable.

3. Upon entering class all cell phones, ipods, earphones, MP3 players, and any text messaging devices should be silenced. Failure to do so will result in me asking you to leave the class and return the following class period.

4. It is each student’s responsibility to be familiar with the University of Florida’s policies and regulations, including those related to academic dishonesty. As for cheating of any sort, including plagiarism, make it easy on us all and DON'T DO IT!

5. Success in this course will be difficult without attending class on a regular basis. A substantial amount of research and theory presented in lecture will not be in the text book.

6. Finally, be respectful of your professor and student colleagues. Impulsively shouting out ideas and opinions will not be tolerated. If you want to share an insight, idea, or have a question please raise your hand and wait patiently. Expression of ideas will not be censored; however, be prepared to defend your position if asked to do so.

7. Make-up exams will not be allowed unless a student has a signed doctor’s note or a family emergency with documentation. The student must notify me within 24 hours of the scheduled exam via email. No other excuses will be accepted. If I allow a make-up the student will be scheduled to take the missed exam on the last day of the course when he/she takes the final exam. No make-ups for quizzes will be allowed.
Accommodations:

University of Florida is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action institution committed to providing reasonable accommodations for any person with a disability who meets the definition of disabled as described in the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you have a disability and require additional accommodations please see me.

Grading

Exam 1: 100 points
Exam 2: 100 points
Exam 3: 100 points
Quizzes: 5 /20 points a piece (100 points)

Total Points: 400 points

Random attendance extra credit: 10 points

Questions on exams will come from lecture notes and assigned readings from texts and articles. Moreover, the exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and true/false questions. The final exam will not be comprehensive.

It will be the professor’s discretion to announce quizzes. In other words, one quiz could be a “pop” quiz while the others are announced a class period before. In addition, quizzes can also be short, take-home writing assignments.

Roll will be taken randomly several times throughout the course. If you are present every time roll is taken you will receive 10 extra credit points (you must be in attendance all 5 times to receive these points).
Grading Scale

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