CCJ 6619: Crime and the Life-Course
Department of Sociology and Criminology & Law
University of Florida
Fall 2013

Professor: Chris L. Gibson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Criminology &
Research Foundation Professor
Office: Turlington Hall 3330
Office Hours: Tuesday 9:00am-11:00am
Email: clgibson@ufl.edu
Time: Wednesday, 1:55pm- 4:55pm
Room: Matherly 0119

Course Description

A life course perspective of human development for understanding behavioral continuity and change has become an important framework for studying criminal behavior. It has been applied to the study of criminal and antisocial behavior for the past 30 years. In this course, we will first explore the historical roots of the life course perspective that include theoretical works in sociology and developmental psychology, as well as research on career criminals and criminal careers. Second, we will focus on the collection of longitudinal panel data and the development of appropriate statistical methods for analyzing longitudinal data. Third, we will examine the relevant theory and research on various developmental stages pertaining to the outcomes of crime and antisocial behavior. The course concludes by examining how the life course perspective can inform intervention, prevention, and policy to reduce antisocial behavior.

No Required Textbooks

Required readings for this course are posted as pdf files on e-Learning.

Assignments

Reaction Papers:

Four times throughout the semester students will be required to type a 2-page paper that provides their own reaction to the assigned weekly readings. I DO NOT want students to simply summarize or regurgitate what the readings state. These assignments are designed for students to think critically about theory and research. Please do not take these assignments lightly, as they will be an important part of your final grade. Remember, I can summarize the articles myself and I already know the arguments made in the articles/book chapters, so give me something more than what I already know. REACTION PAPERS MUST BE EMAILED TO ME 24 HOURS BEFORE THE START OF OUR WEEKLY CLASS SESSION. IF YOU FAIL TO DO YOU WILL BE ASSIGNED A ZERO FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.
Leading and Participating in Discussions:

I expect students to play an important role in leading and participating in scholarly discourse. Students will be matched with one or two peers and will lead discussions. Leading discussion requires the discussant to identify major points in the readings and develop questions around those points. Below are a few suggestions:

1. You are NOT lecturing, but rather leading a discussion. Leading discussion is not a test of your knowledge and you do not need to know the answers to questions you ask.

2. Read critically and make sure you try to bring out major themes in the readings. You should decide for yourself what you think is important from the readings.

3. Before class prepare a list of questions that will help bring out important themes and major points from the assigned readings.

4. Try to ask questions that require more complex answers that will lead to more discussion rather than asking questions that may have only one correct answer.

5. If conflicting views or controversy emerges don’t try to smooth over it! Ask the students (or professors!) to define their positions and leave time for rebuttal. Also, don’t feel as if you must resolve the controversy, instead try have those with opposing positions achieve clarity of points they are making.

6. If you are not leading the discussion, then you are responsible for actively participating in the discussion.

7. Don’t panic! A discussion is an exchange of ideas!

Mid-Term Exam:

Your mid-term exam will mimic a comprehensive exam question. Students will be asked to answer a question that requires them to show mastery of theory and research covered up to the point of the mid-term exam. The answer will be a 10 page double spaced essay (excluding citations). I will allow 3 days to complete the essay. This means that you must have a very good understanding of the material covered during the first half of the semester when you sit to write this mid-term, and you must be very organized. We will discuss the structure for the mid-term at a later date.

Examples of two questions that have been used on the Tool Comprehensive Exam can be found below (the mid-term question will be an original question that I create from the readings you have had for this course up to the point of the mid term):

1. Most theories of crime have not incorporated biological explanations into their primary set of propositions. In turn, biosocial research has been criticized for being a perspective and not a theory. To be sure, we now have compelling evidence that genetics exert a non-trivial influence on criminal behavior. With this in mind, please address the following:
a. Choose and discuss one criminological theory that is a candidate for incorporating findings from genetic research and why you think this to be the case (cite relevant studies).

b. Provide a review of the genetic studies (molecular and behavior genetic studies) related to the particular theory you identify and why the genetic studies would be relevant.

c. Develop and discuss three genetically informed propositions that could be incorporated into the identified theory that would result in testable hypotheses.

2. Research results function to inform criminological theory. Results may be particularly important in continuing to entertain a theory, in suggesting we should no longer pursue a theory, or in suggesting ways to modify the theory.

   a. Please identify three research results dating back to no earlier than 1993 that are especially important to our theoretical understanding of crime (make sure to cite relevant studies).

   b. Describe the research that produced each of these results and provide a thorough exposition of the results (make sure to cite relevant studies).

   c. Then discuss why these results are especially important in terms of what they should suggest for the theory(ies) and what the actual consequences of the reporting of those results were for theory development (make sure to cite relevant studies).

Grant Proposal or Quantitative Research Paper:

Students are required to write a grant proposal that centers on a life-course criminology research question(s) or an empirical research paper that includes an original quantitative analysis to address a research question related to life course criminology.

Students choosing to write a research proposal will follow guideline provided for the National Institute of Justice graduate dissertation fellowship. Below you can find links to the Request for Proposals (RFP), which will clarify guidelines, criteria, etc. I will provide students with example proposals.

Importantly, I must approve proposal ideas and research question before students begin their projects.

Proposal or paper topics should be identified and a statement of the research question along with a problem statement must be sent to me via email by week 5. THIS IS NOT OPTIONAL.

Below are the criteria in which your proposal will be graded and evaluated:

Understanding of the problem and its importance
1. Clarity of problem statement.
2. Awareness of relevant research.
3. Connection between proposed research and problem.

Quality and technical merit
1. Awareness of the state of current research or technology.
2. Soundness of methodology and analytic and technical approach.
3. Feasibility of proposed project and awareness of pitfalls.
4. Innovation and creativity (when appropriate).

Impact of the proposed project
1. Potential for significant advances in scientific or technical understanding of problem.
2. Potential for significant advances in the field.
3. Relevance for improving the policy and practice of criminal justice and related agencies and improving public safety, security, and quality of life.

Grading

Four Weekly Reaction Papers: 100 points (25 per paper)
Leading /Participating in Discussion: 100 points
Mid-Term Comp Essay: 200 points
Proposal: 600 points

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1000 points

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A 100-92</td>
<td>(1000 to 915 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A - 91-90</td>
<td>(914 to 895 points)</td>
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<td>B + 89-88</td>
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<td>B 87-82</td>
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<td>B - 81-80</td>
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<td>F 59 or below</td>
<td>(594 and below)</td>
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## Tentative Course Outline

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week # 1 (Aug. 24)</th>
<th>Introduction to life course criminology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week # 2 (Aug. 31)</td>
<td>Why should a life-course perspective be used to understand human behavior?</td>
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### Required Readings:

### Week # 3 (Sept. 7) | Research that set the stage for life-course criminology? |

### Required Readings:

### Week # 4 (Sept. 14) | Exploring continuity and change in antisocial behavior |

### Required Readings:


Week # 5 (Sept. 21)  Moffitt’s Dual Taxonomy / Sampson and Laub’s-Age Graded Theory

Required Reading:


Week # 6 (Sept. 28)  Life-Course Research Methods I: Basics of Longitudinal Data and Research

Required Reading:
TBA

Week # 7 (Oct. 5)  Life-Course Research Methods !!: Group Based Trajectory Analysis

Required Reading:


Special Issue: Developmental Criminology and Its Discontents: Trajectories of Crime from Childhood to Old Age (Section 2, pp. 82-154). The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science

**Week # 8 (Oct. 12)  **Life Course Research Methods III: Individual Growth Curve Analysis

**Required Readings:**

TBA

**Week # 9 (Oct. 19)  **Introduction to Biosocial Research and Pre/Perinatal Insults

**Required Readings:**


**Week # 10 (Oct. 26)  **Behavioral and Molecular Genetics: How do genes help us understand environmental Influence on Behavior?

**Readings:**


**Week # 11 (Nov. 2) Are individual differences in early childhood irrelevant?**

**Required Readings:**


**Week #12 (Nov. 9)  Emerging Adolescents: Socialization and Emerging Adolescence: How and When Do Parents and Peers matter?**

*Required Readings:*


**Week #13 (Nov. 16)  ASC MEETINGS (NO CLASS)   Possibly reschedule**

**Week #14 (Nov. 23)  THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)   Possibly reschedule**

**Week #15 (Nov. 30)  Transitioning to Adulthood and Desistance**

*Required Readings:*


Week # 16 (Dec. 7) Should a life-course perspective be used for Intervention and Prevention?

Required Readings:


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FINAL PROPOSAL OR PAPER DUE DATE: December 8th by 5pm (MUST EMAIL COPY OF PROPOSAL to clgibson@ufl.edu)