



PSYC/SOC 249 - Criminal Behavior

Course Syllabus
Spring Semester 2026

Instructor: Professor Julia Rogers

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: None

Course Description

Crime comes in many different forms and has been known since the beginning of humankind. The questions raised after every crime are stable over time: **when, where, who, how** and, most important, **why**. This course tries to give an answer by analyzing theories of crime, physiological and psychological models of criminal behavior, crime and mental disorders, human aggression and violent crimes, cybercrimes and other specific offenses. Students will learn how to profile offenders based on their actions, identify risk factors in human development and propose crime prevention policies. Students are required to develop critical thinking skills when analyzing case studies by using the theoretical material learned in class.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measures
<i>By the end of course students will be able to:</i>	<i>Course requirements that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome</i>
<i>Summarize and compare</i> the main theories of crime.	Midterm and Final Exams
<i>Apply</i> the main theories of crime to analyze cases and develop and support arguments.	Case Study Presentations and small group work
<i>Present</i> a clinical case study and understand the use of case presentations in solving crimes.	Case Study Presentations

<i>Deconstruct</i> a case study and <i>evaluate</i> the relevance of the measures described in relation to crime prevention.	Small group work and class discussions
<i>Communicate effectively</i> psychological profiles using oral formats.	Case Study Presentations
<i>Recognize</i> socio-cultural and international diversity of criminal behaviors.	Small group work and class discussions

Course Materials

The readings, assignments and other course materials are available on the course's Moodle site.

Assessment

Attendance	10%
Weekly Moodle Quizzes	15 %
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15 %
Case Study Presentations	30%
Course Journal	10%
Office Hours	5%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following components:

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. If you attend all the meetings, you will receive 10% of your grade. There are no make-ups for missed attendance.

Quizzes (15%)

Students will be assigned a short Moodle quiz every week, which will be due before the next class begins. The quizzes will help students learn and work with the most important concepts in the course. Students can take each quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive.

Midterm Exam (15%)

Students will take a midterm exam covering the material presented in the first half of the course. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions and be given during class time. See Moodle for a full prompt.

Final Exam (15%)

Students will take a final exam covering all of the material presented during the course. It will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions and be given during class time. See Moodle for a full prompt.

Case Study Presentations (30%)

Students will choose a criminal and prepare a case study consisting of: (i) a psychological profile based on the relevant predisposing and precipitating factors; (ii) explanations for why the offending behavior may have developed using theories of crime and research in the field; and (iii) proposed interventions aimed at preventing the behavior in others. The case studies will have a written component, including references in the APA style, and a presentation component where the students will communicate the psychological profiles and theoretical arguments to the class, answer questions, and lead a discussion. **The case studies will be presented in Week 12. Students will submit an outline in Week 8, a first draft in Week 10, and a final draft in Week 11.** The grade will be based on all three submissions and the class presentation. A full prompt will be given on Moodle.

Course Journal (10%)

Students will need a notebook at the start of the semester, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas; alternately, they can use a Google doc or Word document for these entries. Journal assignments will be given throughout the semester and the entries will be checked twice, once before the mid-semester break (Week 6) and again at the end of the course (Week 12). Each check is worth 5% of your grade, for a total of 10%. See the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

Office Hours (5%)

Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with them and therefore more likely to ask for help. It is also a chance to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 5% of your grade for coming to office hours at least once by Week 9.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment except for the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform her of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As with all policies, exceptions may be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused "sick days" and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may

result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class. Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class.

Computers and other electronic devices (for example, earbuds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation. An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distractions (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, there is a physical notebook policy; i.e. leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook during class. There are four

exceptions: 1) if you have a vision or other accommodation; 2) if you are using a tablet to take notes and it is not connected to the internet; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools; or 4) if you make an office hours appointment with the instructor to discuss the use of a computer.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Meeting 1: Introduction to the course

Meeting 2: Laws and crimes

Readings for the week:

1. Walsh, A. & Jorgensen, C. (2014). *Criminology* (pp. 1-8). Sage Publications.
2. Bartol, C.R. & Bartol, A.M. (2017). *Criminology, a Psychological Approach* (pp. 34-45). Pearson.

Assignment

Week 2 readings

Quiz

WEEK 2

CRIMINOLOGY AND THE ORIGINS OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Meeting 1: Overview of criminology

Meeting 2: Origins of criminal behavior

Readings for the week:

3. Bartol & Bartol, *Criminology, a Psychological Approach*, "Introduction to Criminal Behavior" (pp. 23-34).
4. Walsh & Jorgensen, *Criminology*, "Overview of Crime and Criminology" (pp. 11-20, 162-177).

Assignment

Week 3 readings

Quiz

WEEK 3

SOCIAL THEORIES OF CRIME

Meeting 1: Social Structure TOC

Meeting 2: Social Learning TOC

Readings for the week:

5. Walsh & Jorgensen, *Criminology*, "Social Structural Theories" (pp. 103-120).
6. Bartol & Bartol, *Criminology, a Psychological Approach*, "Learning and Situational Factors" (pp. 105-116).

Assignment:

Week 4 readings

Quiz

WEEK 4
GENERAL THEORIES OF CRIME

Meeting 1: Rational Choice TOC

Meeting 2: Social Control TOC

Readings for the week:

7. Walsh & Jorgensen, *Criminology*, "Crime as Choice" (pp. 83-89).
8. Pratt, T. C., Gau, J. M., & Franklin, T. W. (2011). Key Idea: Hirschi's Social Bond/Social Control Theory. *Key Ideas in Criminology and Criminal Justice* (pp. 57-60, 64-67). Sage Publications.
9. Sampson, R. J., and Laub, J.H. (2010). *Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control* (pp. 3-13). Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory.

Assignment:

Week 5 readings

Quiz

WEEK 5
DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES OF CRIME

Meeting 1: Developmental risk factors

Meeting 2: Developmental TOC

Readings for the week:

10. Bartol & Bartol, *Criminology, a Psychological Approach*, "Developmental Risk Factors" (pp. 50-80);
"Developmental Theories of Delinquency" (pp. 173-181).

Assignment:

Week 6 readings

Quiz

WEEK 6
MIDTERM REVIEW AND EXAM

Meeting 1: Midterm review

Meeting 2: Midterm Exam, Case Study Presentations introduction

Readings for the week:

11. Paternoster, B. *et al.* (1997). Multiple Routes to Delinquency? A test of Developmental and General Theories of Crime. *Criminology*, 35(1), 49-76.

Assignment:

First course journal check

Week 7 readings

Semester Break

WEEK 7

OFFENDER PROFILING AND CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATIONS

Meeting 1: Offender profiling

Meeting 2: Crime scene investigations

Readings for the week:

12. Douglas, J. E., Burgess, A. W., Burgess, A. G., & Ressler, R. K. (Eds.). (1992). *Crime Classification Manual* (pp. 11-37). Lexington Books/Macmillan.
13. Torres, A. N., Boccaccini, M. T., & Miller, H. A. (2015). Perceptions of the validity and utility of criminal profiling among forensic psychologists and psychiatrists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 37(1), 51–58.

Assignment:

Week 8 readings

Quiz

WEEK 8

AGGRESSION, VIOLENCE AND MURDER

Meeting 1: Aggression and violence

Meeting 2: Murder

Readings for the week:

14. Bartol & Bartol, *Criminology, a Psychological Approach*, “Human Aggression and Violence” (pp. 144-155).
15. Lankford, A., Silver, J., & Cox, J. (2021). An epidemiological analysis of public mass shooters and active shooters: Quantifying key differences between perpetrators and the general population, homicide offenders, and people who die by suicide. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 8(4), 125–144.

Assignment:

Outline of Case Study Presentations due

Week 9 readings

Quiz

WEEK 9

SERIAL KILLERS

Meeting 1: Serial killers I

Meeting 2: Serial killers II

Readings for the week:

16. Miller, L. (2014). Serial killers: I. subtypes, patterns, and motives. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19(1), 1-11.
17. Miller, L. (2014). Serial killers: II. development, dynamics, and forensics. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 19(1), 12- 22.

Assignment:

Week 10 readings

Quiz

WEEK 10
MODERN CHALLENGES IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Meeting 1: The internet and sexual offending

Meeting 2: Climate change and crime

Readings for the week:

18. Fisico, R. & Harkins, L. (2021). Technology and Sexual Offending. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 23(9), 59.

19. Agnew, R. (2012). Dire forecast: A theoretical model of the impact of climate change on crime. *Theoretical Criminology*, 16(1) 21-42.

Assignment:

First draft of Case Study Presentations due

Week 11 readings

Quiz

WEEK 11
APPLYING COURSE CONCEPTS

Meeting 1: No class - Pasquetta

Meeting 2: Documentary

Assignment:

Final draft of Case Study Presentations due

WEEK 12
CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS

Meeting 1: Case Study Presentations

Meeting 2: Case Study Presentations

Assignment:

Final course journal check

WEEK 13
COURSE REVIEW, FINAL EXAM

Meeting 1: Course review

Meeting 2: Final Exam