

**Doctoral Qualifying Examination
Theory Exam
Department of Criminology**

Spring 2017

Exam Rules:

The student's personal items will be kept in the office of the graduate director during the exam. The student will be provided with a writing pad, computer, pen, and exam.

During the examination period of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., the student must not utilize any outside resources. The student may not confer with any people or refer to any books, articles, etc. Students are on their honor to produce their own work on their exams. The University subscribes to a document-checking service that can be used to assess plagiarism; the Department of Criminology reserves the right to submit any examination to this service for evaluation.

Responses to exam questions may be typed; student should double-space and use a 12-point font. Students who use computers will save their exam as a single MS Word document to the notebook computer provided by the Graduate Director.

Students may not withdraw from the exam after receiving it; if the student does not complete and turn in the exam, it will be recorded as a failure. Exam responses must be submitted to the Exam Proctor by 5 p.m.

Security: The exam computers have been stripped. The computers were checked before the exam. All non-program file were removed, Internet access has been blocked, and the computers were locked up until exam time.

After the exam, the computers will be checked to determine if any flash drive has been inserted or if the internet has been accessed. **DO NOT ACCESS THE INTERNET FOR ANY REASON.** The Graduate Director will have visual/audio contact with the room for the exam period.

There is a single Word file on the desktop with the exam. Write your answers IN that document (which includes the exam questions). You, your computer and your exam have a number that identifies you. Do not change the name of the file; do not include your name IN the exam file. You may print to the printer in SOC 351.

When you are finished, submit your completed exam to the Graduate Director.

Exam Instructions: You must pick at 4 questions from the 8 questions listed below.

In total, you will answer 4 questions. For each, write an essay the scientific style of which resembles that found in scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Students should provide in-text citations to the best of their abilities; a reference list is not required. There are no minimum or maximum page limits.

- 1) Criminologists have historically examined the causes of crime by focusing on explaining why some individuals commit crime and others do not. This type of approach has produced between-individual comparisons that have empirically identified a number of key correlates of crime (sex, race, personality, family background, and so on). Notwithstanding these theoretical and empirical contributions, an alternative developmental/life-course criminology tradition has recently emerged. What are the theoretical origins of life-course criminology? What does it offer that is missed by traditional criminology? The biggest critics of life-course criminology are Gottfredson and Hirschi. What is the thrust of their criticism? What is your position regarding Gottfredson and Hirschi's criticisms of developmental/life-course criminology?
- 2) When students are asked to discuss "subcultural" theories of crime, they usually dredge up theorists like Walter B. Miller, Lloyd Ohlin, Richard Cloward, and maybe even Franco Ferracuti and Marvin Wolfgang. There seems, however, to have been a recent renaissance in subcultural theory in the study of crime. This new thinking has primarily come from Elijah Anderson and Sampson & Bartusch. Compare and contrast the classic and contemporary subcultural theories. What improvements/refinements—either conceptually or empirically—have these contemporary subcultural theorists made over the years? Do you think these contemporary subcultural theories hold promise? Why or why not?
- 3) Discuss thoroughly the criteria used to evaluate the quality of criminological theories for explaining crime/criminal victimization and detail why each of these criteria produce stronger theories. Which current macro-social criminological theory do you believe does the best job and which does the worst job of meeting those criteria. Thoroughly defend your answer to those who would disagree with you.
- 4) Criminology theorizing is criticized for being male-centered and unable to account for female experiences (including participation in crime and delinquency). Briefly summarize the main points of this critique and assess the empirical evidence around these claims. Also describe and evaluate one theory in particular that purports to account for gender *similarities* in crime and another theory that purports to account for gender *differences* in crime. Discuss the implications of your evaluation for future theory and research.
- 5) Deterrence theory and labeling theory offer two contradictory positions on the effects of legal punishment. Please describe these two positions and, for each one, provide a comprehensive review of the empirical evidence and assess which theory most accurately captures the effects of legal punishments.

- 6) Compare and contrast the anomie theories of Durkheim, Merton, and Messner & Rosenfeld.
- 7) Describe the historical development of social learning theory, including its origins in differential association theory. What elements of differential association theory are retained in social learning theory and in what ways has social learning theory extended or elaborated upon the original differential association theory? Cite relevant research that supports and/or refutes the theoretical elaborations provided by the social learning model and draw a conclusion whether social learning theory has made a substantive contribution to the explanation of crime beyond that provided by differential association theory.
- 8) Control theory has undergone several changes, especially since Hirschi's (1969) proposal and test of "social bonding" theory. Describe in detail the evolution of control theory since 1969 and highlight the similarities and differences among the various iterations of this theoretical tradition. Finally, evaluate the degree to which this evolution in control theory has produced meaningful improvement, from both a logical and empirical standpoint, in our understanding of crime and delinquency.