

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

Fall 2015

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.¹

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 computers have been stripped. After the fact, 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.

¹ The exam computers are checked before the exam. All non-program files are removed, Internet access is blocked, and the computers are locked up until exam time. After the exam, software is used to detect use of USB ports.

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) Select one of the following types of crimes: intimate partner violence, serious and violent juvenile offending, drug offending, white-collar crime, or homicide. Choose one criminological theory that you believe best explains the type of crime you selected and discuss why you consider it to be the best explanation. Illustrate in detail how the theory you selected accounts for this crime and cite relevant research that supports your argument.

2) 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.

3) Developmental/life-course criminology has witnessed substantial growth in the recent years. Two of the more recognized theoretical frameworks are that of Moffitt (1993) and Sampson and Laub (1993). Specifically, Moffitt (1993) has provided a typology where she describes adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent offenders. Comparatively, Sampson and Laub (1993) have proposed an age-graded theory of informal social control. For this essay, (a) discuss the central propositions of each of the two theoretical frameworks, (b) highlight the distinctions between the two, (c) review the evidence in support of or against their central propositions, and (d) indicate which one of these theoretical frameworks you think is most promising as an explanation for crime.

Moffitt, T.E. (1993). Adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100, 674-701.

Sampson, R.J., & Laub, J. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

4) 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.

5) General theories of crime tend to ignore the importance of crime correlates widely reported in the criminological research literature. More specifically, general theories do not address, nor have they been modified to examine, variations in crime that related to gender, race or social class – three factors which have been established as major crime correlates. Examine how race, class and gender might be incorporated into one of the general theories listed below, why this would be an improvement, and whether or not significant theoretical refinements might be required. Moreover, if such theoretical modifications are needed, can it still be claimed that the theory is a general theory?

General strain theory
Social bonding/control
Self-control
Social learning

Developmental
Control balance
Life-course

6) The U.S. experienced dramatic reductions in crime during the 1990s. Describe the theory or theories that are most useful for explaining this drop. Then review the empirical research that has been conducted on this issue and assess the extent to which it supports the relevant theories.

7) Different criminological theories—even those from very different intellectual traditions—often agree on what variables are statistically associated with one another. The disagreements between different theories often relate to their interpretations of those correlations. As an example of this issue, discuss the positive correlation between past and future offending, and then describe in detail two different theories' competing interpretation of this correlation. For each theory, give a thorough explanation of its interpretation, being sure to show how this interpretation fits within its overall explanation of involvement in crime. Then, to conclude, indicate which interpretation most accurately describes the association between these two variables and describe relevant research.

8) A successful theory must meet both theoretical and empirical standards. In some detail, highlight the theoretical and empirical elements of a good theory. Which criminological theory does the best job of meeting these standards? What current criminological theory fails to meet these standards? Justify your answers to those who would disagree.