

**Doctoral Qualifying Examination
Department of Criminology
Spring 2013**

Theories of Crime

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, grading information, and exam.

During the examination period from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, 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 hand write their exams; the student will type up his/her own exam after the fact and a staff person will do a side-by-side check to make sure the typed version matches the handwritten one. The committee will receive both the typed and hand-written copy.

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 graduate director by 5 p.m.

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 done. Bring the computer and cord to me in my office.

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.

Pick any four of the following 8 questions. For each, write an essay the scientific style of which resembles that found in scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Provide in-text citations to the best of your ability; a reference list is not required. There are no minimum or maximum page limits. Be sure to consider the grading rubric as you write your responses.

1. Sampson has argued that 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

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.

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 the Gottfredson and Hirschi and Sampson and Laub debate?

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. Theories of criminality have been faulted on the basis that they appear to have little to do with many forms of white-collar and corporate criminality. Using examples of individual white-collar offending and organizational lawbreaking: 1) Explain which theories best account for these forms of crime; and 2) Which major theories are most lacking and in which ways? Be sure to delineate the basic tenets of the theories you discuss, what the theory is and is not able to explain, and your own assessment of the theory as it relates to white-collar and corporate criminality.
4. There is now a sizable literature seeking to understand the victim/offender overlap. Which theoretical framework(s) best explain(s) the above association? Please cite relevant literature and research. Identify and discuss at least one research topic where the theoretical framework you selected has difficulty or otherwise falls short in accounting for the overlap between victimization and offending. Identify a theory that you believe is poorly suited to explaining the victim/overlap and explain why.
5. 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.
6. Contemporary social disorganization theory identifies several structural correlates of crime rates across communities but acknowledges that additional factors mediate the relationship between these structural factors and crime. Discuss in detail both the exogenous structural conditions of disorganization necessary for crime as well as the factors that mediate the effects of disorganization on crime rates. Review the research that tests the relationships proposed by contemporary social disorganization theory and take a position on whether or not variation in crime rates across communities can be explained by variation in the community’s level of disorganization. Be sure to defend your answer thoroughly.
7. A growing body of research suggests that genetic factors play an important role in the etiology of criminal behavior. Briefly summarize what we have learned to-date about the link between genes and crime, describe the theoretical processes thought to explain this link, and discuss the implications of the existing empirical evidence for individual-level theories that omit genetic differences.
8. Some criminologists argue that differences in neighborhood crime rates simply represent the tendency for individuals with certain social, psychological, and demographic characteristics to live in different parts of the city. From this perspective, it is not necessary to consider the role of neighborhood structures and dynamics at all, for they are simply aggregated proxies for processes that actually unfold at the individual level. That is, for example, observed relationships between the level of community deprivation and the crime rate actually represent the relationships between the economic status of individuals and the level of their criminal involvement. Do you agree or disagree with this proposition, and what theoretical and empirical evidence can you provide to support your position?