THEORY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM:
READING LIST AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING

June 2016

The comprehensive examination builds on the ideas covered and readings assigned in the two required Theory courses in our Department’s Ph.D. program curriculum. Importantly, the criminology comprehensive exam is not merely a test of what students may have learned in these two courses. Rather, the comprehensive examination includes an understanding of the readings covered in these courses in addition to a test of the integration of knowledge drawn from other graduate courses taken in our Department and readings conducted outside of course work.

Students are expected to read, understand, and include in their responses tests of theories that have been undertaken as well as classic and contemporary readings on the theories themselves (i.e., their assumptions, modifications, extensions, etc.). These responses should be informed by literature drawn from books and academic journals. Beyond the reading materials from the two required Theory courses, students must also examine the main journals in the field over the past five years to find and then read articles that assess the theories of crime. Although not exhaustive, these journals are: Criminology, Justice Quarterly, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, and Social Forces. Other journals that should be examined are: Crime and Delinquency, Journal of Criminal Justice, Criminal Justice & Behavior; Deviant Behavior, and Theoretical Criminology.

When studying, students should be able to integrate theory and research. Students are expected to know the “empirical status” of each theory; that is, to what extent do existing research studies support each theory? More specific, it is important that students know the theories accurately (e.g., what the theory argues; how theorists within a tradition differ from one another; how a theory has developed and changed over time; what are the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, possible linkages to policy, issues surrounding the theory, etc.). In addition, students should be knowledgeable of the major points or conclusions that can be drawn from existing studies. Further, in conveying an answer, an effort must be made to discuss research studies in detail (e.g., the sample and measures used, specific findings, the reason why the study illuminates an important aspect about the theory). While textbooks can aid in providing a base understanding of theory, do not rely or heavily cite textbooks on theory as sources, rather cite the original work or research.

Below is a listing of readings covered in Theory I and Theory II, grouped by area and by theoretical perspective. Again, the list is a guide and is not exhaustive; as detailed above, you are expected to supplement the readings by incorporating reading and research from outside the two classes. You should have already read the material listed below from taking the two theory courses. In preparing for the comprehensive examination students should re-read these materials in order to obtain a better grasp of each theory, issues associated with the theory, etc. and then elaborate by incorporating research not covered in the class, but can be found in material from other courses and material from reviews of the journals listed above in addition to any others that have recent and relevant theory tests.
Reading Reference List

Books


Elements of Theory/Policy Making: How Relevant is Criminology?


**Measurement of Crime**


**Classical and Positive Traditions in Criminology**


Rational Choice, Deterrence, Linkage to Policy


Routine Activities/Life Style Theory


Biological/Bio-Social Perspectives


**Merton- Structural Strain**


**Institutional Anomie Strain**


**General Strain Theory**


**Crime as Learned Behavior**


**Subcultural Explanations**


Be also familiar with Wolfgang and Ferracuti’s (1958) subculture of violence perspective and related research

**Social Disorganization Theory**


Suggested reading: Anything by Robert Sampson, John Hipp, Robert Bursik

**Social Control Theory**


**Self-Control Theory/Redefined**


**Situation Action Theory**

Symbolic Interaction/Labeling and Societal Reaction Theory


Reintegrative Shaming


Developmental and Life Course Approaches to Crime


Suggested readings: Work by Piquero, Farrington, Jennings, Paternoster, Nagin, Elder, Loeber

**Conflict/Critical Criminology/Radical Theory**


**Theory Development, Theory Integration, Theory Elaboration**


