

CLJ 597c – Approaches to Theory Testing in Criminology

Professor: Derek Kreager
Office: 904 Oswald
Office Hours: T 1:00-2:00 or by appointment
Email: dkreager@psu.edu
Phone: 867-0217

Class Location: 406 Oswald
Class Hours: M 1:25-4:25

COURSE OVERVIEW

What makes a scientific study interesting and/or important? How do advances in study design, measurement, methodological sophistication, and sampling contribute to our understanding of crime and delinquency? In this course, we will critically examine the innovative strategies that researchers take to test theory and push the field forward. With prominent and recent scholarly examples, we will discuss the feasibility and relevance of the various approaches and their applicability to graduate research. The goals of the course will be to (1) understand the current empirical status of influential criminological theories, (2) evaluate the relative contributions of theory-testing studies, and (3) connect theory-testing approaches to one's own research agenda and current projects.

REQUIRED READINGS

Kubrin, Charis, Thomas Stucky, and Marvin Krohn. 2009. *Researching Theories of Crime and Deviance*. New York, NY: Oxford Press.

Articles available on-line, via e-mail, or photocopied and placed in Oswald 211.

GRADING

There are five evaluation areas in this course:

Research Paper	50%
Research Paper Presentation	10%
Seminar Leadership	20%
Seminar Participation	10%
Mock Journal Reviews	10%
Total	100%

Final grades are based upon the following scale: A = 93-100; A- = 90-92.9; B+ = 87-89.9; B = 83-86.9; B- = 80-83.9; C+ = 75-79.9; C = 70-74.9; D = 60-69.9; and F = 59.9 and below.

Research Paper: You will be required to complete a seminar paper related to one of the areas covered in the course. The paper should be approximately 15-20 pages, double-spaced. You are encouraged, but not required, to include data analyses and results in your paper. At the least, you should identify a data source and method appropriate for your research question. A one-page abstract is due on March 2nd, and the final paper is due on April 20th. In addition, you will provide a 10-15 minute presentation of your paper on the final class period, April 27th.

Seminar Leadership: You each will sign up to lead three class discussions during the semester. The seminar leaders will play a large role in guiding and facilitating each week's discussion. Each leader should develop at least five questions related to the week's readings and the overarching topic. These questions will be distributed to the class at least one day prior to the class meeting. I will be available the week prior to the class period to develop an outline of topics and to answer any questions prior to the seminar.

Seminar Participation: The success of the class will depend on lively discussions and the sharing of ideas, so we all should come to the seminar having completed the readings and ready to contribute our thoughts. Along with the questions provided by the seminar leaders, everyone should come to class prepared to discuss the (1) feasibility, (2) general interest and social importance, and (3) scientific relevance of the week's block of readings.

Mock Journal Reviews: A central goal of this course will be evaluating the relative contributions of various research approaches and empirical studies. An important aspect of an academic career is to evaluate the contributions of submitted manuscripts as part of the blind journal review process. To help socialize you to this role, I will provide an array of my prior reviews and ask you to be blind reviewers for your classmates' papers. I will then perform the duties of the editor to consolidate the recommendations and provide my own summary report.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1/12 Introduction and Overview

- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1968. Chapter Two: The Logic of Scientific Inference. Pp. 15-56 in *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

1/19 The Gold Standard – Experimental Designs

- Kling, Jeffrey, Jens Ludwig, and Lawrence Katz. 2005. "Neighborhood Effects on Crime for Female and Male Youth: Evidence from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(1):87-130.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5):937-75.
- Nagin, Daniel and Greg Pogarsky. 2003. "An Experimental Test of Deterrence: Cheating, Self-Serving Bias, and Impulsivity." *Criminology* 41(1):168-184.
- Duncan, Greg J., Johanne Boisjoly, Michael Kremer, Dan M. Levy, and Jacque Eccles. 2005. "Peer Effects in Drug Use and Sex among College Students." *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 33(3):375-385.
- Sherman, Lawrence and Heather Strang. 2004. "Verdicts or Inventions? Interpreting Results from Randomized Controlled Experiments in Criminology." *American Behavioral Scientist* 47(5):575-607.

1/26 My Theory is Better than Yours – Crucial Tests in Criminology

- Lyons, Christopher. 2007. "Community (Dis)Organization and Racially Motivated Crime." *American Journal of Sociology* 113(3):815-63.
- Lafree, Gary and Andromachi Tseloni . 2006. "Democracy and Crime: A Multilevel Analysis of Homicide Trends in Forty-Four Countries, 1950-2000." *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 605(1):25-49.
- Kreager, Derek. 2007. "Unnecessary Roughness? School Sports, Peer Networks, and Male Adolescent Violence." *American Sociological Review* 72(5):705-724.
- Wright, Bradley, Avshalom Caspi, Terrie Moffitt, and Phil Silva. 1999. "Low Self-Control, Social Bonds, and Crime: Social Causation, Social Selection, or Both?" *Criminology* 37(3):479-514.
- Alarid, Leanne, Velmer Burton, and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "Gender and Crime among Felony Offenders: Assessing the Generality of Social Control and Differential Association Theories." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 37(2):171-199.

2/2 Testing Invariance – Conditional Effects and Subpopulation Analyses

- Steffensmeier, Darrell and Dana Haynie. 2000. "Gender, Structural Disadvantage, and Urban Crime: Do Macrosocial Variables Also Explain Female Offending Rates?" *Criminology* 38(2):403-438.

- Krivo, Lauren J. and Ruth D. Peterson. 2000. "The Structural Context of Homicide: Accounting for Racial Differences in Process." *American Sociological Review* 65(4):547-559.
- McNulty, Thomas L. and Paul E. Bellair. 2003. "Explaining Racial and Ethnic Differences in Adolescent Violence: Structural Disadvantage, Family Well-Being, and Social Capital." *Justice Quarterly* 20(1):1-31.
- Kreager, Derek A., Ross L. Matsueda, and Elena Erosheva. "Motherhood and Criminal Desistance in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods." Unpublished Manuscript.
- Villarreal, Andres and Braulio Silva. 2006. "Social Cohesion, Criminal Victimization and Perceived Risk of Crime in Brazilian Neighborhoods." *Social Forces* 84(3):1725-1753.

2/9 Testing Theory with Unique Data

- Haynie, Dana and Danielle Payne. 2006. "Race, Friendship Networks, and Violent Delinquency." *Criminology* 44(4):775-805.
- Behrens, Angela, Christopher Uggen, and Jeff Manza. 2003. "Ballot Manipulation and 'Menace of Negro Domination': Racial Threat and Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States, 1850-2002." *American Journal of Sociology* 109(3):559-605.
- Sampson, Robert J. and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1999. "Systematic Social Observation of Public Spaces: A New Look at Disorder in Urban Neighborhoods." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(3):603-651.
- Bridges, George and Sarah Steen. 1998. "Racial Disparities in Official Assessments of Juvenile Offenders: Attributional Stereotypes as Mediating Mechanisms." *American Sociological Review* 63(4):554-570.
- Slocum, Lee Ann, Sally Simpson, and Douglas Smith. 2005. "Strained Lives and Crime: Examining Intra-Individual Variation in Strain and Offending in a Sample of Incarcerated Women." *Criminology* 43(4):1067-1110.

2/16 The Cult of Methodology – Advanced Methods for Causal Inference

- King, Ryan, Michael Massoglia, and Ross Macmillan. 2007. "The Context of Marriage and Crime: Gender, the Propensity to Marry, and Offending in Early Adulthood." *Criminology* 45(1):33-65.
- Apel, Robert, Shawn Bushway, Raymond Paternoster, Robert Brame and Gary Sweeten. 2008. "Using State Child Labor Laws to Identify the Causal Effect of Youth Employment on Deviant Behavior and Academic Achievement." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 24(4):337-362.
- Uggen, Christopher and Melissa Thompson. 2003. "The Socioeconomic Determinants of Ill-Gotten Gains: Within-Person Changes in Drug Use and Illegal Earnings." *American Journal of Sociology* 109:146-85.
- Sampson, Robert J., John Laub, and Christopher Rimer. 2006. "Does Marriage Reduce Crime? A Counterfactual Approach to Within-Individual Causal Effects." *Criminology* 44(3):465-508.

2/23 Searching for Mechanisms – Mediation and Qualitative Insights

- Bernburg, Jon, Marvin Krohn, and Craig Rivera. 2006. "Official Labeling, Criminal Embeddedness, and Subsequent Delinquency." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43(1):67-88.
- Silver, Eric and Lisa Miller. 2004. "Sources of Informal Social Control in Chicago Neighborhoods." *Criminology* 42(3):551-583.
- Stewart, Eric and Ronald Simons. 2006. "Structure and Culture in African-American Adolescent Violence: A Partial Test of the Code of the Street Thesis." *Justice Quarterly* 23:1-33.
- Steffensmeier, Darrell and Jeffrey Ulmer. 2006. "Black and White Control of Numbers Gambling: A Cultural Asset-Social Capital View." *American Sociological Review* 71(1):123-156.

- Carr, Patrick, Laura Napolitano, and Jessica Keating. 2007. "We Never Call the Cops and Here is Why: A Qualitative Examination of Legal Cynicism in Three Philadelphia Neighborhoods." *Criminology* 45(2):445-480.

3/2 Connecting across the Disciplines – Injecting Non-Sociological Ideas into Criminology

******One-page Abstracts Due******

- Moffitt, Terrie E. and Avshalom Caspi. 2001. "Childhood Predictors Differentiate Life-Course Persistent and Adolescence-Limited Pathways among Males and Females." *Development and Psychopathology* 13:355-375.
- Guo, Guang, Michael Roettger, and Tianji Cai. 2008. "The Integration of Genetic Propensities into Social-Control Models of Delinquency and Violence among Male Youths." *American Sociological Review* 73:543-568.
- Matsueda, Ross, Derek Kreager, and David Huizinga. 2006. "Deterring Delinquents: A Rational Choice Model of Theft and Violence." *American Sociological Review* 71:95-122.
- Beaver, Kevin. 2008. "Nonshared Environmental Influences on Adolescent Delinquent Involvement and Adult Criminal Behavior." *Criminology* 46(2):341-369.

3/9 Spring Break

3/16 Measurement Validity of Theoretical Concepts

- Sampson, Robert and Byron Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social Disorganization Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 94(4):774-802.
- Burton, Velmer, Frances Cullen, David Evans, and R. Gregory Dunaway. 1994. "Reconsidering Strain Theory: Operationalization, Rival Theories, and Adult Criminality." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 10:213-239.
- Zhang, Lening and Steven F. Messner. 2000. "The Effects of Alternative Measures of Delinquent Peers on Self-Reported Delinquency." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 37:323-337.
- Piquero, Alex and Jeff Bouffard. 2007. "Something Old, Something New: A Preliminary Investigation of Hirchi's Redefined Self-Control." *Justice Quarterly* 24(1):1-27.
- Matsueda, Ross. 1992. "Reflected Appraisals, Parental Labeling, and Delinquency: Specifying a Symbolic Interactionist Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 97:1577-1611.

3/23 Defining the Dependent Variable

- Felson, Richard, Glenn Deane, and David Armstrong. 2008. "Do Theories of Crime or Violence Explain Race Differences in Delinquency?" *Social Science Research* 37(2):624-641.
- Aseltine, Robert, Susan Gore, and Jennifer Gordon. 2000. "Life Stress, Anger and Anxiety, and Delinquency: An Empirical Test of General Strain Theory." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 41(3):256-275.
- Osgood, Wayne and Christopher Schreck. 2007. "A New Method for Studying the Extent, Stability, and Predictors of Individual Specialization in Violence." *Criminology* 45(2):273-312.
- McGloin, Jean Marie, Christopher Sullivan, Alex Piquero, and Travis Pratt. 2007. "Local Life Circumstances and Offending Specialization/Versatility." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 44(3):321-346.

3/30 What We Thought We Know Is Wrong – Research Reversals through Replication Analyses

- Lauritsen, Janet. 1998. "The Age-Crime Debate: Assessing the Limits of Longitudinal Self-Report Data." *Social Forces* 77(1):127-55.
- Paternoster, Raymond, Robert Brame, Paul Mazerolle, and Alex Piquero. 1998. "Using the Correct Statistical Test for the Equality of Regression Coefficients." *Criminology* 36(4):859-866.
- Schwartz, Jennifer and Jeff Ackerman. 2001. "In Search of a Dependent Variable: Comment on Avakame, 1998." *Criminology* 39(4):301-312.
- Tremblay, Pierre and Carlo Morselli. 2000. "Patterns in Criminal Achievement: Wilson and Abrahamse Revisited." *Criminology* 38(2):633-657.

- Lowenkamp, Christopher, Francis Cullen, and Travis Pratt. 2003. "Replicating Sampson and Grove's Test of Social Disorganization Theory: Revisiting a Criminological Classic." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 40(4):351-373.

4/6 Widening a Theory's Scope – Introducing new Dependent and Independent Variables

- Dugan, Laura, Gary LaFree, and Alex Piquero. 2005. "Testing a Rational Choice Model of Airline Hijackings." *Criminology* 43(4):1031-1065.
- Hagan, John, Wenona Rymond-Richmond, and Patricia Parker. 2005. "The Criminology of Genocide: The Death and Rape of Darfur." *Criminology* 43(3):525-562.
- Wright, John Paul and Francis Cullen. 2000. "Juvenile Involvement in Occupational Delinquency." *Criminology* 38(3):863-896.
- McCarthy, Bill and Teresa Casey. 2008. "Love, Sex, and Crime: Adolescent Romantic Relationships and Offending." *American Sociological Review* 73:944-969.
- McCarthy, Bill and John Hagan. 2003. "Danger and the Decision to Offend." *Social Forces* 83(3):1065-1095.

4/13 Beyond Coleman's Boat – Testing Across Multiple Levels of Analysis How's My Theory Doing? – Meta-Analyses

- Coleman 1990 Chapter 1
- Sampson, Robert, Stephen Raudenbush and Felton Earls. 1997. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science* 277(5328):918-924.
- Osgood, D. Wayne and Amy L. Anderson. 2004. "Unstructured Socializing and Rates of Delinquency." *Criminology* 42(3):519-550.
- Hoffman, John P. 2002. "A Contextual Analysis of Differential Association, Social Control, and Strain Theories of Delinquency." *Social Forces* 81(3):753-785.
- Pratt, Travis C. and Francis T. Cullen. 2000. "The Empirical Status of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime: A Meta-Analysis." *Criminology* 38(3):931-964.
- Mitchell, Ojmarrh. 2005. "A Meta-Analysis of Race and Sentencing Research: Explaining the Inconsistencies." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 21(4):439-466.
- Baier, Colin and Bradley Wright. 2001. "'If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments': A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Religion on Crime." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38(1):3-21.

4/20 Multi-Method Tests (also Evaluating a Manuscript's Merit in the Journal Review Process)

******Papers Due******

- Giordano, Peggy, Stephen Cernkovich, and Jennifer Rudolph. 2002. "Gender, Crime, and Desistance: Toward a Theory of Cognitive Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 107(4):990-1064.
- McCarthy, Bill, John Hagan, and Monica J. Martin. 2002. "In and Out of Harm's Way: Violent Victimization and the Social Capital of Fictive Street Families." *Criminology* 40(4):831-866.
- Laub, John and Robert Sampson. 2004. "Strategies for Bridging the Quantitative and Qualitative Divide: Studying Crime Over the Life Course." Pp. 81-99 in *Research in Human Development*, edited by Richard Lerner. Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

4/27 In-Class Presentations

5/5 Manuscript Reviews Due