

CRIM 2330 – Theories of Crime Causation

Syllabus for Fall 2026

Face-to-Face – Public Health & Education 102

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces you to the major criminological and related social science theories used to explain the causes of criminal behavior.

OBJECTIVES

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. **Describe** what a theory is (and isn't), and explain the purpose of theory.
2. **Describe** how theories are created, tested, and revised.
3. **Describe** and **evaluate** major criminological theories.
4. **Apply** relevant theories to specific, real-world examples.

Learning Objectives Translated:

- **Describe:** Recall specific facts and be able to state *what* something is.
- **Explain:** Grasp the meaning of materials and state *why* something is the way it is
- **Evaluate:** Use information to make judgments, such as identifying the strengths and weaknesses of something.
- **Apply:** Use information you've learned in a new situation.

Note: The instructor is not solely responsible for assuring students meet these outcomes. It requires effort and input from the students as well.

TEXTBOOK

Required Textbook:

Akers, R. L., Sellers, C. S., & Jennings, W. G. (2021). *Criminological theories: Introduction, evaluation, and application* (8th ed). Oxford University Press.

GRADED WORK

Points for the course are allocated as follows:

Attendance	10%
Reading Quizzes:	20%
Reflection Journals:	20%
Exams:	40%
<u>Final Exam:</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total:	100%

Attendance

- You are expected to make class attendance a priority. As such, attendance will be worth 10% of your grade.
- You may miss **three (3)** scheduled class days without penalty (except for exam days—see below for the missed exam policy).

Reading Quizzes

- To ensure you are doing the readings, you will complete weekly or semi-weekly reading quizzes.
- Only your **10 highest scores** will be counted.

Reflection Journals

- You will periodically be asked to submit a short (200-400 words) reflection journal entry via Blackboard.
- The submission **MUST** be **handwritten**. You will scan the submission with your phone and upload it to the appropriate assignment in Blackboard. It **must** be easily readable.
- The entry should do all of the following:
 - Summarize what you have learned that week
 - Identify one way that it relates to information from prior weeks
 - Identify any content from that week that you found confusing (if you felt you understood everything, you can skip this component)

Exams

- There will be **three (3)** exams.
- Exams are semi-cumulative, with 80% of the material being new and 20% of the material being review.
- If you miss an exam, contact me within 24 hours after the exam or as soon as you know you will miss the exam, *whichever is sooner*.
 - Students who will miss an exam for official university-sanctioned activities must let me know **as soon as they know** of the absence to arrange to take the exam early.
 - Students who miss the exam for any other reason will replace the grade of their missed exam with the grade of their final exam.

Final Exam

- There will be **one (1)** cumulative final exam worth 10% of your grade.

GRADING POLICIES

Letter Grade Ranges and Descriptions

Graded assignments and final grades are administered on the following scale:

Table 1. Letter grade ranges and descriptions

Letter Grade	Grade Range	Description
A	90-100	Excellent
B	80-89	Good
C	70-79	Average
D	60-69	Passing
F	> 60	Failure
FN	> 60	Failure (Non-Attendance)

Rounding

Final grades are rounded according to normal rounding rules (e.g., a 79.5 [C] would be rounded up to an 80 [B], but a 79.4 would not). **Requests for rounding outside of this rule will guarantee no rounding.**

Submitting Work

Work **must** be submitted to the correct assignment portal on Blackboard. I do not accept submissions via email. I will grade the most recent version submitted **prior to the deadline**.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted for any reason outside of official accommodations.

Contesting grades

Students will have **3 days** to contest grades beginning on the day they are released. Students should only contest grades in a situation where a specific mistake has been made (e.g., a miscalculated grade).

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

How I Contact You

I use Blackboard Announcements to communicate to the class. You are responsible for keeping up with Blackboard notifications, so please **check it daily**. When I need to contact you individually, I will email you.

Who to Contact with Questions

For most questions, your first point of contact should be my teaching assistant, Victoria Piette (vpiette01@jaguar.tamu.edu). She will be able to answer most of your questions regarding due dates, logistics of the course, assignment instructions, etc. She's also who you should email if you wish to use a Life Happens token. If she doesn't have the answer, then she will loop me in.

That said, if your question pertains to **your grade** or a **sensitive topic**, please contact me directly.

How You Contact Me

Email me at cducate@tamusa.edu. **Do not use Blackboard messages.**

You **MUST** include the **course number (CRIM 2330)** in the subject of the email. I auto-sort my emails to prioritize students, so if you forget the course number in the subject, I may not respond promptly.

In your email, please make it clear **what you have already tried to solve the problem** and what **specifically** you need from me. Well-formatted emails with clear questions will get a much faster answer from me.

I usually check my email twice a day between 10am and 4pm on weekdays and do not check email on the weekends. If I have not responded to your e-mail within 24 hours (excluding Sat and Sun), **please send another e-mail with a reminder.**

How to Meet with Me

I hold weekly student (i.e., office) hours to allow students to come ask questions about material they are struggling with. If none of the available times work with your schedule, email me to work out a time. I do my best to work with students to find a time that works for both of us, but it is the student's responsibility to ensure they have some availability during normal working hours (i.e., 8am-5pm).

This is a difficult course, so I encourage you to attend office hours. However, I expect you to come prepared. This means you should come with *clear* questions about the material you do not understand. If you have questions about the assignments, you must have the assignment open and with the work you've already tried available for me to review.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Technology Use

You **may not use phones or laptops** in this class **except for designated activities and disability accommodations**. This means your phone should be away and on silent—I should not be able to see it. This also means your earbuds need to be out of your ears unless we have discussed your use in advance.

Instead, I expect you to take notes by hand. If you cannot afford a notebook or writing utensil, let me know, and I'll provide one for you.

You MAY use tablets so long as you use them to take notes with a stylus in a notetaking app (i.e., if you are using it like digital paper rather than like a mini-laptop).

I know—students hate this policy. But they're distracting to you and to me. I promise, you'll pay more attention and learn more when taking notes via hand (even if you feel like you don't!).

If you are expecting a phone call (e.g., daycare, sick parent, etc.), keep your phone on vibrate in your pocket and step outside to take the call if necessary. If you want to leave your phone on the desk in such a situation, let me know before class.

Technical Issues

Technical and logistical problems, such as being unable to access a computer, computer failure, problems with internet connections (such as speed or quality of the connection) or browser, difficulty printing, failure to check that your assignments have properly uploaded, etc., will not result in additional accommodations.

If you have a question about using Blackboard as a student, **please check the help page first**: <https://tinyurl.com/tamusastudentbbhelp>. If you have difficulty accessing Blackboard or using, please contact IT here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/information-technology-services/index.html>. You can also **call them** at (210) 784-4357.

Recordings & Use of Course Materials

The materials in this course are my intellectual property. Students may not make audio or video recordings of the course except as allowed through DSS accommodations. Furthermore, **no student has permission to sell or distribute any recording or material made in the course. This includes Coursera and similar course material exchanges online.** Distribution of materials is a copyright violation, and distribution of recordings violates students' right to privacy.

Academic Integrity & AI Use

As a TAMUSA student, I expect you to follow the Student Code of Conduct (see Section 14 of the [Student Handbook](#)). **When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is yours and only yours** unless otherwise cited or referenced. This includes both assignments and exams. This means that **all work submitted by students must be generated by the students themselves**, working individually or in groups (as specified in the assignment).

To ensure academic honesty, you will be expected to be able to **defend your work**. This means that you need to **maintain a version history** of your work and **be able to explain your submission verbally**. If I suspect plagiarism or cheating of any kind, I reserve the right to question you about your knowledge of your submitted work. When a student is suspected of plagiarism or cheating, they will receive a **temporary 0** on the assignment until they arrange a meeting with the professor to discuss the assignment. Students who cannot demonstrate the origins of their submission either through verbal mastery or clear documentation (e.g., edit history on Google docs) will be considered to have plagiarized.

What is Allowed:

- Using AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, **in the form of a tutor**. In other words, you can use it as a resource the same way you would use me as a resource. You **cannot**, therefore, ask it to answer specific assignment questions for you or submit any of its answers as your own. If you aren't sure whether you are violating this rule, don't use it.
- Studying with fellow classmates.
- Any assignment where I have explicitly stated you can use it, and only in the capacity I have stated.

What is Not Allowed

- Having another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. This includes *ideas* as well as *written text*. This also includes using Grammarly to do anything beyond checking your spelling and grammar.

Consequences

- **Strike one:** Fail the assignment and be reported to the university on the first strike in accordance with TAMUSA policies.
- **Strike two:** Fail the class.

Disability Accommodation

Students with disability accommodations should **set up a one-on-one meeting with me ASAP** to discuss the specifics of their accommodations. Don't worry—you do not need to disclose anything about your disability! I just want to be sure you're getting what you need. What DSS sends me about your accommodations is usually vague, so this meeting ensures that I understand exactly what it is you need. Students who suspect they need accommodations can visit the [DSS website](#) to discuss their options. Students who need extra time can also arrange exam proctoring via that website.

EXPECTATIONS

Academic Expectations

1. **Independent Problem-Solving.** Try to solve problems on your own first. Check the syllabus, check Blackboard, ask classmates, Google it. I am always here if you need me, but try to find the solution on your own first.
2. **Frustration Tolerance.** This can be a very demanding course. Often, even the best students struggle at first, but I expect you to not be deterred by the initial discomfort you will inevitably experience. Instead, I expect you to persevere in the face of the discomfort, to wrestle with the material until it finally makes sense. This may mean revising your study habits or putting in more work than you usually do. That's okay! That's part of learning.
3. **Honesty.** I expect my students to be honest with me. This means more than academic integrity. It also means admitting when you are struggling or when you made a mistake that is totally human. I know honesty is vulnerability, and vulnerability is hard, but I promise, I am here to help you if you let me. I, in turn, hold myself to the same standard and try to be as transparent with you all as I can.

Technology Expectations

You should have the following technological tools:

- A paper notebook & working pen or pencil
- A functional and reliable laptop or tablet
- A web camera (for exam proctoring and office hour meetings over Zoom)
- An email client
- A PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Acrobat)

- The Respondus browser
- Microsoft Office 365 (especially Microsoft Word)
 - Note: TAMUSA students can use MS365 for free. [Log in to their online portal here.](#)

You are also expected to have the following technological & digital literacy skills:

- Using Blackboard (including viewing rubrics & feedback)
- Using and writing polite (and ideally professional) emails
- Creating and submitting documents using .doc or .docx formats
- Downloading and reading PDFs from Blackboard
- Using web conferencing tools and software (e.g., Zoom)

If you aren't confident in these skills, **visit the Writing Center ASAP** (see [here](#) for how to make an appointment) or visit the library and ask for assistance with creating digital objects.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course schedule is tentative and subject to change. All substantive changes will be announced via Blackboard (e.g., changes in due dates). In instances where the due dates in the course schedule and Blackboard conflict, the due date in this course schedule takes priority.

WEEK	DATE	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	READINGS (Due Sundays)
1	08.24 - 08.30	Introduction	Defining Crime	ASJ Ch. 1
2	08.31 - 09.06	Measuring Crime	Correlates of Crime	Tittle Ch. 2
3	09.07 - 09.13	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY	Introduction to Causality	Tittle Ch. 1
4	09.14 - 09.20	What is Theory?	Exam 1 Review	
5	09.21 - 09.27	EXAM 1	Deterrence & Rational Choice Theories	Exam 1 Postmortem ASJ Ch. 2
6	09.28 - 10.04	Biopsychosocial Theories	Psychological Theories	ASJ Ch. 3 & 4
7	10.05 - 10.11	Learning Theories pt. 1	Learning Theories pt. 2	ASJ Ch. 5
8	10.12 - 10.18	Strain Theories pt. 1	Strain Theories pt. 2	ASJ Ch. 9
9	10.19 - 10.25	Review Day	EXAM 2	
10	10.26 - 11.01	Control Theories pt. 1	Control Theories pt. 2	Exam 2 Postmortem ASJ Ch. 6
11	11.02 - 11.08	Labelling and Reintegrative Shaming	Social Disorganization	ASJ Ch. 7 ASJ Ch. 8
12	11.09 - 11.15	Lifecourse Theories	Theory Integration	ASJ Ch. 14 ASJ Ch. 15
13	11.16 - 11.22	Review Day	EXAM 3	Exam 3 Postmortem
14	11.23 - 11.29	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK		

WEEK	DATE	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	READINGS (Due Sundays)
15	11.30 - 12.03	Review for Final Exam	Review for Final Exam	
16	12.07- 12.11	Final Exam December 12 from 10-11:50am (Modality TBD)		