Course Overview:

This class exposes each student to the intellectual discussion related to the nature of criminal behavior that has taken place over the last several hundred years. We will explore in detail the major schools of thought that have been developed to help us understand why some individuals are more likely to commit crime and why variations in crime exist both spatially and temporally. Because an understanding of why some individuals deviate from legal and normative expectations are so fundamental to the understanding of society, each student should also gain a greater appreciation of the mechanisms through which a peaceful society is maintained. To accomplish this, we will examine in detail the development of 20th century criminological perspectives including human ecology/social disorganization, strain, differential association/learning, social control, developmental, labeling, and conflict theories. While the course will focus on sociological contributions to criminological theory, psychological and biological theories will also be considered.

The major objectives of the course are as follows:

- To become familiar with the foundations of current theoretical debates in criminology.
- The ability to apply these theoretical approaches to the explanation of deviance and crime.
- To critically evaluate the theoretical approaches.

Course Requirements:

*Class participation (roughly 30% of final grade):* Participation in class discussions and small group work is a vital component of the course. Students will be graded on participation, and you can’t participate unless you **attend class** and do the readings. In order to promote useful class discussion, each student should have read all the required readings prior to class. Students should be prepared to share their thoughts and comments during class. **One student will be required to present a brief summary (10-12 minutes) and lead the discussion for each of the articles.** For each reading you are responsible for presenting, you must write a 1-2 page single-spaced summary of the article or chapter and make this available to the rest of the class prior to your presentation. This summary should also include criticisms, limitations, and weaknesses of the theoretical argument.
Note: I would prefer you not have laptops out during the class. You may choose to ignore this preference but distracting laptop use will result in a reduction of your class participation grade up to a maximum of your entire class participation grade (30%).

Seminar Paper and Class Presentation (roughly 70% of final grade): Students are required to complete a seminar length paper (due during the last class). Students will also be required to present their final paper to the class during the last class (10% of the final grade). Details will be given during the first few weeks of class. A paper proposal of 1-2 pages which summarizes your intended paper topic is due on the 6th week of class.

Final grades will be based on a relatively subjective assessment of your overall work in the course (presentations, participation, and final paper using the weights mentioned above).

Course Topics (readings will be made available on WebCT):

Week 1: Sept. 8th.
Introduction to the course.

Week 2: Sept 15th. Personal/Biological/Psychological Traits and Crime

Ellis, Lee and Anthony Walsh. 1997. “Gene-based Evolutionary Theories in Criminology.” Criminology. 35: 2


Week 3: Sept. 22nd. Personality and Crime (cont.) and The Origins of Sociological Criminology

Personality and Crime Continued


The Durkheimian foundations of modern criminology


**Week 4: Sept. 29th. Strain Theory (or Anomie Theory)**

*Classical Statements:*


**Week 5: Oct. 6th. Strain (Cont) and Social Disorganization Theory**

*Strain Theory (cont): Contemporary reformulations:*


*The Chicago School and early ecological/social disorganization approaches to crime*


**Week 6: Oct. 13th. Social Disorganization (cont) – PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

*Contemporary reformulations*


*Routine Activity Theory*


*Differential association*


*Social learning theory*


*Social control*


**Week 9: Nov. 3rd. Self-Control Theory**

*Self-Control*


*Simultaneous Examination*


**Week 10: Nov. 10th. Other Theories of Crime**

*Containment Theory*


*Neutralization Theory*


*Criminal careers/interactional theory*

*The Seduction of Crime*


**Week 11: Nov. 17th. Developmental theories and Class-Based Theories**

*Life course theories*


*Class Theories*


**Week 12: Nov. 24th. Conflict/Critical theories of crime**

*Labeling theory*


Additional Points:

1) McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

2) In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

3) In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

4) If you have a disability that requires special accommodations please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.

5) There will be no incompletes given in this course except in the most extreme, documented medical circumstances (at the discretion of the instructor).