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JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Sociology 220

Course Description

The course is divided into four sections, with each section being organized around one or more major questions about delinquency.

- I. The Nature and Extent of Delinquency. The first section will deal with some basic "facts" about delinquency. We will answer four questions: 1) What is delinquency and, in particular, how does it differ from adult crime? 2) How much delinquency is there? 3) Is delinquency increasing?, and 4) What types of people tend to commit delinquent acts?
- II. Theories of Delinquency. After answering the above questions, we will focus on what is probably the most frequently asked question about delinquency: "What causes juveniles to break the law?" We will examine the four major sociological theories or explanations of delinquency: strain, social learning, control, and labeling theories.
- III. Research on the Causes of Delinquency. We will then examine research inspired by or at least compatible with the above theories. This research examines the extent to which delinquency is caused by individual traits (e.g., low intelligence, negative emotionality), family factors (e.g., "broken homes," poor discipline), school factors, delinquent peer groups and gangs, and other factors.
- IV. The Control and Prevention of Delinquency. In the final section of the course, we will ask "How can we control or prevent delinquency?" We will spend the first part of this section examining what the juvenile justice system (police, juvenile court, juvenile correctional agencies) does to control delinquency. Three questions will guide our analysis: 1) How do these agencies operate -- what do they do to control delinquency? 2) To what extent do these agencies violate the rights of individuals and groups in their efforts to control delinquency? and 3) How effective are these agencies and what can they do to be more effective? We will then examine four general strategies to control delinquency: the "get tough" strategies of deterrence and incapacitation and the "liberal" strategies of rehabilitation and prevention.

Course Web Site

The Blackboard site for this course contains a copy of the syllabus, links to a range of sites related to juvenile delinquency and careers in criminology/criminal justice, and copies of old exams. Please see me if you have trouble accessing this site.

Course Goals

There are four major course goals.

1. Introduce you to the major research on juvenile delinquency, as outlined above. This goal will be achieved primarily through the readings and class lectures and discussions.
2. Introduce you to the methods that criminologists use to study delinquency. How do criminologists determine how much delinquency there is, whether some factor like "broken homes" causes delinquency, or whether some policy like imposing a curfew reduces delinquency? We will examine some of the methods that criminologists use to answer questions about delinquency. In particular, we will examine how criminologists estimate the extent of delinquency and trends in delinquency, how they determine whether various factors cause delinquency, and how they determine whether certain policies or programs reduce delinquency. A basic knowledge of these methods will prove invaluable to you, since they will help you evaluate the accuracy of many of the claims you hear about delinquency and other topics (claims from friends and family, politicians, the media, etc.).
3. Get you to apply course materials. It is not enough to simply memorize certain facts and theories about delinquency. Such facts and theories are useless unless you can apply them to your own lives and the larger community. In particular, the materials in this course can help you better understand your own behavior and that of the people around you; better raise your children if you decide to have children; better evaluate the claims you hear about delinquency from others; and better work toward the control of delinquency in your community. We will achieve this goal through class discussions, class exercises, and an assignment described below. This goal will also be emphasized on the exams.
4. Increase your commitment to work toward the reduction of delinquency. Almost everyone in the field of juvenile justice feels that we can do much more to control delinquency. This course will help you better formulate your own views on controlling delinquency and will encourage you to act on your views. This goal will be achieved through reading and discussing the literature on delinquency, and through presentations by a juvenile court judge and others.

Grading

Exams: There will be four exams, one for each section of the course. Exams will consist of short answer/essay questions. Old exams are on the course web site (click on assignments). I strongly recommend that you review them to guide you in your studying and prepare for the exams. Also, be sure to review the "Test Your Knowledge..." and "Thought and Discussion" questions at the end of each chapter in the text. Each exam is graded from 0 to 100 (93+=A, 90-92=A-, 88-89=B+, 83-87=B, etc.) and counts for 23% of your grade (so the four exams comprise 92% of your grade).

Application Exercise: This exercise requires that you apply course materials to something you've seen or heard in the media, such as a YouTube video, song, or newspaper article. For example, you might apply the text discussion on the problems with police data, one of the theories of delinquency (e.g., strain theory), the research on families and delinquency (e.g., the research on family disruption and delinquency), or the text discussion on deterrence. This assignment should be written up in a 1-2 page paper, typed, double-spaced with one inch margins. Do not describe the media object in this paper, rather focus on the application of course materials to this object. However, include a copy of the news article, song lyrics, etc., or the web address of the video clip. You will also present your application in class (I'll

past around a sign-up sheet on January 23). The presentation should devote no more than 5 minutes to the media object (e.g., showing the video clip, playing the song (have the lyrics on PowerPoint), describing the newspaper article); then another 5 minutes to your application; followed by 5 minutes for Q and A. **Your written report is due when you give your presentation.**

Your report and presentation make up the remaining 8% of your grade. To earn an A, you should have a well-chosen media object, informed and creative application of course materials, well-organized presentation, and good performance during Q and A. Further information will be provided in class

Class attendance can raise your final grade. Class attendance is very important. Much of the class material will appear on the exams. Further, poor attendance will reduce the value of class discussions and interfere with certain class exercises. **I WILL PASS AROUND AN ATTENDANCE SHEET AT THE START OF EVERY CLASS.** If you **ARRIVE LATE**, you will be counted as absent. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE YOU SIGN THE SHEET. DO NOT SIGN THE SHEET IF YOU ARRIVE LATE** (after I start talking) **OR SIGN IN FOR SOMEONE ELSE** (doing either will be considered an honor code violation since attendance may affect your grade). Attendance will be graded as follows:

Miss **THREE OR FEWER CLASSES**: 2 points **ADDED** to overall course average

Miss **FOUR OR FIVE CLASSES**: 1 point **ADDED** to course average

Miss **SIX OR MORE CLASSES**: no points added to course average

Note that you are **NOT** penalized for poor attendance, but are rewarded for good attendance. Also, note that I allow you to miss up to three classes and still receive 2 points – these missed classes are for things such as illness, family emergencies, sporting events, etc. – I'd advise you **NOT** to use them as “vacation days.”

You can create your own set of textbook notes for use during the exams if you do the following: 1) Pick up the Index cards that I distribute **ahead of time**. 2) You can use one index card per book chapter for notes, but you can write on the front and back of the card. 3) You must turn in the Index card by the **start** of the class period when the chapter is **first assigned** (e.g., the Index card for Chapter 6, the Strain Theory chapter, is due at the **start** of class on Feb. 13). Index cards, however, can be turned in early (so if you are going to miss a class, try to turn in the Index card for that class ahead of time). I will distribute the index cards you turn in back to you at the start of each exam. I will allow you to turn in up to three Index cards late – but no later than one week after the Chapter in question is first assigned. (If you add this course after the start of the semester, you can turn in the Index cards for the previous reading assignments at the class after the first class you attend (they will not be accepted after this time). This option is of course designed to encourage you to do the readings on time and to think about the key points in each reading. It also helps me keep track of what you are getting out of the readings. I strongly encourage you take advantage of the option; having books notes available can substantially improve your grade on each exam.

Extra-credit: Individuals who want to raise their Exam 1, 2, or 3 grades can complete the following extra-credit assignment: write a five-page paper, typed, double-spaced, on a topic of my choice. The paper is due **BY THE LAST DAY OF CLASS**, April 27. I will grade the paper on a scale from 0 to 100, and the paper grade will be averaged with the exam grade to determine your new grade for that exam (e.g., if you got a 70 on the exam and an 80 on the extra-credit paper, your new exam grade will be 75). **I only recommend this option for people with low exam scores – it is not likely to be of much benefit for those who score 75 or above on an exam.** Only one extra-credit paper is allowed per student.

Make-Up Exam Policy. My permission is needed to take the make-up for Exams #1 -- #3 (NOTE: having another exam on the same day as our exam will not get you my permission). Individuals taking the make-up for Exams #1 – #3 should come to the first class after the regularly scheduled exam. We will try to work out a mutually convenient date for the make-up at this class (if we cannot, the date for the make-up will be determined by a vote of those present). The make-up will consist of a few long-essay questions. If you are unable to take the make-up on the date we decide, your make-up will consist of a seven-page paper on a topic of my choice. Exam #4 will be given on the final exam date, **May 6 at 12:30**, and make-ups for this exam will only be given to individuals who have obtained permission from an academic counselor in the College Office.

Readings

Juvenile Delinquency: Causes and Control, THIRD EDITION (2009), by Robert Agnew. Available at the Emory Bookstore.

A set of readings available through RESERVES DIRECT (RD) – the titles of these readings are indicated below.

How to Do Well in This Course

1. Come to class on a regular basis. I will describe the essential things you should get from the readings, elaborate on the readings, and present new materials. I will also "pull things together," describing how the different topics we're studying are connected. About half of all exam materials will come from class. If you miss more than a few classes you will experience serious difficulties, even if you borrow someone's notes. In particular, you will have trouble following the course organization and doing well on exams.

2. Come to class on time. If you come late, you may have trouble following the lecture. Also, other students and I find it distracting.

3. Do the text readings on time and take notes on each reading (ideally, on the Index cards I provide). In particular, read each chapter, highlighting key points. Then go back and write an outline of the chapter in your own words. This will dramatically increase your recall and comprehension of the chapter. Also, go over the questions at the end of each chapter. If you can answer these, you should do well on those exam questions dealing with the text.

For the Reserves Direct readings, focus on the major points being made and try to relate the readings to the text and the class discussions (most provide illustrations or extensions of text and class materials). Since these readings are generally less detailed than the text, I do not provide the option of turning in Index cards for them (although you are encouraged to take notes on them).

4. If something is unclear, ask me during or after class, during my office hours, or email me at bagnew@emory.edu. I encourage you to ask questions or make comments at any time.

5. Review the old exams on the course web site. Study with others for each exam -- asking each other questions and evaluating each other's answers.

Class Schedule

I. Nature and Extent of Delinquency

Jan. 14	Introduction and Survey	
Jan. 16	What is Delinquency?	Agnew, Chapter 1
Jan. 21	How Explain the Invention of Delinquency?	
Jan. 23	How is Delinquency Measured?	Agnew, Chapter 2
Jan. 26	How Much Delinquency is There? Is Delinquency Increasing?	Agnew, Chapter 3
Jan. 28-Feb. 4	Who is Most Likely to Engage in Delinquency?	Agnew, Chapter 4 RD: Saints and Roughnecks; Girls Study Group
Feb. 6	EXAM #1	

II. Theories of Delinquency

Feb. 9-11	How Do We Know If Something <u>Causes</u> Something Else?	Agnew, Chapter 5
Feb. 13-16	Strain Theory	Agnew, Chapter 6
Feb. 18	Social Learning Theory	Agnew, Chapter 7; RD: Code of the Street; Influence of Situational Ethis on Cheating
Feb. 20	Control Theory	Agnew, Chapter 8
Feb. 23	Labeling Theory	Agnew, Chapter 9; RD: Legal Stigma
Feb. 25	Situational Theories	
Feb. 27	Applying the Theories	
Mar. 2	EXAM #2	

III. Research on the Causes of Delinquency

Mar. 4	Individual Traits	Agnew, Chapter 13
Mar. 6	NO CLASS	

Mar. 9-13	SPRING BREAK	
Mar. 16	Individual Traits, cont.	
Mar. 18-20	The Family	Agnew, Chapter 14
Mar. 23	The School	Agnew, Chapter 15
Mar. 25	Delinquent Peer Groups and Gangs	Agnew, Chapter 16: RD: Fraternities, Athletic Teams and Rape
Mar. 27	Religion, Mass Media, Drugs	
Mar. 30	The Larger Social Environment	Agnew, Chapter 12: RD Northton Community
Apr. 1	Pulling It All Together	Agnew, Chapter 18
Apr. 3	EXAM #3	

IV. The Control and Prevention of Delinquency

Apr. 6-8	Determining Program Effectiveness	Agnew, Chapter 19; RD: Well- Meaning Programs.....
Apr. 10-13	The Police	Agnew, Chapter 20: RD: Pulling Levers; Student Party Riots
Apr. 15-17	Juvenile Court and Corrections	Agnew, Chapter 21 RD: Restorative Justice...
Apr. 20	Does the Juvenile Justice System Discriminate?	Agnew, Chapter 22
Apr. 22	Deterrence and Incapacitation	Agnew, Chapter 23
Apr. 24	Prevention and Rehabilitation	Agnew, Chapter 24
Apr. 27	So What Should We Do to Control Delinquency?	Agnew, Chapter 25
May 6	EXAM #4, 12:30-1:30 in our classroom	