

CRIM 3: Long Essays on a range of criminological topics 2023-2024

Course convenor: Associate Professor Kyle Treiber

Supervisors

To be arranged by the Course Convenor, Institute of Criminology, based on the essay titles chosen.

Deadlines

Essay 1: Monday 22 January 2024 by 12 noon

Essay 2: Monday 29 April 2024 by 12 noon

Introduction

This paper gives students the opportunity to pursue particular criminological topics in greater depth, and to engage in independent exploration, reading, and analysis of relevant literature and debates, with the support and guidance of a supervisor.

Assessment

This paper is assessed by means of two long essays of 5000 words each. Students select two questions to answer from a list that is published each year by the Faculty Board.

Aims and Objectives

- To give students the opportunity to investigate criminological questions and to pursue specific issues and topics in some depth.
- To encourage students to think carefully about criminological concepts and to analyse them rigorously.
- To encourage students to think about the nature of criminological arguments and explanations.
- To encourage students to think about the relation between theory and empirical research and to consider the suitability of the research methods used to answer particular questions.
- To encourage students to think about the kinds of evidence that can be used to support and/or criticise theories and arguments and to weigh up evidence in a careful and considered way.
- To encourage students to write clearly and to develop reasoned criminological arguments of their own.

Teaching

This paper is taught primarily by supervision. There is one introductory session for this paper at the beginning of Michaelmas Term: Thursday October 5th, 2023, 9:00-11:00am in the **Institute of Criminology Boardroom** (meet in front of Reception). All

other teaching for the paper is by means of supervision. There will be three one hour supervisions for each essay.

- In the first supervision you can discuss your chosen question with your supervisor in a preliminary way, define how you will approach the question and ask your supervisor for help in putting together an initial reading list.
- In the second supervision you can discuss your progress on the basis of a written outline for your essay.
- In the third supervision you can discuss a draft of your essay with your supervisor. Supervisors will not read more than one draft of your essay.

Table 1: Example schedule (supervision dates to be arranged in consultation between the student and supervisor)

Week	Activity	Date	Leader
Week 0	Introductory seminar – 9:00-11:00 Boardroom, Institute of Criminology	Oct 5 (Thursday)	Treiber
Essay 1 (Michaelmas Term)			
Week 1/2	Supervision 1: Discuss your chosen question and recommended readings	Oct 9-20	Supervisor
Week 3/4	Supervision 2: Discuss an outline	Oct 23-Nov 3	Supervisor
Week 5/6	Submit essay draft to supervisor	Nov 6-17	
Week 7/8	Supervision 3: Discuss your essay draft	Nov 20-Dec 1	Supervisor
	<u>Essay due by 12:00 noon!</u>	January 22	
Essay 2 (Lent Term)			
Week 1/2	Supervision 1: Discuss your chosen question and recommended readings	Jan 16-26	Supervisor
Week 3/4	Supervision 2: Discuss an outline	Jan 29-Feb 9	Supervisor
Week 5/6	Submit essay draft to supervisor	Feb 12-23	
Week 7/8	Supervision 3: Discuss your essay draft	Feb 26-Mar 8	Supervisor
	<u>Essay due by 12:00 noon!</u>	April 29	

You will be expected to work on your essays during full term and to be supervised during full term. Unless there are exceptional circumstances where your Director of Studies has provided evidence that you were unable to work for a significant period of time during term, supervisors may refuse to read drafts outside of full term.

Your supervisor may negotiate different arrangements for the supervisions, to suit your needs, as long as the three hours is not exceeded.

CRIM 3 Long Essay Titles for 2023-2024

1. How can we best understand both the ‘punitive turn’ and the ‘victimological turn’ in late modern society?

2. 'Crime is a sociopolitical artefact, not a natural phenomenon. We can have as much or as little crime as we please, depending on what we choose to count as criminal' (Packer, 1968). Discuss.
3. How good are the prospects for 'spotting tomorrow's criminals in today's pushchairs' (Lettice, 2007)?
4. Does 'opportunity make the thief' (Felson and Clarke, 1998)?
5. 'As one reads history . . . one is absolutely sickened not by the crimes the wicked have committed, but by the punishments the good have inflicted' (Oscar Wilde, 1891). How should punishments be determined?
6. 'Our correctional system reproduces all of the ingredients known to promote violence: isolation, discomfort, pain, exposure to other violent individuals, and general insecurity. In prison we have created a laboratory that predictably reproduces and reinforces aggression . . .' (Lewis, 1999). Do prisons do more harm than good?
7. Discuss the evidence for and against the existence of institutional racism in a criminal justice system of your choice.
8. 'Equality means different treatment' (Corston, 2007). Discuss in relation to the treatment of women and men in the criminal justice system.
9. It is suggested that youth justice systems in modern society lack vision and values. What should be the essential ingredients of a youth justice system?
10. Is it necessary to prosecute all offenders? Are out of court options decided upon by the police fair and effective?
11. What is the relationship between social disadvantage and crime? Consider in light of the fact that although most persistent offenders come from disadvantaged backgrounds, most people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not become persistent offenders.
12. Cybercrime has been described as 'old wine in new bottles' (Grabosky, 2001). What similarities and differences are there between cybercrime and traditional street crimes? What are the implications for explaining and preventing cybercrime?
13. Across populations a similar pattern of crime is observed across ages, with a steep rise during early adolescence, a peak in late adolescence or early adulthood, and a long decline into later adulthood. How can we explain this age-crime curve?
14. Should biological factors (e.g., neurological, genetic) mitigate criminal culpability and influence sentencing?

15. Select a model of policing (e.g., reactive, community, intelligence led, problem oriented) and assess the evidence of its effectiveness in preventing crime.

Registering your choices

All students taking this paper must register their choices for their first and second questions with Paulina Baltsooukou (pb815@cam.ac.uk) in the HSPS Faculty Office in Free School Lane by the end of the first week of Michaelmas Term. For each question, please indicate a second choice in case there is a shortage of supervisors for your first-choice question.

Reading

There are no published reading lists for the questions. Reading for each question will be suggested by your supervisor, who may encourage you to look for additional readings and sources yourself. Following a preliminary discussion with your supervisor you will be sent some reading suggestions.

Deadlines

One electronic copy of the first essay should be sent to the Sociology Office in Free School Lane by **12:00 on Monday January 22 2024**, one electronic copy of the second essay by **12:00 on Monday April 29 2024**. As with all material submitted for examination, the marking is anonymous; please do NOT put your name and college on the essay.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is citing the work of others verbatim as if it were your own, although it does not extend to acknowledging what a supervisor will have said to you in conversation or any comment on your work. It includes paraphrasing the work of others where you do not acknowledge it in a reference or give some indication of who has made the point you are describing in the text. Plagiarism also includes cutting and pasting from the web. If you take material from websites, you must acknowledge it in the same way as from books, articles, and other paper texts. You should give the date when you consulted the web if you use web sources.

Plagiarism is taken very seriously, and is more readily detected—even from an obscure textual source or a remote site on the web—than you might imagine. It can lead to the University taking disciplinary action. You must read the Faculty's document and sign a plagiarism form with each essay that you submit. If you are in any doubt, please consult your supervisor. You find out more about plagiarism and University policies and procedures at <https://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/>.

Assessment

The marking criteria for the assessment of long essays are available on the website. Aim to engage critically and analytically with the literature and key debates. Being analytical refers to examining a subject or idea thoroughly and in detail; being critical refers to examining a subject or idea's merits and faults thoroughly and in detail.

Kyle Treiber, August 2024.