

## **CRIM 3: 2020-21 Long Essays on a range of criminological topics**

**Course organiser:** Professor Loraine Gelsthorpe

**Supervisors:** to be arranged by the Course Convenor, Institute of Criminology, depending on essay titles chosen.

**Deadlines:** Essay 1 : **Monday 1 February, by 12 noon**  
Essay 2 **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, by 12 noon**

**Introduction:** This Paper gives student opportunity to pursue particular interests in Criminology in some depth. With the help and guidance of a supervisor, you will have a chance to engage in independent reading and research.

**Assessment:** The paper is assessed by means of two long essays of 5000 words each. You are asked to choose two questions 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 in studies.
- 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. 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.

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 2020-21**

1. Critically discuss the role of the media in shaping fears about crime and attitudes towards punishment.
2. How can we best understand both the 'punitive turn' and the 'victimological turn' in late modern society?
3. '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.' (Herbert PACKER, 1968). Discuss.
4. 'The crime reduction challenge involves being honest about the scale and nature of crime and related harms, and developing a far broader range of policies to address them than those afforded by the criminal justice system.' (Richard GARSIDE, 2006). Discuss, with reference to one or two types of criminal offence.
5. 'I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge of it is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind . . . ' Lord KELVIN (1891). Do crime statistics constitute more than 'meagre and unsatisfactory' knowledge'?
6. 'Criminology . . . provides . . . a form of constraint upon government whose liberal effects may be unintended or inadvertent—it just so happens that many illiberal crime and penal policies do not work . . . But does 'what works' work?' (Ian LOADER, 2007). Discuss.

7. How good are the prospects for 'spotting tomorrow's criminals in today's pushchairs' (John LETTICE, 2007)?
8. '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?
9. 'There is a popular saying of Madame de Staël, that we forgive whatever we really understand. The paradox has been judiciously pruned by her descendant, the Duke de Broglie, in the words: "Beware of too much explaining, lest we end by too much excusing" (Lord ACTON, 'Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History', from *Lectures on Modern History*, 1906). Do we understand too much about criminal behaviour to be able to deal with it effectively?
10. '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 . . .' (Dorothy Otnow LEWIS, 1999). Do prisons do more harm than good?
11. Is the criminal justice system in England and Wales 'institutionally racist'?
12. 'Equality means different treatment' (Baroness Jean CORSTON, 2007). Is the differential treatment of women and men in the criminal justice system desirable or inevitable?
13. It is suggested that the youth justice system in modern society, lacks vision and values. If you were designing a youth justice system what would the essential ingredients be?
14. Traditional criminal justice in England and Wales, if not the UK, represents an adversarial approach to justice, whereby prosecution and defence lawyers argue their different perspectives in a court of law, the defendant has a 'walk on part' in this drama. Looking further afield, are there any alternative concepts and forms of justice from which lessons can be learned?
15. Is it necessary to prosecute all offenders? Are out of court options decided upon by the police fair and effective?
16. 'No one is surprised that most murderers are men. What gets ignored too often is that most men are not murderers' (Gutmann, 2019). Critically discuss the relationship between maleness, masculinity and violence.

### **Registering your choices**

All students taking this paper must register their choices for their first and second questions with Odette Rogers ([ohmr3@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ohmr3@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 1 February, 2021**, one electronic copy of the second essay by **12:00 on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2021**. 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 note or some indication of the kind 'Weber argued' in the text. It 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 also give the date when you consulted the web.

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.

### **Assessment**

The marking criteria for the assessment of long essays are available on the website. Aim for critical engagement with any reading and critical analysis of issues.