

**CRIMINOLOGY AREA EXAMINATION
GENERAL STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES
(Revised January, 2008)**

I. Purpose

The Criminology Area Examination provides the criminology faculty an opportunity to assess the level of mastery doctoral students have achieved in the area of sociological criminology. As outlined in the Department of Sociology's "Doctoral Program" document, the purpose of area examinations is to determine whether students have attained a level of mastery that is sufficient for becoming a viable professional in the sociological discipline.

The Criminology Area Examination should be viewed as an opportunity to develop as a scholar in the field of criminology. Preparing for the examination will lead students to synthesize criminological knowledge and to develop their own understanding of the discipline. Sustained reflection and study of criminological theory and research, both classic and contemporary, will provide students with a firm foundation for organizing their own research program and can yield conference presentations or publications. Moreover, systematic scrutiny of the state of criminological knowledge will leave students in a favorable position to develop courses in their future teaching endeavors. Finally, acquiring and studying the books and articles central to the criminological discipline will assist students in the development of a library which will serve them well in their professional roles of researcher and teacher.

Doctoral students who wish to claim expertise in the field of criminology are expected to demonstrate both depth and breadth in their general and integrative knowledge of theories of crime and delinquency and criminological methods. They should be able to evidence a solid understanding of the standard criminological theories, to discuss classic and contemporary research and empirical evidence with respect to each of these theories, to demonstrate competency with respect to the manifold research methods employed in criminological investigations, and to apply critical thinking skills to these theories and methods. Students must also demonstrate a familiarity with the current issues and debates that surround these theories and use of methods in the field.

II. Format

The Criminology Area Examination will consist of a written portion and an oral portion:

A. *Written Portion of the Examination.* The written portion of the examination will be completed as a "take home" examination, allowing students to use notes and other sources. Students will be given the test questions at 8:00 a.m. on a Monday and will have until 5:00 p.m. the next Friday to complete the examination, which should be printed in double spaced, 12 point font. There will be three questions administered. Students will be expected to keep their answers to a 20 page maximum *per question*.

For the first question, students will be asked to select one question from at least two options that deals with criminological theories and research that tests these theories. These questions are designed to allow students to demonstrate both depth and breadth in their general and integrative knowledge of criminological theories and their empirical status. Answers to these questions should be both succinct and comprehensive.

For the second question, students will be asked to select one question from at least two options that deals with criminological research methods. These questions are designed to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of data collection techniques (both qualitative and quantitative) and statistical methods used in the field of criminology. Answers to these questions should be both succinct and comprehensive.

The third question will offer a choice between at least two alternatives, and will cover criminological theories, research methods, or a combination of theories and methods. These questions are designed to allow students to demonstrate both depth and breadth in their general and integrative knowledge of criminological theories and/or research methods.

B. Oral Portion of the Examination. Within three weeks of the completion of the written examination, an oral examination shall be held on a date scheduled by the chair in consultation with the student and the Criminology Area Examination Committee. The oral examination will provide students an opportunity to revisit each question addressed on the written examination in order to extend and clarify their responses. Faculty members will ask questions that allow students to further demonstrate their mastery of the field of criminology. Faculty questions may focus on the written responses, questions from the written examination that were not selected, or any other relevant criminological topic.

III. Composition of the Criminology Area Examination Committee

The Criminology Area Examination Committee for any particular examination will consist of the standing chair and two criminology faculty members selected by the criminology faculty. The standing chair will serve a one year term from January to December while the other two members will rotate each semester. In 2008, the standing chair will be Professor Crawford.

IV. Declaring an Intention to Take the Criminology Area Examination

Students who would like to sit for the Criminology Area Examination must attend an orientation session that will be held approximately six months prior to the administration of the Fall examination (i.e., an orientation session in April) and Spring examination (i.e., an orientation session in September). Attendance at the orientation session serves as a formal declaration of one's intention to sit for the Criminology Area Examination at its next administration. Students may formally declare their intention to take the Criminology Area Examination and later decide not to sit for the examination once, with

a second occurrence resulting in a failure on the examination.

V. Preparation

A [general reading list](#) of books and edited volumes in criminology, which the criminology faculty consider to be core knowledge in the discipline, is provided to guide students in their preparations for the Criminology Area Examination. In preparing for the examination, students should develop a capacity to think in terms of the central theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and key empirical tests represented by this general reading list. The reading list also contains a list of the most important journals in the field of criminology. Students should consult these journals for empirical tests of the theories that appear on the general reading list. This general reading list will be revised by the criminology faculty every two years.

In order to qualify for a seat at the Criminology Area Examination, students must earn a grade of "B" or better in SOC660 (Seminar on Theories of Crime), SOC665 (Research Issues in Criminology), and in at least one other criminology seminar such as SOC560 (Corporate and Governmental Crime), SOC561 (Violence and U.S. Society), SOC562 (Victimology), SOC563 (Gender and Justice), SOC568 (Race, Ethnicity, and Justice), SOC578 (Sociology of Law), SOC590 (Surveillance and Society), SOC590 (Media and Crime), SOC610 (Deviance and Social Problems Theory), SOC661 (Seminar on Current Issues in Criminology), SOC663 (Comparative Criminology), and SOC664 (Studies in Criminology -- Variable Topics).

[Questions from previous administrations](#) of the Criminology Area Examination are available for students to inspect and study. Students should also meet individually with criminology faculty for further guidance on preparing for the written and oral portions of the examination.

VI. Examination Schedule

The Criminology Area Examination will be administered twice a year, once during the Spring Semester (February) and once during the Fall Semester (October). Please note that examinations are not given during the Summer Sessions.

VI. Assessment

At the conclusion of the oral portion of the examination, faculty members on the Criminology Area Examination Committee will confer amongst themselves for purposes of arriving at a formal assessment of a student's performance on both portions of the examination. The committee will determine with a unanimous vote whether a student has passed or failed the examination. When the committee is unable to reach unanimity, it may award an incomplete and request additional written work and/or a second oral examination before making its final decision. An incomplete can be given, however, only if the committee agrees that a student has passed on two out of three questions. If a student is given an incomplete by the committee, the standing chair will provide a

written statement to the student and her/his doctoral advisor that specifies the required additional work. A final decision of pass or fail must be made by the committee within six weeks of the date of the assignment of the incomplete. Students who fail the Criminology Area Examination will be permitted to take the examination one more time.

VII. Academic Integrity

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog that pertain to academic integrity. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If it is determined that you have been involved in academic dishonesty in the area examination, this will result in your failing the examination. You will also be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. Please consult with the chair of the Criminology Area Examination Committee if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an examination.

VIII. Record

The standing Chair of the Criminology Area Examination Committee will prepare a written record of a student's performance on the Criminology Area Examination that shall be placed in the student's academic file.

IX. Criminology Faculty and Research Interests

[Susan Caringella](#)

Gender and Crime, Political Economy and Crime, Popular Culture, Media, and Crime, Punishment and Crime, Race/Ethnicity and Crime, and Social Class and Crime

[Susan M. Carlson](#)

Political Economy of Crime and Social Control, Research Methods in Criminology, Public Policy and Crime Control, and Social Disorganization Models of Community Crime Control

[Susan L. Caulfield](#)

Juvenile Delinquency, Measurement of Crime, Public Policy and Crime Control, Restorative Justice, Violence, and White-Collar, Corporate, and State Crime

[Charles E. Crawford](#)

Crime Prevention, Drugs and Crime, Law Enforcement, Political Economy and Crime, Popular Culture, Media, and Crime, Punishment and Social Control, Race/Ethnicity and Crime, Social Class and Crime, and Violence

[Barry Goetz](#)

Crime Prevention, Drugs and Crime, Regulatory Process, Law Enforcement, Political Economy and Crime, Public Policy and Crime Control, Punishment and Social Control, Restorative Justice, and White-Collar, Corporate, and State Crime

[Gregory J. Howard](#)

Comparative Criminology, Surveillance, Punishment and Social Control

[Ronald Kramer](#)

Political Economy and Crime, Public Policy and Crime Control, White-Collar, Corporate, and State Crime

[Angela M. Moe](#)

Gender and Crime, Juvenile Delinquency, Race/Ethnicity and Crime, Victimology, and Violence against Women

[Zoann K. Snyder](#)

Gender and Crime, Popular Culture, Media, and Crime, Public Policy and Crime Control, Race/Ethnicity and Crime, and Sociology of Law

CRIMINOLOGY AREA EXAMINATION
SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM PREVIOUS EXAMINATIONS
(Revised February, 2005)

1. Two lists of theorists are given below. Select four theorists from each list and explain the contributions of the theorists to the sociology of crime/delinquency.

List A	List B
Robert Merton	Robert Agnew
Kai Erikson	John Hagan
Edwin Sutherland	Robert Sampson
Howard Becker	Jody Miller
Edwin Lemert	James Messerschmidt
Thomas Scheff	Delbert Elliot
Austin Turk	Terrance Thornberry

2. Much has been made of the need to reconcile structural and subjective accountings for crime. Provide examples of criminological theories that operate at each of these levels. Why is there such a serious breach between these two types of theoretical explanations? In your considered opinion, what is the best way to overcome this theoretical chasm?

3. Develop a graduate level course in criminological theory. How would you approach the course? What theories and perspectives would you cover and in what order? What would you identify as the key issues with which you would want the students to grapple in the course? What key readings would you require in the course and why would you require them?

4. Select a form of criminal behavior and develop a comprehensive theoretical explanation for that behavior.

5. Both "mainstream" and "critical" theoretical perspectives in criminology attempt to explain crime. Compare and contrast one mainstream theory and one critical perspective or theory in terms of their explanations of crime (i.e., how does each approach the task of explanation, how does each define crime, how does each explain crime, where are they similar, where are they different). In your view, is it possible to integrate these perspectives? Why or why not?

6. Theories of criminal behavior may focus on "micro" (i.e., individual-level) explanations or they may focus on "macro" (i.e., structural) explanations. Discuss and contrast efforts to explain crime and delinquency at these two levels with reference to a general type or particular form of criminal behavior (your choice). In your view, what are the prospects for merging individual and structural explanations?

7. Select a research topic based on your knowledge of the research literature in criminology. Briefly review the major research findings on your topic and identify a research question that needs to be addressed and hypotheses that need to be tested.

Develop a research design that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research question and to test the hypotheses. Be sure to discuss and justify the methods of data collection, operationalization of variables, and methods to be used in analyzing the data. What are the strengths and limitations in the research design you have proposed relative to previous studies in the literature?

8. Delineate the various quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to the study of crime. Provide examples of research for each of the different methodologies, along with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each. Can the privileging of quantitative techniques in criminology be justified?

9. The Detroit Free Press recently published an exposé on burn deaths and injuries caused by exploding gas tanks in GM cars and trucks manufactured during the 1970s and 1980s and GM's efforts to cover up the problem. Design a study using multiple methods to examine this case. Be sure to discuss and justify the methods of data collection, operationalization of variables, methods to be used in analyzing the data, and any difficulties that you anticipate in conducting this study. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your proposed study?

10. Wayne County has just implemented a drug court program for juvenile offenders. You have been hired to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. In addition to collecting data for the program evaluation, as a criminologist you also want to use this opportunity to collect data that will allow you to test one or more criminological theories. Develop a research design to accomplish the dual goals of program evaluation and theory testing. Include a discussion of the theory or theories and hypotheses to be tested, a description of the sampling design, an overview of the data collection strategy, and a plan for analyzing the data (including relevant statistical techniques).

11. What is the difference between macro and micro levels of analysis? Give an example of each in criminological research. Give an example of research that combines both levels of analysis.

12. Ralph Nader has been named Attorney General of the United States. He appoints you to revise the FBI Uniform Crime Report. In particular, he directs you to construct a new index of crime that reflects the actual injury and damage done to society and its victims. How would you accomplish this task? Be sure to address, but do not necessarily limit yourself, to the following points: a) justify your choice of crimes for inclusion in the new index, b) would you use officially recorded data, victimization data, self-report data, some other measure of crime, or a combination of these different indicators of crime?, c) what would be the advantages and disadvantages of relying on official law enforcement agencies to collect your data? Would retraining, reeducating, or redeploying "traditional" police be required?, d) what would be the impact, if any, on society and/or the media if each month the FBI released a crime index constructed according to your recipe?

13. Trace the history of attempts to measure "crime" in the United States. Critically evaluate these measures based on what you know from the research literature. Be sure to cite relevant sources. What do you conclude based on your critical evaluation?
14. The FBI and Bureau of Justice Statistics have hired you as a consultant to improve official measures of crime in the United States. Develop a set of specific recommendations to improve the reliability and validity of official measures of crime based on your knowledge of the literature?
15. You are about to begin an investigation into cross-national variations in violent crime. What measures of violent crime would you use in your study? How would you obtain these measures? What special problems are you likely to encounter in your cross-national investigation that you are unlikely to face with a study confined to a single nation-state?
16. Three of the better known methods of measuring crime in our society are the Uniform Crime Report, the National Crime Victimization Survey, and self-report data. Choose a specific form of crime and develop a detailed plan that will utilize one of the following alternative methods for measuring crime: a) observation studies, b) participant observation, or c) life histories.
17. Most empirical tests of theories of delinquency rely on self-reported delinquency to measure the dependent variable. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of this measurement strategy for theory testing.
18. As a new assistant professor at a respected research institution, you have been encouraged by the chair of your department to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) released by the National Institute of Justice. The RFP asks specifically that you study the relationship between morality and violence. How would you proceed with such a study? The RFP requests that you (a) provide a theoretical model that accounts for the relationship, (b) indicate the type of data that you would gather to assess the efficacy of this theoretical model, (c) specify the analytical techniques that you would deploy, and (d) note particular threats to reliability and validity which this study will likely encounter.
19. Select one influential empirical article or book and evaluate the research design. Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the data collection method, sampling method, measurement of key concepts (conceptualization and operationalization), and analysis techniques. Given your assessment of the methods, comment on the appropriateness of the conclusions presented by the author(s).
20. Discuss the key components of, and distinctions between, quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying crime. Provide examples of research for each of these methods, along with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages associated with each. Discuss the apparent privileging of quantitative techniques in criminological research and address whether such a privileging of methods is justifiable.

**CRIMINOLOGY AREA EXAMINATION
GENERAL READING LIST
(Revised April, 2008)**

The reading list below represents what the criminology faculty consider to be core knowledge in sociological criminology. We also assume each student has mastered classical (Durkheim, Weber, and Marx) and contemporary theories (Foucault, Habermas, Giddens) that form the core of the discipline of sociology. In preparing for the examination, students should develop a capacity to think in terms of the central theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and key empirical tests represented by this general reading list. We expect students to gain an adequate understanding of the empirical adequacy of theories on the list, the methods used to test the theories, the methodological issues involved in such tests (e.g., weaknesses, strengths, innovations), and the contributions of those tests to theoretical development. To accomplish this, students should identify research articles that represent key tests and/or advances of the theories.

Students should develop a list of research articles they have read, and submit it to the Criminology Area Examination Committee prior to the examination. We have provided a list of journals that may contain relevant research articles. In addition, students are responsible for the material covered in the two required core courses, "Theoretical Issues in Criminology" (SOC6600) and "Research Issues in Criminology" (SOC6650).

Books/Articles

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Arrigo, Bruce A. (Ed.). 1999. *Social Justice/Criminal Justice: The Maturation of Critical Theory in Law, Crime, and Deviance*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Beccaria, Cesare. 1963. *On Crime and Punishment*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.

Becker, Howard. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press.

Belknap, J. (2007). *The invisible woman: Gender, crime and justice* (3rd ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Braithwaite, John. 1989. *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bursik, Robert J. and Harold G. Grasmick. 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York: Lexington Books.

Chambliss, William J. 1964. "A Sociological Analysis of the Law of Vagrancy." *Social Problems* 12:67-77.

Chesney- Lind, Meda and Lisa Pasko. 2003. *The Female Offender: Girls, Women and Crime*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cloward, Richard and Lloyd Ohlin. 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Colvin, Mark. 2000. *Crime and Coercion: An Integrated Theory of Chronic Criminality*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Colvin, Mark, Francis T. Cullen, and Thomas Vander Ven. 2002. "Coercion, Social Support, and Crime: An Emerging Theoretical Consensus." *Criminology* 40:19-42.

Cullen, Francis T. and Robert Agnew (Eds.). 2003. *Criminological Theory: Past to Present*, 2nd edition. Los Angeles, CA: Mayfield.

Durkheim, Emile. 1938. "Rules for the Distinction of the Normal from the Pathological." Pp. 85-107 in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Translated by W. D. Hall. New York: Free Press.

Erikson, Kai. 1966. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Ferrell, Jeff and Mark S. Hamm (Eds.). 1998. *Ethnography on the Edge: Crime, Deviance and Field Work*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.

Garland, David. 2002. *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gottfredson, Michael R. and Travis Hirschi. 1990. *A General Theory of Crime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Greenberg, David (Ed.). 1993. *Crime and Capitalism*, expanded/updated edition. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Gusfield, Joseph R. 1963. *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Hagan, John. 1989. *Structural Criminology*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Hindelang, Michael J., Travis Hirschi, and Joseph G. Weis. 1981. *Measuring Delinquency*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Hirschi, Travis. 1969. *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Katz, Jack. 1988. *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*. New York: Basic Books.

Kornhauser, Ruth. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laub, John H. and Robert J. Sampson. 2003. *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys To Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lemert, Edwin. 1967. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Matza, David. 1964. *Delinquency and Drift*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Messerschmidt, James W. 1993. *Masculinities and Crime*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Messner, Steven F. and Richard Rosenfeld. 2001. *Crime and the American Dream*, 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Mosher, Clayton James, Terance D. Miethe, and Dretha M. Philips. 2002. *The Mismeasure of Crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newman, Graeme. 1985. *The Punishment Response*, 2nd edition. Albany, NY: Harrow and Heston.

Quinney, Richard. 1970. *The Social Reality of Crime*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Rusche, Georg. [1933] 1978. "Labor Market and Penal Sanction: Thoughts on the Sociology of Criminal Justice." Translated by G. Dinwiddie. *Crime and Social Justice* (Fall-Winter):2-8.

Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. *Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points Through Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sellin, Thorsten. 1938. *Culture Conflict and Crime*. New York: Social Science Research Council.

Shaw, Clifford and Henry McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Spitzer, Stephen. 1975. "Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance." *Social Problems* 22:638-651.

Taylor, Ian, Paul Walton, and Jock Young. 1973. *The New Criminology*. New York: HarperTorchbooks.

Tittle, Charles R. 1995. *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Warr, Mark. 2002. *Companions in Crime: The Social Aspects of Criminal Conduct*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson, James Q. and George Kelling. 1982. "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety." *The Atlantic Monthly* 249:29-38.

Wilson, James and Richard Herrnstein. 1985. *Crime and Human Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wolfgang, Marvin and Franco Ferracutti. 1967. *The Subculture of Violence: Towards an Integrated Theory in Criminology*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Journals

American Journal of Sociology
American Sociological Review
Crime, Law, and Social Change
Criminology
Critical Criminology
Feminist Criminology
Journal of Research on Crime and Delinquency
Justice Quarterly
Law and Society Review
Quantitative Criminology
Social Forces
Social Justice
Social Problems
Theoretical Criminology
Violence Against Women
Women and Criminal Justice