

CJUS 5600.001,600 Advanced Criminological Theories

Instructor: Jessica Craig, Ph.D.
Class meeting: T 1:00 – 3:50 PM

Term: Spring 2026
Classroom: Chilton 274

INSTRUCTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Office location: Chilton 273A
Phone: 940-565-3464

E-mail (preferred): Jessica.Craig@unt.edu
Office hours: By appointment (virtual or in-person)

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow-up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated. Finally, please know I can only discuss grades over email if it was sent through your Eagle Connect email account (username@unt.edu).

Course Description

Crime is a complex problem. There are so many seemingly distinct types of crime, and crimes occur for different reasons and under different circumstances. In fact, the complexity of crime is increasing. For example, the globalization of communications (e.g., the internet) and conflict (e.g., terrorism) had substantial impacts on the nature of crime. Despite this complexity, it is imperative that we gain as great an understanding of crime as possible through criminology. Criminology can be defined as the study of the nature of crime, its causes, and the systemic practices that (re)produce patterns of harm. At its core, criminology attempts to understand what crime is and why it occurs. We will study the major theoretical traditions that have emerged over the past several centuries to offer insight into the crime problem. We will also evaluate each theory using extant research and identify policy implications.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- ✓ Identify, distinguish, and explain the major schools of criminology, including classical, Chicago, learning, strain, social control, labeling, biosocial, and developmental theories.
- ✓ Evaluate criminological theories using empirical evidence and key criteria like explanatory power and policy relevance.
- ✓ Apply criminological theories to analyze diverse criminal cases and inform policy discussions.
- ✓ Demonstrate ethical and responsible use of AI tools to support scholarly research and critical analysis.

Required Materials

Cullen, F. T., Agnew, R., & Wilcox, P. (2021). *Criminological theory: Past to present* (7th ed.). Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780197619315. (Print edition is required)

** Additional materials in the form of articles and/or book chapters will supplement this course.

NOTE: If a student chooses to purchase anything other than the current edition of the assigned course texts, it is their responsibility to ensure access to and familiarity with the most up-to-date course materials

COURSE NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Office hours offer you an opportunity to ask for clarification or find support with understanding class material. Come visit me! I encourage you to connect with me for support. Your success is my goal.

Please make sure to have your official UNT email forwarded to your preferred email address (if different) to receive important updates, changes, announcements, class cancellations (if applicable), and generally, so I can reach you if necessary. The announcement board in Canvas, and email, will be used for primary communication to the class as a whole. I advise you check the announcements section frequently. It is your responsibility to utilize a computer system that works and is compatible with Canvas.

Important: Minimum technology requirements for this course: a browser that is compatible with Canvas (visit [this link](#) to ensure your browser is suitable) and Microsoft Office Word (or a similar word-processing software). Microsoft Office 365 is available for free to all currently-enrolled students. For instructions to download the software, please see [this link](#). Students are expected to know how to access their UNT email, open attachments, and use Microsoft Word (or a similar word-processing software). Students facing IT issues should visit [UNT's IT website](#) or the [IT Helpdesk](#). Students are also expected to have basic digital literacy skills such as using UNT's library's website, searching online databases, and properly citing information sources. Here is a [UNT Library Guide for Criminal Justice students](#) that walks you through how to find research and official sources online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are a total of 1000 points that can be earned in this class. The grading policy is presented below. Students can expect to receive feedback on all graded work within 1 week of the assignment's due date. If there is going to be a delay, I will let you know via an announcement on Canvas.

Grading Scale:

900-1000 points = A

800-899 points = B

700-799 points = C

600-699 points = D

Below 600 points = F

Pre-Class Discussion Questions

Active preparation is key to a successful seminar-style course. Before most class sessions (except the first and last), you will submit a discussion question on Canvas by 8 AM the day of class. You have two choices for your submission each time: either pose a thoughtful question about the assigned readings that you want the class to explore, or identify a concept or idea you find confusing and would like clarified. Each response should be 2-3 sentences, aiming to foster curiosity and critical thinking across the group.

To support fairness and flexibility, two of your 12 submissions will be dropped, so 10 will be graded at 10 points each for a total of 100 points, or 10% of your final grade. Your thoughtful and timely participation here will help shape our in-class discussions and enhance everyone's learning experience.

Reflections

To help you deepen your understanding and make connections between class discussions and course theories, you will complete 12 brief reflection assignments. You will submit these reflections in class before you leave each day. Each reflection invites you to thoughtfully consider the day's content—how our discussions and class activities either challenged or enhanced your thinking about criminological theory. Reflections should be about 4-6 sentences long, encouraging concise but meaningful insights.

To account for absences or off days, 2 of your lowest reflection scores will be dropped, so 10 reflections will count toward your final grade. Each reflection is worth 15 points, totaling 150 points, or 15% of your overall grade.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam is worth 30% of your final grade (300 points). It will focus on applying and critically analyzing criminological theories covered in the first half of the course through open-book, open-note case study questions. The exam will be given in class and emphasize applied problem-solving, policy analysis, and theoretical evaluation. You will be asked to answer case-based questions using evidence and theory, showing clear, organized, and thoughtful responses. Exam grades are assessed based on completeness, critical analysis, proper organization, and writing quality. Late exams will not be accepted. See the course schedule for the exam date.

Final Project

The final project makes up 45% of your final grade (450 points), divided into two parts:

- ePortfolio (300 points; 30%) — A comprehensive, professionally formatted portfolio analyzing three distinct real-world criminal justice cases using three different criminological theories. The portfolio should demonstrate critical thinking, theoretical application, research depth, and include an ethical reflection on your approach to using (or not using) AI tools in academic work. Submitted via Canvas ePortfolio.
- Presentation (150 points; 15%) — You will deliver a 10-minute in-class presentation summarizing two case studies from your portfolio, comparing their theoretical insights, and reflecting on your learning progress since the midterm. The presentation should use clear visuals, demonstrate effective communication skills, and engage your audience. Following your presentation, there will be 5 minutes for questions and discussion.

CLASS POLICIES

Academic Dishonesty/Integrity

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

AI Tools & Academic Integrity

This course is about your ability to understand, apply, and critique criminological theories; that intellectual work must come from you, not from AI tools. Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, Grammarly) may be used only as a support tool for mechanics and limited research help, never as a substitute for your own analysis.

Allowed (support only – “green zone”): You may use AI to proofread for grammar and clarity after you have written your own work, to assist with APA formatting, and to help locate or preliminarily summarize sources that you then independently verify and read.

Use with caution (“yellow zone”): AI use for brainstorming case ideas or explaining theories as a study aid is generally discouraged because it can short-circuit your own critical thinking; if you choose to do this, you must still do the reading yourself and must not use AI-generated phrasing or reasoning in submitted work.

Prohibited (“red zone”): You may not use AI to generate or draft any part of your theory explanations, case analyses, critical evaluations, or policy discussions for this course, including the midterm exam and the final ePortfolio. You may not use AI on quizzes, tests, or discussion posts, and you may not fabricate or “hallucinate” sources, data, or citations with AI. Submitting AI-generated reasoning or text as your own work is considered academic misconduct and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Transparency: Any AI use beyond basic spell-check must be clearly disclosed and cited in APA format, following assignment instructions (for example, in the required AI Reflection Statement for the final project). When in doubt about whether a use of AI is appropriate, you are responsible for asking me before using it.

Make-Up, Late Work & Authorized Absence Policy

Make-up exams, assignments, and late work will only be accepted when an absence or missed deadline is authorized according to UNT policy. Authorized absences include religious holy days, official university functions (including university-sponsored activities), required military service, student pregnancy/parenting (Title IX), university closure, and other documented extenuating circumstances approved by the Dean of Students. If you anticipate an authorized absence, you must notify me as soon as possible—preferably before the due date—and provide written documentation.

Absences for school-sponsored activities require prior approval from the department chair and academic dean, along with authorized absence documentation from the Dean of Students. Requests for excused absences for religious holy days must be made in writing within the university’s prescribed time frame. Late work is generally not accepted unless linked to a documented authorized absence, in which case it will be treated under the same guidelines as make-up work. For unexpected emergencies, notify me as soon as possible. Students with excused absences will be granted a reasonable period—no fewer than 10 business days—to complete missed work unless otherwise specified.

If you have questions about what qualifies as an authorized absence or need assistance, please consult UNT’s Student Attendance and Authorized Absences policy or contact the Dean of Students. While I want all students to succeed, withdrawal may sometimes be the best option for those facing significant challenges. The last day to withdraw with a “W” is April 10, 2026.

Student Behavior and University Policy:

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

To be successful at learning and understanding the material in this class, it is essential that you read and complete the assigned material and engage in thoughtful discussions. Your active participation, along with your willingness to engage in thoughtful discussions will be taken into account at all times during the semester. Certain topics in criminal justice policy are controversial, thus discussion may become heated where there will be disagreements. The classroom is a place to express ideas, opinions, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Students will respect the views and opinions of others at all times. While I do not foresee any problems, if problems do arise, I will address them with the individual student. Below are general guidelines for how to communicate well in a classroom—both in-person and online.

- Remember that college communication is still professional communication. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check your response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
- Use standard, readable fonts, sizes, and colors and avoid writing in all caps.
- Use your instructor's title of "Dr." or "Professor," or if you don't know use "Mr." or "Ms." Do not use "Mrs." to address female instructors unless told otherwise by said instructor.
- Be mindful of tone in online communication as it lacks the nonverbal cues of face-to-face communication that provide clarity and context to conversations.
- Respect the personal identities of others based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.
- Respect the privacy of yourself, your instructor, and your peers. Keep in mind what you reveal and do not reveal, particularly if this information involves personal health and/or classroom performance, such as grades.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. Though there may be a computer between you, there are people on the other side of the screen.
- Do not make assumptions about others' technological skills. Technological skills vary across a variety of factors, including experience, age, culture, etc.
- Read these [Core Rules of Netiquette](#) for additional tips about online communication.

Communicating via Email

- Check the syllabus before asking a question about the course and let the instructor know you checked the syllabus before asking. Instructors put a lot of time into making syllabi as comprehensive as possible for students.
- Use a descriptive subject line to get the instructor's attention. Instructors receive a lot of emails and a descriptive subject line helps them identify student inquiries more efficiently.
- Be concise and to the point.
- For a sample email, read this article, ["How to Email Your Professor."](#)

Discussion Board Communication

- Treat your posts like the professional communication that they are. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check a response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
- Read all the messages in a thread before replying so you do not repeat something one of your peers may have already said.
- Avoid replies such as "I agree" and instead explain why you agree or do not agree.
- Show your work by sharing resources and utilizing citations.
- When disagreeing, do not make personal attacks or use language that discriminates based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.

Office of Disability Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](#). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Student Evaluation of Instruction

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right and have the discretion to change this syllabus. While every effort will be made to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, it is sometimes the case that the syllabus must be modified. In the case that the syllabus needs to be adjusted, I will announce such adjustments to the class. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. It is the student's responsibility to check announcements/email so that any and all syllabus changes are documented. Failure to obtain syllabus

changes because of failure to check and read announcements does not constitute a defense against missed assignments, test dates, and other applicable changes.

Miscellaneous:

The material posted online is my personal intellectual property or that of the University of North Texas. You may not utilize the material for other than class purposes. Class recordings are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called [Eagle Alert](#) to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at [my.unt.edu](#). Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at this [link](#). Information regarding data privacy for Canvas can be found [at this link](#).

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](#) (Links to an external site) for more resources.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

[NOTE: Read the assigned reading for each day prior to coming to class]

DATE	TOPIC, READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES
1/13/26	Topic: Course Introduction & Overview of Criminological Theory Readings: None
1/20/26	Topic: Deterrence Theory: Classical and Modern-Day Arguments Readings: pg. 21-24; 26-29; 399-405; 419-424
1/27/26	Topic: Rational Choice & Routine Activities Theories Readings: pg. 405-408; 425-430; 453-455; 467-478
2/3/26	Topic: Chicago School: Social Disorganization & Collective Efficacy Readings: pg. 33-40; 45-51; 64-69
2/10/26	Topic: Learning Theories: Differential Association, Social Learning, & Code of the Street Readings: pg. 79-84; 89-92; 101-113; 115-126
2/17/26	Topic: Strain Theories: Merton and General Strain Theory Readings: pg. 127-133; 138-145; 163-172
2/24/26	Topic: Control Theories: Social Control & Self-Control Readings: pg. 173-181; 192-200; 201-213
3/3/26	Midterm Exam
3/10/26	No Class- Spring Break
3/17/26	Topic: Labeling Theory & Procedural Justice Readings: pg. 217-226; 230-236; 411-412; 444-452 ePortfolio Checkpoint 1 Due at 1 PM
3/24/26	Topic: Critical Criminology Readings: pg. 253-265; 277-289; 290-297
3/31/26	Topic: Biosocial Perspectives: Beginnings and Contemporary Readings: pg. 24-25; 30-32; 511-520; 540-547; 548-556 ePortfolio Checkpoint 2 Due at 1 PM
4/7/26	Topic: Developmental & Life Course Theories Readings: pg. 557-570; 574-593; 594-600
4/14/26	Topic: Positive Criminology: Social Support & Social Concern Readings: pg. 651-654; 657-667; 668-678 ePortfolio Checkpoint 3 Due at 1 PM

4/21/26	Topic: Wrap-Up and Reflections Readings: Wikstrom & Kroneberg (2022) <i>Access on Canvas</i>
4/28/26	In-Class Presentations ePortfolios Due at 1 PM