

RUTGERS School of Criminal Justice

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Class location and time: Online, asynchronous

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm-2:30pm in person. By appointment online.

Office: 123 Washington St., 5th Floor, Room 542

Criminology 47:202:102, Spring 2025 **Rutgers University Newark, School of Criminal Justice**

Course Description

Welcome! In this course, we will look at the theories, nature, and causes of crime as a social phenomenon. We'll discuss the processes of making laws, breaking laws, and the social reaction to law breaking. We will also ask how to create a better criminal justice system and reduce crime.

Course Objectives

Through this course, you will:

1. Understand the central criminological theories, concepts, and research methods used by criminologists.
2. Connect those theories, concepts, and methods to criminal justice policy and practice.
3. Recognize, understand, and think critically about the major issues in criminology.
4. Become a critical consumer of media reports and politicians' claims about crime and crime policies.

Course Materials

I will provide all texts as PDFs on the class Canvas page. You do not need to purchase any books for this class. Many of our readings will come from the book:

Beirne, Piers & James W. Messerschmidt. 2016. *Criminology: A Sociological Approach*, 6th edition. Oxford University Press.

You might want to buy a copy of this book if you read better with physical media than with PDFs.

Requirements and Grading

55% of total grade – Quizzes

Each week, starting the second week, you will have a quiz assessing your knowledge of that week's course materials. The quizzes will draw from all the course materials: readings, lectures, podcast episodes, videos, etc. There are no cumulative exams in the course. The quizzes must be completed by 11:00pm Friday each week and cannot be

retaken or made up. They are between 10 and 15 questions and are time limited (20-30 minutes). The quizzes are open book, meaning you can refer to the readings during the quiz, so the questions can be difficult. The best way to prepare for the quizzes is to do each reading twice, annotate the readings, and take close notes on the lectures and clips. Your lowest quiz grade of the semester will be dropped.

30% of total grade - Discussion contributions

Four times this semester, we will discuss the course materials on a Canvas discussion board. You will respond to prompts, and good responses will address the question directly, cite evidence from the course materials, and are clearly written. Limit your comments to one paragraph in length. Concise comments will be graded more highly than long ones, so edit your comments several times for length and clarity before posting.

5% of total grade – Media project

The week we cover “media and crime” you will find a newspaper article, broadcast news clip, or social media post about crime and analyze it in a short response. I’ll provide detailed instructions the week of.

10% of total grade – Article reviews

The last week of class, we will discuss research skills, and you will find an academic article on a topic of your interest. You’ll read and summarize that article and an assigned article. I’ll provide detailed instructions the week of.

Letter grades follow the School of Criminal Justice’s grading scheme, outlined below. Grade percentages are not rounded.

A	90% to 100%
B+	87% to 89.99%
B	80% to 86.99%
C+	77% to 79.99%
C	70% to 76.99%
D	60% to 69.99%
F	0% to 59.99%

Weekly Schedule

Each week covers a different topic, with a mix of readings, lectures, audio, and video sources on that topic. Each week, you will absorb the course materials then complete the quiz or response paper. This is an asynchronous course, meaning that we will not meet together at any time. Here is the schedule for each week:

Sundays, 9:00am

The week’s course materials are released. Read any texts before watching the lectures and do all that before contributing to any discussions. The quiz is also opened at this time. Obviously do the quiz after everything else.

Fridays, 11:00pm

Deadline for reading and/or watching all the course materials, taking the quiz, contributing to any discussion boards, and completing any assignments.

Work Time per Week

As with most college courses, one credit represents about three hours of academic work per week, so for our three-credit class, you should expect to do about nine hours of work each week. Some weeks will be more and some will be less. Online courses like this one are more flexible than in-person courses, but they are not easier. You'll have 40-60 pages of reading in the typical week. This will require some extensive butt-in-chair reading time (what the Germans call [sitzfleisch](#)), so plan breaks and persevere through tough passages. I turn off my laptop's wifi and put my phone in a different room when I have a lot of reading to do. I find I read best first thing in the morning.

Academic honesty and A.I.

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will result in you failing the course. You are not allowed to collaborate with anyone else, including other students, on the quizzes, though you may discuss course materials with anyone prior to taking the quiz. For more information, review Rutgers Newark's Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity [here](#). You are also not allowed to refer to search engines or large-language models (LLM) like Chat GPT or Gemini for help on any assignment or quiz. And, remember, LLMs "hallucinate" (i.e. make things up) and they are not drawing on the specific readings and lectures that we are.

To prevent A.I. use and encourage thorough engagement with the course materials, I've inserted a few quiz answers into the readings and lectures that A.I. will struggle to answer and that might seem bizarre. For instance, I might say "For the quiz question about food, answer 'pasta.'" These quiz questions will be easy for those who have closely engaged with the readings and closely watched the lectures, and they will be difficult for those who are asking robots to do their thinking.

Content Warning

As with any course on crime, we will sometimes read about and discuss intense, emotionally difficult subjects. These include sexual assault, intimate-partner violence, abortion, suicide, and violence against children. If you feel any reading or class discussion might be too difficult for you, do not hesitate to email me, and we can work together to find an alternative.

Late Work

Quizzes cannot be made up after their deadline. Canvas will not allow you to start a quiz after the deadline and they must be completed before the deadline. If you submit a discussion post, media project, or article review after the deadline, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade (10%) for every business day it is late with a maximum 30% penalty. Technical problems are not an excuse for missing deadlines, so allow extra time before any deadlines in case you need switch computers or call the Rutgers helpdesk (info below). If there is an emergency life situation, email me 24 hours in advance of the assignment due date.

Rutgers tech help desk
833-OIT-HELP (833-648-4357)
help@newark.rutgers.edu

Contacting Brenden

I respond more quickly to email (brenden.beck@rutgers.edu) than Canvas messages. If you emailed me and haven't heard back in 48 hours, feel free to email me again. Before emailing me, please check the syllabus first and consider emailing a fellow student to see if they know the answer. If you'd like to reach out to our teaching assistants, feel free to do so.

Course Schedule

(This schedule is preliminary. See the Canvas modules for the finalized materials.)

Class	Required Course Materials	Assignments Due
Week 1 Introduction 1/21	Read: Syllabus Read: Fayyad, "Why Do Americans Think Crime is Going Up?", Vox, 2024. Watch: Introductory lecture - different approaches to criminology (24:21)	No quiz. Next week's quiz will cover this material.
Week 2 Defining and Measuring Crime 1/26	Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 1. "The Problem of Crime." pp. 14-24. Note the required pages are not the whole chapter. Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 2. "The Measurement of Crime." Whole chapter. Watch: Crime Rates Lecture (8:01). Watch: Crime vs. Harm Lecture (5:55). Watch: When Should We Call Someone a "Criminal"? Lecture (9:24).	Weeks 1 & 2 quiz
Week 3 Why Do People Commit Crime? Part 1 2/2	Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 4. "Social Structure, Anomie, and Crime," pp 81-101. Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 5. "Delinquent Subcultures," pp 103-120. Note the required pages are not the whole chapter. Watch: Lecture on scale and theories of crime (20:01).	Week 3 quiz and Discussion Post 1
Week 4 Why Do People Commit Crime? Part 2 2/9	Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Sections 6.2-6.4., pp 144-156. Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Sections 7.1 & 7.2, pp 164-177. Listen: WBEZ, "There's a Story Behind Why We Shoot People" Every Other Hour (28:49) Watch: three short lecture videos (1) Labeling and Deterrence Theories (6:58), (2) Human Nature (13:29), and (3) Scale Part 2 (5:00).	Week 4 quiz
Week 5 Gender, Crime, and Interpersonal Violence 2/16	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 9, Section 2. "Gender and Crime," pp 222-228. Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 11. "Interpersonal Violence" pp 263-282. Note the required pages are not the whole chapter. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." Stanford Law Review. Pages 1241-1250. 	Week 5 quiz

	Watch: Where "Snoop" from the Wire Grew Up (3:45)Links to an external site. and Snoop Buys a Nailgun from the Wire (3:03)	
Week 6 Media and Crime 2/23	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beirne & Messerschmidt. "Crime in the Mass Media," pp 9-12. • Goode & Ben-Yahuda. "Moral Panics." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>. pp 149-156 and pp 167-168. Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KETV, "Boozy Bears" (2:23)Links to an external site. • Lecture on Moral Panics (20:10) • Lecture on Information Sources (10:27) • The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, "Copaganda - How Cops Shows Lie to You" (8:06) 	Week 6 quiz and Media project
Week 7 Economic Inequality and Crime 3/2	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 9, Section 1. "Class and Crime," pp 216-222. • Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 12, Sections 1 & 2. "Occupational Crime" and "Corporate Crime," pp 294-298 & 300-309 (skip Box 12.1 on p 299). • Kiel & Eisinger. 2018. "Who's More Likely to Be Audited: A Person Making \$20,000 - or \$400,000?" <i>ProPublica</i>, December 12. Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frontline, "To Catch a Trader," 2014 (53:41)Links to an external site. • Lecture on White-Collar Crime (12:56) 	Week 7 quiz and Discussion Post 2
Off Week 3/9	Spring Break. No class.	
Week 8 Race, Crime, and Justice 3/16	Read: Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 9, Section 3. "Race and Crime" pp 228-231 (you can skip Box 9.2). Listen: Price. 2008. "Bicycle Safety on Essex." <i>The Moth</i> (12:52) Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC News. 2010. "Lost Key or Bike Thief?," What Would You Do? (4:40). • Lecture on race, crime, justice (20:00). 	Week 8 quiz
Week 9 Crime Globally 3/23	Read: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "Compiling and comparing International Crime Statistics." Read: Singh, "How Dowries Are Fueling A Femicide Epidemic" Watch: Lecture on Global Criminology Listen: Ear Hustle, "What's Dangerous About Trees?"	Week 9 quiz
Week 10 Crime and Justice in the City 3/30	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bratton, Bill and George Kelling. 2015. "Why We Need Broken Windows Policing." <i>City Journal</i>. • Beirne & Messerschmidt. Chapter 10, Section 1. "Robbery and Burglary," pp 240-248. 	Week 10 quiz

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowry, Wesley. 2018. "Where Killings Go Unsolved." <i>The Washington Post</i>. June 6. <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vox & ProPublica. 2017. "Walking While Black" (7:58). • Lecture on Disorder Crimes (12:34). • Lecture on Broken Windows Policing (7:40). 	
Week 11 Police 4/6	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willis. 2014. "A Recent History of the Police." <i>Oxford Handbook on Police and Policing</i>, pp 1-19. • Finnegan. 2020. "How Police Unions Fight Reform." <i>The New Yorker</i>. <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture on What Police Do (4:30) • Lecture on Scales of Policing (3:04) • Lecture on Do Police Reduce Crime? (20:30) • Clip: Why Fingerprinting is Flawed (2:16) 	Week 11 quiz and Discussion Post 3
Week 12 Courts 4/13	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith, Allan. 2019. "Progressive DAs are shaking up the criminal justice system. Pro-police groups aren't happy." <i>NBC News</i>. • Rakoff, Jed. 2014. "Why Innocent People Plead Guilty." <i>The New York Review of Books</i>. <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture on the Purposes of Punishment (6:58) • Adam Ruins Everything. 2016. "Why the Public Defense System is So Screwed Up." from Adam Ruins Justice (2:22) 	Week 12 quiz
Week 13 Incarceration 4/20	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travis & Western, Poverty, Violence, and Black Incarceration, <i>Policing the Black Man</i>, 2015. • Lind, The 2 Facts That Explain Why the US Prison Population Exploded, Vox, 2015 <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House I Live In, 2012 (1:48:51). 	Week 13 quiz and Discussion Post 4
Week 14 Article Review 4/27	Watch: Lecture on "How to Read an Academic Study" (30:34).	Article Review

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the [RU-N ODS website \(ods.newark.rutgers.edu\)](https://ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) Students requesting a letter of verification should submit information using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/Verification>.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm>.

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm> or emailing careteam@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805. Additional support is available through Uwill services:

- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.
- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid. Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.