



Criminal Justice 47:202:423
Fall 2025

Crime Over The Life Course

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Class Date, Time, & Location:
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:00-2:20PM, Smith
Hall Rm. 245
Office Hours: By Appointment / Upon Request

I. Course Description

This course analyzes the development of deviant, anti-social, and or criminal behavior from childhood through old age, including patterns of onset, persistence, and desistance. This course offers an overview of what is known about why and how people start and stop committing crime at various ages. The topics covered in this course intend to provide students a developmental perspective on criminality.

Prerequisites: None (n/a)

Why study this?

The study of crime and the life course is inextricably linked to multiple disciplines outside of criminology and sociology providing students an interdisciplinary understanding of crime "causes." A broad and rigorous understanding of human development and the intersection of deviance offers students an intriguing and thought provoking semester-long learning experience.

II. B.S., Criminal Justice Program Learning Goals

Completion of the Bachelors of Science in Criminal Justice at Rutgers University - Newark should give students the ability to:

- Describe the development and function of major Criminal Justice institutions (police, courts, & corrections), the activities of actors within these institutions, and how these systems relate to the broader social, political, and economic world.
- Describe the correlates, mechanisms, theories, and situational contexts of crime, criminal opportunity, and techniques for prevention.
- Apply and analyze theories related to policies and practices of the criminal justice system and its major institutions.
- Demonstrate the ability to gather, explain, and apply empirical research in the field of criminal justice.
- Display a comprehensive knowledge about the process of conducting research about the criminal justice system.

III. Course Objectives

This undergraduate lecture-based class is designed to provide students a synopsis of key concepts in the study of crime as a developmental phenomenon. At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Identify key concepts in the study of crime and the life course.
- Evaluate and critique basic theories and research methods used by life-course criminologists.
- Apply theoretical concepts from the life-course framework to interpret patterns of criminal onset, persistence, and desistance from crime.
- HAVE FUN STUDYING CRIMINOLOGY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE!¹

IV. Required Readings

- Benson, M. L. (2013). *Crime and the life course: an introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
 - FULL TEXT READING.
- Hobbs, J. (2014). *The short and tragic life of Robert peace: A brilliant young man who left Newark for the Ivy League*. Simon & Schuster.
 - FULL TEXT READING.
- Duck, W. (2015). *No way out: Precarious living in the shadow of poverty and drug dealing*. University of Chicago Press
 - SELECTED CHAPTERS - ON: "Criminal Careers"
- Jones, N. (2018). *The chosen ones: Black men and the politics of redemption*. University of California Press.
 - SELECTED CHAPTERS - ON: "Desistance"

Supplemental Readings

All additional / non-textbook readings will be posted directly to Canvas , see under "Files."

- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Harvard University Press.
- Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2006). *Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70*. Harvard University Press.
- Giordano, P. C. (2010). *Legacies of crime: A follow-up of the children of highly delinquent girls and boys*. Cambridge University Press.

V. Course Structure

This course will be lecture- and discussion based, requiring participation from all class members. New concepts are introduced through lectures and seminar style PowerPoint presentations. A handful of classes toward the end of the semester will be devoted to discussing the non-fiction books: *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace* & *No Way Out: Precarious Living...*

To do well in this class, students must arrive in a timely fashion, participate in class discussions, read all assigned material (**prior** to class), complete exams, and prepare strong written assignments. In addition, some class sessions will be devoted to Mid-Term and Final Exams.

¹ This is critical!

VI. Course Schedule²

DATE	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENTS: TO BE READ BEFORE CLASS...	DUE DATES & NOTES
09/02 - 04 WEEK 1	FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN THE LIFE COURSE	- Elder, G. H. (1994). Time, Human Agency, and Social Change: Perspectives on the Life Course. <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i>, 57(1), 4–15. https://doi.org/10.2307/2786971 - Elder, G. H. (1998). The Life Course as Developmental Theory. <i>Child Development</i>, 69(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/1132065 - Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1992). Crime and Deviance in the Life Course. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, 18, 63–84. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083446	- Read all.
09/09 - 11 WEEK 2	FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN THE LIFE COURSE	- Benson (2013) - Chapter 1 - Fabio, A., Loeber, R., Balasubramani, G. K., Roth, J., Fu, W., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). Why Some Generations Are More Violent than Others: Assessment of Age, Period, and Cohort Effects. <i>American Journal of Epidemiology</i>, 164(2), 151–160. https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwj172	- Read all.
09/16 - 18 WEEK 3	BIOLOGY & BEHAVIOR	Benson (2013) - Chapter 2	- Read all.
09/23 - 25 WEEK 4	THE FAMILY	- Benson (2013) - Chapter 3 - Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). <i>Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life</i>. Harvard University Press. [Introduction & Chapter 4]	- Read all.
09/30 - 02 WEEK 5	ADOLESCENCE & CRIME	- Benson (2013) - Chapter 4 - Hoffman, John P., and Felicia Gray Cerbone. 1999. Stressful Life Events and Delinquency Escalation in Early Adolescence. <i>Criminology</i> 37 (2): 343-74.	- Read all.

² I reserve the right to change this course schedule.

10/07 - 09 WEEK 6	ADULTHOOD & DESISTANCE	- Benson (2013) - Chapter 5 - Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2006). <i>Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70</i>. Harvard University Press. [Chapters 1-3] - JONES, N. (2018). <i>The Chosen Ones: Black Men and the Politics of Redemption</i> (1st ed.). University of California Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv6p410 [Chapters: Introduction & Conclusion]	- Read Benson (2013) & Laub (2006). - Skim read Jones (2018). Evaluate the main concepts presented.
10/14 - 16 WEEK 7	THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS: CRIMINAL CAREERS	- Sullivan, C. J., & Piquero, A. R. (2016). The Criminal Career Concept: Past, Present, and Future. <i>The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency</i>, 53(3), 420–442. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427815627313 - Ray, K. (2021). Criminal career research: An overview of past and current research methods. <i>The encyclopedia of research methods in criminology and criminal justice</i>, 2, 576-582. - Blumstein, A., & Cohen, J. (1987). Characterizing Criminal Careers. <i>Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)</i>, 237(4818), 985–991. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.237.4818.985 - Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: a developmental taxonomy. <i>Psychological Review</i>, 100(4), 674–701. - GOTTFREDSON, M., & HIRSCHI, T. (1986). THE TRUE VALUE OF LAMBDA WOULD APPEAR TO BE ZERO: AN ESSAY ON CAREER CRIMINALS, CRIMINAL CAREERS, SELECTIVE INCAPACITATION, COHORT STUDIES, AND RELATED TOPICS. <i>Criminology (Beverly Hills)</i>, 24(2), 213–234. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1986.tb01494.x - BLUMSTEIN, A., COHEN, J., &	- Read Sullivan & Piquero (2016), Ray (2021), and skim read Blumstein (1987). - Review Moffitt (1993), and be ready to explain what an “offending trajectory” is. - Skim read (lightly review) Gottfredson & Hirschi (1986) and Blumstein et al’s (1986) response. THIS IS NOT MANDATORY. THIS JOURNAL DEBATE WILL BE REVIEWED IN LECTURE. - Mid-Term Review

		FARRINGTON, D. P. (1988). CRIMINAL CAREER RESEARCH: ITS VALUE FOR CRIMINOLOGY. <i>Criminology (Beverly Hills)</i> , 26(1), 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1988.tb00829.x	
10/21 - 23 WEEK 8	THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS: INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL	- Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). <i>Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life</i>. Harvard University Press. [Chapter 10] - Laub, J. H., & Sampson, R. J. (2006). <i>Shared beginnings, divergent lives: Delinquent boys to age 70</i>. Harvard University Press. [Chapter 10]	- Read all. Be ready to discuss in class. - Mid-Term Exam
10/28 - 30 WEEK 9	THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS: GENERATIONAL CHANGE	Giordano, P. C. (2010). <i>Legacies of crime: A follow-up of the children of highly delinquent girls and boys</i>. Cambridge University Press. [Introduction & Chapter 1 & Chapter 8]	- Read all.
11/04 - 06 WEEK 10	APPLYING THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE	- Benson (2013) - Chapter 8 - ROB PEACE (PARTS I-II) - Duck, W. (2016). Becoming a Drug Dealer: Local Interaction Orders and Criminal Careers. <i>Critical Sociology</i>, 42(7–8), 1069–1085. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514552534	- Skim read Benson (2013). - Read the Rob Peace chapters in full. - Skim read Duck's (2016) article. What is the central argument here?
11/11 - 13 WEEK 11	APPLYING THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE	- ROB PEACE (PART III) - DUCK (2015) [Chapters: Introduction & Chapter 2]	- Read all. Be ready to discuss in class / during book club.
11/18 - 20 WEEK 12	APPLYING THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE	- ROB PEACE (PART IV - V) - DUCK (2015) [Chapters: Chapter 6]	- Read all. Be ready to discuss in class / during book club.

11/25 - 27 WEEK 13	APPLYING THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE	• ROB PEACE (PART VI) • DUCK (2015) [Chapters: Conclusion]	- Read all. Be ready to discuss in class / during book club.
	THANKSGIVING RECESS (THURSDAY - SUNDAY)		
12/02 - 05 WEEK 14	TBD ...		- TBD... - Potential in-class film day?
12/05 - 09 WEEK 15	TBD ...	• Mayer, K. U. (2009). New Directions in Life Course Research. <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>, 35(1), 413–433. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134619 • Kanazawa, S. (2003). Why productivity fades with age: The crime–genius connection. <i>Journal of research in Personality</i>, 37(4), 257-272. • Campedelli, G. M., Calderoni, F., Comunale, T., & Meneghini, C. (2021). Life-course criminal trajectories of mafia members. <i>Crime & Delinquency</i>, 67(1), 111-141.	- TBD... - Final Exam Review. - Book Review Paper is Due.

VII. Grading & Assignments³

- Participation (10%)
- Book Review (15%)
- Reaction Paper (15%)
- Mid-Term Exam (30%)
- Final Exam (30%)

The following grading scale will be used for this course:

- A 90-100%
- B+ 85-89%
- B 80-84%
- C+ 75-79%
- C 70-74%
- D 60-69%
- F < 60%

³ All assignments will have an accompanying instruction & rubric sheet for reference.

For writing assignments, see resources for Thesis Statements: See Here - ([Creating a Thesis Statement, Thesis Statement Tips - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#))

Reaction Paper

In your reaction papers, you should reflect upon and describe key concepts in the life-course framework. Do not write fluff or simply copy and paste an AI response.

Rather, for this reaction paper you should review powerpoint slides, the textbook, additional readings, and other academic sources to develop a 3-page written narrative. In this assignment, it is your task to describe and explain central concepts to the life-course framework. This assignment should be typed and organized in paragraph structure.

Example Thesis: The life-course perspective in the study of crime emphasizes three central concepts. In this paper, I argue that the concept of “linked lives” is best understood as...

Book Review Paper⁴

In this course, we will review at least two pieces of non-fiction literature that contribute to our understanding of life-course criminology. Students are expected to select one of these texts and write / type a review of the book. This review is more than summary, students are expected to interpret and apply life-course concepts to the narratives discussed in each book. Expect a full length instruction sheet for this assignment.

Example Thesis: “In, *The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace* (2014), Jeff Hobbs critically analyzes Rob Peace’s life course to demonstrate that... In this paper, I argue Rob’s life was significantly impacted by ...

Example Thesis: *No Way Out: Precarious Living in the Shadow of Drug Dealing* (...) is an academic publication that follows the life of... The [Main character]’s life is riddled with complex twists and turning points which showcase key concepts of the life course framework. For example, ...

Mid-Term Exam

This midterm exam is designed to test your understanding and comprehension of course materials from Weeks 1 through 6. This exam will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. This exam is made up of 25 multiple choice, 15 True or False statements, and 5 short answer questions.

We will review all relevant material for this exam during prior class periods.

Final Exam

This Final exam is designed to test your understanding of course materials from Weeks 7 through 12. This exam will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. This exam consists of 25 multiple choice questions, 15 True or False statements, and 5 short answer questions.

We will review all relevant material for this exam during prior class periods.

⁴ For resources on thesis statements, [see Link](#).

VIII. Course Policies

Classroom Etiquette

All members of the class are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Inappropriate or argumentative behavior will not be tolerated. This class is intended to be a safe and informative learning environment for both the students and instructor. All questions from curiosity to critical thought are always encouraged and allowed.

Communication Policy

Your success in this class is of utmost importance to me. I recognize that we all learn differently and come with different strengths and needs to the classroom. Please feel free to email me with any questions regarding course materials, educational development, and campus resources. I intend to respond to all email inquiries within a 24-48 hour time frame. Be sure to indicate that you are emailing about this course in the subject line of the email.

Email: ryan.smith1@rutgers.edu

Late Work Policy

Students can be expected to submit late work only if there is knowledge of a delayed submission prior to the assignment due date. Please email the Professor if there is an expectation that you will miss an assignment and we can strategize for completion of the missed work. No penalties are given for communicated late submissions.

Technology & Laptop Usage

We live in an ever evolving technological world and computer systems allow us to more efficiently and effectively complete tasks. In this course, usage of Laptops and recording devices are permitted upon approval from the instructor. However, Laptop and computer technology must be utilized for note-taking and simple web searches related to course content. Outside usage of cell phones is not permitted. If students need to take phone calls or respond to text messages please quietly exit into the hall if permissible.

Academic Integrity

Members of the Rutgers University system must commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity - that is work that adheres to the intellectual and academic standards for transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas and conclusions. Cheating on exams and plagiarizing language of someone else as one's own qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates the standards of this institution and higher education at large.

Disability Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss

the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Wellness Statement & Student Resources

I recognize that coursework and managing all life spaces is challenging, and class is not the only primary demand of your life. You are certainly not alone and the Rutgers community prides itself on offering students an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Stressors related to health, money, family, and academic concerns can impact your physical and mental well-being. If you experience challenges, stress, depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, loneliness or otherwise feel down or alienated please consider connecting with one or more of the student counseling resources on campus.

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). 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) 353-1906 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 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

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: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>.

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: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-Being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805.

Additional support is available to any RU-N student through Uwill services:

- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.
- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection 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 contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.