

The Offender in the Criminal Justice System  
Program in Criminal Justice  
Fall 2017  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Syllabus for Brookdale College, Freehold, NJ

Instructor: Denise Mayfryer

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Officer hour: 5-6pm; Place: TBA

Tuesday 6pm-8:40pm, Brookdale College

Course Number: 01:202:496:80; Index Number: 20003

**Course Overview:** This course will cover the criminal justice system from the perspective of the offender. The course will provide students with an understanding of how and why offenders make the decisions that lead them to commit crime. The course will help students understand offenders' motives, perceptions, decision-making strategies and the rationalizations for crime featuring first-hand accounts from all types of offenders including murderers, robbers, illegal drug manufacturers, shop-lifters, sex workers and white collar offenders.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will learn from field studies about offenders' motives for committing crimes. By understanding offenders' perspectives, decision-making processes and motivations, students will have insight into the minds of the offenders
2. Students will be exposed to research about the everyday activities of offenders including how they interact with others, how they perceive the objects and events in their lives and events in their daily lives, and how they perceive the sanctions and threat of the criminal justice system.
3. The course will allow offenders to "speak for themselves," a different way for students to understand offenders' decision to engage in crime.
4. The course textbook places the offenders' words in a theoretical context and provides analyses and conclusions about the offenders' motivations.

**Readings:**

Required Book:

*In Their Own Words: Criminals on Crime*, Michael Birzer and Paul Cromwell

**Articles:**

Articles will be found in Sakai

## Course Outline:

### Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

9/5/17 Course introduction

9/12/17      **Topic One** - Doing Fieldwork with Offenders  
Chapter 1 – “Researching Crack Dealers: Dilemmas and Contradictions,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 2 – “Consenting to Talk: Why Inmates Participate in Prison Research,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic One, we discuss why incarcerated offenders decide to discuss their crimes and behaviors with researchers and why there are inherent dangers in studying street criminals.

9/19/17-      **Topic Two**      Criminal Lifestyles and Decision Making  
9/26/17      Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 3 – “Deciding to Commit a Burglary,” *In Their Own Words*;  
Chapter 4 - “Opportunities and Decisions: Interactional Dynamics in Robbery and Burglary Groups,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 5 – “Auto Theft and Restrictive Deterrence,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Two, we will explore criminal lifestyles and what gives some the drive to decide to commit a crime. We will look at this issue as an individual decision-making process and through the decision-making processes working in groups. We will also look at the restrictive deterrence decision making process of active auto thieves.

10/3/17-      **Topic Three**      Property Crimes  
Article(s)  
Chapter 6 - “Establishing Connections: Gender Motor Vehicle Theft, and Disposal Networks,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 7 – “‘The Devil Made Me Do It’: Use of Neutralizations by Shoplifters,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 8 – “Identity Theft: Assessing Offenders’ Motivations and Strategies,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Three, will look at aspects of those who engage in property crime – their motives might not be all economically based. We will examine the gendered nature of motor vehicle theft; look at the justifications, excuses, and neutralizations used by shoplifters to explain their crimes; and gain insight into the motives, perceptions and strategies involved in identity theft.

10/10/17      **TERM PAPER OUTLINE DUE**

10/10/17-10/17/17      **Topic Four**      Violent Crime  
Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 9 – “Gendering Violence: Power in Men’s Accounts of Domestic Violence,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 10 – “Serendipity in Robbery Target Selection,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 11 – “Peaceful Warriors: Codes for Violence Among Adult Male Bar Fighters,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Four, we will explore some reasons why people commit violent offenses. The rationales are often unexpected. We will explore the strategies used by abusing males to portray themselves as rational and non-violent. We will look at how robbers select their victims based not on rational choices but rather on serendipity and how white, working class males in a southern U.S. city participate in bar fights based on a code of violence as part of a system of order and honor.

10/24/17      **Topic Five**      Occupational and White Collar Crime  
Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 12 – “Crime on the Line: Telemarketing and the Changing Nature of Professional Crime,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 13 “Drugged Druggists: The Convergence of Two Criminal Career Trajectories,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Five, we look at how lifestyles and motivations lead to career choices and how career accesses can lead to abuse. Wanting a good lifestyle can lead one into telemarketing but keeping a certain lifestyle can lead to illegal telemarketing. Similarly, illicit prescription drug abuse by pharmacists can progress from access to the source to addiction.

**10/30/17      MIDTERM EXAM**

11/7/17      **Topic Six**      Illegal Occupations  
Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 14 – “The ‘Myth of Organization’ of International Drug Dealers,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 15 – “Informal Control and Illicit Drug Trade,” *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 16 – “A Perversion of Choice: Sex Work Offers Just Enough in Chicago’s Urban Ghetto,” *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Six, we examine how people keep their illegal occupations. We look at this from the perspective of those whose roles facilitate the drug trade and those in the sex work economy. We also explore how rational-choice and opportunity determine how and why the frequency and seriousness of popular justice affect the prices and rates of drug sales.

11/14/17     **Topic Seven**   Gangs and Crime  
Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 17 - "Gang-Related Gun Violence: Socialization, Identity, and Self," *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 18 - "Gender and Victimization Risk Among Young Women in Gangs," *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 19 - "Voices from the Barrio: Chicano/a Gangs, Families and Communities," *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Seven, we explore gangs and various factors that determine reasons for gang culture. We look at how gang socialization leads to gun-related violence, how being a female member of a youth gang shapes girls' risk of victimization and how gang members and their families impact gang activity and the entire community.

11/21/17     **NO CLASS**

11/28/17     **Topic Eight**    Drugs and Crime  
Article(s) to be posted  
Chapter 20 - "'E' Is for Ecstasy: A Participant-Observation Study of Ecstasy," *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 21 - "'Cooks Are Like Gods': Hierarchies in Methamphetamine-Producing Groups," *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Eight, we look at crime and drug culture. We examine whether marijuana legalization creates social dislocation, how club culture is associated with crime and what are the various roles/statuses involved in methamphetamine-producing groups.

12/5/17      **Topic Nine** - Quitting Crime  
Article(s)  
Chapter 22 - "Getting Out of the Life: Crime Desistance by Female Street Offenders," *In Their Own Words*  
Chapter 23 - "The Victimization-Termination Link," *In Their Own Words*

In Topic Nine, we see the processes by which female offenders and middle-class drug dealers desist from crime.

12/5/17      **TERM PAPERS DUE**

12/12/17     **ORAL PRESENTATIONS OF TERM ASSIGNMENTS**

12/19/17     **FINAL EXAM**

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**Grading:**

20% Class Attendance/Participation  
30% Term paper  
25% Midterm Exam  
25% Final Exam

The final grade will be assigned based upon the following scale:

A	=	90-100	C	=	70-74.9
B+	=	85-89.9	D	=	60-69.9
B	=	80-84.9	F	=	59 and below
C+	=	75-79.9			

**Preparation:**

The assigned readings are the basis of class discussion each session. Students are expected to have read the assigned text book chapters and other material prior to class`. *All assignments are due on the specified date.*

**Attendance/Participation/Lateness:**

Each student is expected to attend each class on time. For each class, those attending will receive a 90 for that day and those actively participating will receive a 100 for that day. Those arriving more than 10 minutes after class, will receive a 60 for that day. Those not attending class will receive a zero for that day.

Exams will be comprised of information from class lectures, media presentations and reading material.

Professionalism and courtesy is expected from each student. Using any device (other than a laptop/tablet for notetaking or other device for accommodation or by permission) is not permitted. Side conversations are disruptive. Disrespect of others with differing opinions or for other reasons is not acceptable. Those not behaving professionally and respectfully will be asked to leave.

**If it becomes evident that the class is ill-prepared, quizzes will be given and included in the class participation grade.**

**TERM PAPER:**

Term Paper: There will be one will consist of a research paper. The research paper for this course is a research paper of at least 5 pages in length, intended to focus on the offender in the field of criminal justice. ALL PAPERS MUST BE PRINTED WHEN HANDED IN.

A list of suggested topics is included at the end of this syllabus. The topic areas are guidelines and you have the ultimate opportunity and responsibility to develop the topic area to your own interests. The use of proper citation format is required. Most important, make sure that you present only your original work. The grading rubric for this assignment is located at the end of this syllabus.

You will submit a one-paragraph paper outline on or before class Tuesday, **October 10, 2017**. Papers are due **Tuesday, December 5, 2017**.

**Make-Up Exam:**

Make-up exams are a privilege that may be granted only under extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the professor. Make-up exams will be contingent upon a legitimate, bona fide excuse (such as death in the family, debilitating illness, emergency) that is presented prior to the test period (in almost all cases). The make-up exam will be given immediately upon cessation of the condition that caused the student to miss the exam. Failure to take the make-up as scheduled will result in a zero grade.

**Cheating:**

*Do not do it.* Sanctions for cheating and plagiarism will be levied in accordance with the University Policy in Academic Integrity. Each student should review the policy at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. Suspected cases of policy violations will be reported to the Department Chair and to the appropriate Dean.

**Special Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities who need special accommodations for this class are encouraged to meet with the professor or the appropriate disability service provider on campus as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations, students must be registered with the appropriate disability service provider on campus and must follow the University procedure for self-disclosure. Students will not be afforded any special accommodations for academic work completed prior to disclosure of the disability and completion of the registration process with the appropriate disability service provider on campus.

If you need special accommodations, you need to let the professor know up front and not at the time of the exam.

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 Term Paper  
 Grading Rubric  
 01-202-496-80

<b>Spelling and Grammar</b>  <i>No paper submitted.</i> <b>0 points</b>	<b><u>20 or more</u></b> spelling and grammar errors  <b>1 point</b>	<b><u>11 to 20</u></b> spelling and grammar errors  <b>2 points</b>	<b><u>7 to 10</u></b> spelling and grammar errors  <b>3 points</b>	<b><u>4 to 6</u></b> spelling and grammar errors  <b>4 points</b>	<b><u>0 to 3</u></b> spelling and grammar errors  <b>5 points</b>
<b>Content pages</b>  <i>No Paper submitted</i> <b>0 points</b>	<b><u>1 or less</u></b> Content Pages  <b>1 points</b>	<b><u>2 or less</u></b> Content Pages  <b>2 points</b>	<b><u>3 or less</u></b> Content Pages  <b>3 points</b>	<b><u>4 or less</u></b> Content Pages  <b>4 points</b>	<b><u>5 or more</u></b> Content Pages  <b>5 points</b>

<b>Content: No Paper submitted on 12/5/17.</b>  <b>0 points</b>	Poor conceptual continuity. Paper is not grounded in existing research on the topic. Paper is not written in an organized manner with an introduction, body and conclusion.  <b>10 points</b>	Conceptual continuity is evident. Paper is grounded in existing research on the topic. Paper is written in an organized manner with an introduction, body and conclusion.  <b>15 points</b>	Conceptual continuity enhances the paper. Paper is grounded on the topic. Paper is well written in an organized manner with an introduction, body and conclusion. Paper promotes continued research on the topic.  20 points
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The maximum score for the term paper is **30 points**.

All papers are due on or before Tuesday, December 5, 2017. All papers not received by that date will receive a 0 for the assignment.

NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

**ALL PAPERS MUST BE PRINTED.**

## **SUGGESTED TOPICS**

- 1. What factors make offenders stop engaging in crime?**
- 2. Why would offenders discuss their offenses with researchers?**
- 3. What about a criminal lifestyle appeals to offenders and causes them to keep offending?**
- 4. How/why is crime addicting?**
- 5. How/why do offenders justify their crimes?**
- 6. How/why have offenders used social media to commit crimes?**