

SOCI 434 A01¹ - Topics in Law, Crime, Deviance, and/or Control Fall 2023

Instructor: Dr. Tamara Humphrey

Course Description and Objectives

Paul's story: Born with fetal alcohol syndrome, Paul's early deficits were compounded by several injuries, a serious illness, and victimization. He has a grade 5 level of education and started using substances before the age of 10.

Paul has 20 offenses on record over a 28-year period. His official criminal history began at the age of 19 when he was first charged and convicted of theft and assault. He has since been charged with several additional thefts and sexual offenses.

Criminal Justice officials decided that Paul's risk to the community was manageable only through a structured living environment and a court-appointed guardian.

This individual is one who appears to have been set on a path toward antisocial behaviour at a young age, yet, under supervision, has stopped offending. Is this a typical scenario for people who engage in crime? Can we predict with any certainty who will start offending and when? Is disadvantage in childhood the norm? Do patriarchal systems and systems of racism impact individual offending pathways and responses to people who offend? What role does the criminal justice system play in offending? Can we distinguish between individuals who commit violent offenses and those who commit non-violent crimes? Do individuals ever stop committing crimes? What if punishment isn't the most effective way to guarantee community and individual safety? These questions will be explored by examining major theoretical perspectives in life-course and critical criminology using case studies of individuals who have committed serious and violent offenses.

By the end of the course, you will gain an understanding of the development of crime and criminalization over the life span and will be able to critically discuss the systemic and structural factors implicated in these pathways. You will also be able to assess theoretical arguments, and



¹ This online outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. Detailed course outlines will be made available for all registered students on the first day of class. Only those outlines are to be considered official.

illustrate whether empirical research, and real life examples support key claims that have been made within the field of criminology.

Given this class is in seminar format, **attendance and consistent participation through in-class discussion and/or discussion boards is required and expected.** In groups of 3-4, you will also be responsible for facilitating discussion about an assigned reading during at least one session over the term. You will also be expected to complete a course project in the form of an 'unessay'. This involves picking a topic related to course content and producing a project in the form of almost anything – except a traditional paper (examples will be provided)! For those of you who are more comfortable with papers - don't worry, there will be options that are closer to that. Our last class will be a showcase devoted to your hard work over the term. You can expect snacks and coffee/tea to accompany this!

While there are no formal pre-requisites for this class, having completed at least one criminology-related course is an asset.

Format of classes:

This course will be delivered in person.

Required Textbook

There is no assigned textbook for this class. Readings will be comprised primarily of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and possible e-books.