SOCIOLOGY 401D – CRIME AND THE LIFE COURSE  
Spring Quarter 2013  
SYLLABUS

LECTURES: 2:30-3:50 Denny 306
INSTRUCTOR: Professor Ross L. Matsueda
  Office Hours:  Tue, Thur 4:30-5:30pm
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course examines crime and deviance within a life course framework. How does crime evolve across the life span? What explains systematic patterns of crime over the life course? A life course framework views an individual’s life span as a set of trajectories (upward, downward, or flat paths over time) and turning points (important life events, such as graduation, parenthood, marriage, work, and incarceration) that alter the direction of trajectories. We will examine early child behavior patterns, juvenile delinquency, adult crime and incarceration over the life course. We begin by discussing important theories of deviance over the life course, including low self-control theory, informal control theory, learning theories, and rational choice theory. We cover life stages, beginning with how trajectories develop in early childhood, focusing on genetic predispositions, parent-child interactions, and child development. We discuss the transition to adolescence and the role of peers and schools in the development of delinquent behavior. We then examine the transition to adulthood, and key turning points, such as parenthood, marriage, work, and incarceration.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Provide you with an appreciation of the life course perspective in studying crime.
- Provide you with an understanding of basic theories, concepts, and research methods used by life course criminologists.
- Show you the connection between life course theories and ideas and real-world phenomena.
- Allow you to simulate the work of social scientists by applying theoretical tools to case studies and other data.
- Make you a critical consumer of media reports and politicians’ claims about crime and crime policies.
- Give you an opportunity to sharpen your critical and analytical skills through oral participation and written assignments.

COURSE WEBPAGE: http://faculty.washington.edu/matsueda/courses/401D/web401d.htm

Check here weekly for readings, assignments, course notes, exam reviews, and other information.

REQUIRED TEXT:
   Available for purchase at the University Bookstore, 4326 University Way. 206-634-3400

2. Other readings are available from the course webpage.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
1. Active participation in the course, which means completing readings and homework assignments on time and contributing positively to discussion in lecture. Credit will be given for positive participation in lectures.

2. Two in-class examinations, each of which will be equally-weighted and non-cumulative. The exams will consist of objective questions. The exams are scheduled for Thursday April 18th and Tuesday, May 14th in lecture. We are not planning make-ups for exams; plan accordingly now.

3. A final exam, which is cumulative, but weighted heavily toward the material since the second exam. The final will be held on Tuesday, June 11th 4:30-6:20.

4. A class debate, in which students will be broken into groups and apply a theoretical perspective to a life history reading.
5. A short (5 page) paper assignment, in which students conduct a brief interview with an adult and explore their deviance over the life course due Thursday June 6th in class. For assistance on writing, consult the Sociology Writing Center (http://www.soc.washington.edu/academics/undergrad_program/experientiallearning/SocWritingCenter.htm), the Odegaard Writing Center (http://depts.washington.edu/owrc), and CLUE (http://depts.washington.edu/clue/index.php). We also highly recommend the little book, The Elements of Style by Strunk and White. The first edition is available on the web at: http://www.bartleby.com/141.

GRADING:

Grades will be based on points. Each exam is worth 50 points. The quiz is worth 20 points. Positive contribution to lecture discussion is worth 5 points. Participation in discussion sections is worth 25 points. The theory application paper is worth 50 points.

| Two Exams: | 80 points |
| Lecture Discussion: | 10 points |
| Class Debate | 20 points |
| Paper Assignment | 50 points |
| Final Exam: | 40 points |
| **Total:** | **200 points** |

Final grades will be based in part on a curve, in which you will be compared to your classmates. The median grade—in which 50% of students grade higher and 50% grade lower—will be approximately 2.9-3.1. All grades are final and, with the exception of errors, non-negotiable.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Papers and tests are to be original work. It is a breach of academic honesty to hand in work that is not your own or to use parts of someone else’s work. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: copying of phrases, sentences, or paragraphs without proper citation, paraphrasing another person’s ideas or words without proper attribution, replicating the overall presentation structure from another source. Sources include textbooks, journal articles, newspaper articles, published or unpublished text, the World Wide Web (e.g., Wikipedia), verbal communication, paper writing “services” or any other source or person, regardless of whether you know him/her. Any form of plagiarism is grounds for failure in the class and removal from the University.

A lack of familiarity with the rules of plagiarism or the student conduct code in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. Knowledge of these rules is your responsibility. A clear definition of plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct is provided at http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#misconduct. For detailed information about other forms of academic misconduct and information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct read the University’s Student Conduct Code http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=478-120.

COURSE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Required readings are either available for purchase at the University Bookstore or available from the course website. The following is a list of topics and approximate dates:

I. PRELIMINARIES, DEFINITIONS, AND THE AGE-CRIME CURVE

1. Apr 1 Introduction to the Course
   
   **Readings:** None.

   
   **Readings:**
3. Apr 9-14  Age-Crime Curve and Latent Classes of Trajectories
   Readings:

***APRIL 18, THURSDAY: FIRST EXAMINATION***

II. LIFE COURSE THEORIES OF CRIME

5. Apr 23-25  Low Self Control and Informal Social Control
   Readings:

6. Apr 30-May 2  Social Learning, Symbolic Interaction, and Rational Choice
   Readings:

III. STAGES AND TRANSITIONS OF THE LIFE COURSE

7. May 7-16  Genetics, Families, and Child Behavior Problems
   Readings:
   Bensen (2013), Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 33-77).

***May 9, THU: CLASS DEBATE***

***MAY 14, TUESDAY: SECOND EXAMINATION***

7. May 21-23  Adolescence, Peers, and Schools
   Readings:

8. May 28-June 4  Adulthood: Work, Marriage, Motherhood, and Desistance
   Readings:
   Benson (2013), Chapter 5 (pp. 123-148).
   Kreager, Derek A., Ross L. Matsueda, and Elena A. Erosheva. 2010. “Motherhood and Criminal Desistance in
Disadvantaged Neighborhoods.” Criminology 48:221-258.

10. Jun 6 **Incarceration as a Turning Point**

Readings:

**Papers are due in Class, Thursday, June 6**

***JUNE 11, TUE, 4:30-6:20PM SECOND EXAMINATION***

*reading is available on the course web page.