

College of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Theory Comprehensive Exam
Fall 2020 2nd Round

Day One

Instructions: Answer any two of the following questions. Please notify the proctor when you are finished. If more than two answers are submitted the committee will read only the first two and the third will not be counted in any way. Responses are to be turned in no later than 12:45.

Once a student takes possession of the examination, this will be regarded as an attempt to take the exam, regardless of whether the student completes the exam, hands in any answers or remains for the full period.

1. Sampson and Laub's life-course approach dominates research that seeks to explain desistance from crime. Describe their basic perspective and the empirical research that bears on it. Then, critique their perspective – what are its problems, limitations, or omissions. How might these be addressed or mitigated?
2. Compare two theories that explain the rise of get-tough punishment policies that arose in the 1980s and thereafter. Discuss empirical research that supports claims made by these theories. Discuss empirical research that counters these claims. Defend which theory you believe provides the most credible explanation and both state and justify the criteria that you use for your assessment.
3. Discuss genetic confounding and how it represents a significant threat to criminological studies that use standard social science methodologies (SSSM's). In doing so, be sure to discuss heritability, gene-environment correlations and biosocial methodologies that are able to account for genetic confounding.
4. Describe the scholarship on immigration and crime. What theoretical arguments have been made? What is the empirical evidence?

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Day Two

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1. What are the major issues, questions and approaches in feminist criminology? In your essay refer to and critically appraise the most important contributions in both contemporary and earlier literature and research in this area.
2. Falsification is key to the advancement of science and yet criminology rarely falsifies and discards theories. Discuss two theories that, based on empirical evidence should have been discarded but have not. Support your position by discussing the empirical evidence bearing on these theories.
3. Much of the theorizing in criminology that uses social relations, circumstances or conditions as explanatory, borrows heavily from the work of either Emile Durkheim or Symbolic Interactionism. Choose either Durkheim or S/I and show how concepts developed in that work have become manifest in the work of criminologists. In your discussion link the concepts developed by criminologists to the earlier concepts of either Durkheim or S/I even though the concepts may not have the same name.
4. Choose an area of criminological theory that you have not discussed in another answer on either Day One or Day Two of this exam and discuss the major empirical findings in that area across the past twenty years. Be sure to discuss what has been learned from prior research in the area, what remains unresolved and identify suggestions for addressing these remaining issues.