

**University at Albany, SUNY**  
**School of Criminal Justice**  
**Ideology and Crime – RCRJ 408**  
**Summer 2014**

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**Course Overview:**

What is "ideology"? How do we develop it and maintain it? And, most importantly for this course, why is it so important in understanding crime?

Ideology is perhaps best understood as a framework that you use. It is a tool for understanding and evaluating the world. It is especially important when thinking about crime, because most of us (citizens, policymakers, politicians, etc.) have very little direct experience with criminal activity. Instead, we bring our underlying beliefs (our ideologies) to the discussion.

The best start to learning about the relationship between ideology and crime is to critically evaluate "what everybody knows" to be true, including what you "know." In this class, we will be looking at what conservatives and liberals "know," what the media "knows," and even what social scientists (like myself) "know."

This course will examine the role of ideology in constructing and reacting to the phenomenon of crime. Students will examine common ideological paradigms in criminology and criminal justice, while taking stock of their own beliefs. Finally, they will examine the roles of two institutions (media and academia) in influencing ideology.

**Course Objectives:**

- A conceptual understanding of ideology
- A better understanding of your own ideology and biases
- Major aspects of the "conservative" view of crime, and crime controls policies
- Major aspects of the "liberal" view of crime, and crime control policies
- Overview of how the media influences the perception of crime
- The influence of ideology in the social sciences

**Required Texts:**

Messner, S. F. & Rosenfeld, R. (2012). *Crime and the American dream*, 5th edition. New York: Cengage Learning.

## **Required Readings:**

Borum, R., & Fulero, S. M. (1999). Empirical Research on the Insanity Defense and Attempted Reforms: Evidence Toward Informed Policy. *Law and Human Behavior*, 23(3), 375–93.

Braga, A. A., Weisburd, D. L., Waring, E. J., Mazerolle, L. G., Spelman, W., & Gajewski, F. (1999). Problem-Oriented Policing in Violent Crime Places: a Randomized Controlled Experiment. *Criminology*, 37(3), 541–580.

Kempinen, C. A., & Kurlychek, M. C. (2003). An Outcome Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Boot Camp: Does Rehabilitative Programming within a Disciplinary Setting Reduce Recidivism? *Crime & Delinquency*, 49(4), 581–602.

Kovandzic, T. V, Sloan, J. J., & Vieraitis, L. M. (2004). "Striking out" as crime reduction policy: The impact of "three strikes" laws on crime rates in U.S. cities. *Justice Quarterly*, 21(2), 207–239.

Kurlychek, M. C., & Kempinen, C. A. (2006). Beyond Boot Camp: the Impact of Aftercare on Offender Reentry. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 5(2), 363–388.

Legge, J. S., & Park, J. (1994). Policies to Reduce Alcohol-Impaired Driving: Evaluating Elements of Deterrence. *Social Science Quarterly*, 75(3), 594–606.

Ludwig, J., & Cook, P. J. (2000). Homicide and suicide rates associated with implementation of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284(5), 585–591.

Lundman, R. J., & Kaufman, R. L. (2003). Driving While Black: Effects of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender on Citizen Self-Reports of Traffic Stops and Police Actions\*. *Criminology*, 41(1), 195–220.

Sherman, L. W., & Berk, R. A. (1984). The Specific Deterrent Effects of Arrest for Domestic Assault. *American Sociological Review*, 49(2), 261–72.

(Please note that all Required Readings are posted to Blackboard, BUT our one Required Text (Messner & Rosenfeld) must be purchased by all students. The 4th Edition or beyond is recommended.)

## **Course Learning Activities:**

- Reading the posted materials
- Regularly posting on the class discussion board
- Constructing and maintaining a "blog" on Blackboard
- Submitting three writing assignments
- Taking short quizzes (ungraded except for participation)

## **Course Requirements:**

- Completion of Quizzes (20%, completion only)
- Writing Assignment A (5% total, completion only)
- Writing Assignment B (10% total, graded)
- Writing Assignment C (15% total, graded)
- Blog posts (20%, graded) – one reflection per week
- Class Discussion (30%, graded) – two posts per week

Please note, rubrics for all graded assignments are located in the Rubric folder. They are also included with the individual assignments themselves.

Also note, exceptional writing ability is not required, but the online format necessitates that you dedicate yourself to improving your ability to communicate in writing. I will provide support resources on how to improve your writing.

## **Instructor Expectations**

- Academic honesty (no plagiarism or cheating)
- Daily participation
- Completion of all assignments
- Clear, concise writing
- Courteous behavior to one another at all times

## **Course Schedule/Outline:**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 06/23/2014 – 06/29/2014 | Icebreaking and the CJ System. Create blog and post; Discussion in Module 1 Forum; Introductory Quiz. |
| 06/30/2014 – 07/06/2014 | What is ideology? Blog post; Discussion in Module 2 Forum; Quiz 2; Writing Assignment A.              |
| 07/07/2014 – 07/13/2014 | Conservative Perspectives. Blog post; Discussion in Module 3 Forum; Quiz 3.                           |
| 07/14/2014 – 07/20/2014 | Liberal Perspectives. Blog post; Discussion in Module 4 Forum; Quiz 4; Writing Assignment B.          |
| 07/21/2014 – 07/27/2014 | The Role of the Media. Blog post; Discussion in Module 5 Forum; Quiz 5.                               |
| 07/28/2014 – 08/01/2014 | Social Science and its Discontents. Blog post; End of Class Survey; Writing Assignment C.             |

### **Writing Assignment A: Your Personal Ideology**

Due date: July 6, 2014 – 11:59 pm.

Now that you have a better abstract understanding of ideology, it is time to think hard about your own personal ideology. What do you think the world, in general, is like? What do you think people, in general, are like? Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this course, what do you think we should we do when people commit crimes?

You may also want to discuss where you think your ideology comes from. Is it from pure reason and logic? Your past experiences? Perhaps your family, or your community?

This is not a research paper, but a personal reflection. No citations are necessary. This assignment is ungraded except for completion. Completion is worth 5% of your final grade.

3-5 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman font. Save your response as a .DOC, .DOCX, or .PDF file, and submit it.

### **Writing Assignment B**

Due date: July 20, 2014 – 11:59 pm.

This assignment is a way for us to transition from our examination of specific criminal justice studies to a broader look at the way the media influences criminal justice opinions.

Please select two news stories that are about criminal justice issues. One story should come from a news outlet (a TV station, website, newspaper, news magazine, etc.) that you believe advocates a liberal perspective. The other story should come from a news outlet you believe advocates a conservative perspective. Compare and contrast the two stories. Highlight what makes each story liberal or conservative.

This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade.

4-6 pages, double-spaced. Times New Roman font. APA citation style. Save your response as a .DOC, .DOCX, or .PDF file, and submit it.

### **Writing Assignment C**

Due date: August 1, 2014 – 11:59 pm.

This last assignment is a research paper. I would like you to select one criminal justice policy (a law, sentencing reform, police program, etc.) and chart its history. Specifically, I want you to examine the role that ideology played in that policy's creation, implementation or evaluation.

This assignment is worth 15% of your final grade. Please see the attached grading rubric for more information.

7-10 pages, double-spaced. Times New Roman font. APA citation style. Save your response as a .DOC, .DOCX, or .PDF file, and submit it.