

Sociology of Crime

Last Updated: Wed, 01/07/2026

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3071

Section: HP

CRN (you may add up to five):
35036

Instructor First Name: Amy

Instructor Last Name: D'Unger

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course focuses on the important theories and substantive issues in the study of crime, with an emphasis on *sociological perspectives*. We will be examining such subjects as: how crime and criminals are perceived; methodological and theoretical approaches for studying crime; characteristics of offenders; and societal reactions to crime. The course provides a broad historical understanding of crime, with a focus on modern America.

Course learning outcomes:

- Students will describe major concepts in the discipline of sociology and the sociological study of crime.
- Students will compare and contrast the major theoretical perspectives and methodological issues in studying crime.
- Students will identify how sociocultural and economic forces shape individual and group criminal behavior.
- Students will analyze the American criminal justice system, its disparate treatment of groups of people, and how sociocultural, political, and economic forces influence the development of criminal laws.

Required course materials:

Cullen, Francis T., Robert Agnew, and Pamela Wilcox. 2022. *Criminological Theory: Past to Present, Seventh Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN# 978-0197619315, paperback.)

Grading policy:

1. **Attendance and class participation (5% TOTAL):** Participation includes two elements: **ATTENDANCE** and **PARTICIPATING IN CLASS DISCUSSION**.

I will take attendance most class periods. Excused absences will not be counted against you. Excused absences will be granted if there is documentation of attendance at an academic event, participation in an athletic event, illness, or family emergency. *Other excused absences will be granted at my discretion.*

In addition to attending class, you should participate in class discussion.

Using attendance as the baseline grade (e.g., a student who attends 75% of the class sessions will have a 75% base grade), good class discussion participation can adjust the final participation grade upward by up to 5%. A lack of class participation will not adjust a grade downward. For example, a student with a 75% base participation grade who consistently has informed things to say in class could improve their participation grade to 80%. The final class participation grade (attendance + class discussion) will count for **5%** of your final grade.

2. **Reflection Papers (30% TOTAL):** You will write three reflection papers (3 – 4 pages typed, double spaced) this semester. Each reflection paper is worth 10% of your grade. You will be given a writing prompt and be responsible for responding to the prompt by incorporating class materials (lectures, readings) and your own ideas. The first and third reflection papers will be graded by the instructor, while the second reflection paper will be graded by a class peer. More details about peer grading of reflection papers will be posted on Canvas.
3. **Examinations (35% TOTAL):** There will be three examinations this semester. Exams #1 and #2 are worth 10% of your grade. Exam #3 is worth 15% of your grade. All exams will cover the material presented in the readings and the lectures and will not be cumulative. The exams will be a combination of short answer and essay.
4. **Research Paper OR Research Poster and Presentation (30% TOTAL):** Each student will do either a research paper (9 – 10 pages typed, double spaced) OR a research poster and a 15 minute in-class presentation on a topic of their choosing. You will be required to submit a proposal for the paper/poster to have your topic approved. More details on the proposal and the research paper or poster and presentation will be posted on Canvas. The research paper or poster and presentation will count for 30% of your final grade (5% for the proposal and 25% for the final paper OR poster + presentation).

Attendance policy:

Attendance and class participation (5% TOTAL): Participation includes two elements: **ATTENDANCE** and **PARTICIPATING IN CLASS DISCUSSION**.

I will take attendance most class periods. Excused absences will not be counted against you. Excused absences will be granted if there is documentation of attendance at an academic event, participation in an athletic event, illness, or family emergency. *Other excused absences will be granted at my discretion.*

In addition to attending class, you should participate in class discussion. Using attendance as the baseline grade (e.g., a student who attends 75% of the class sessions will have a 75% base grade), good class discussion participation can adjust the final participation grade upward by up to 5%. A lack of class participation will not adjust a grade downward. For example, a student with a 75% base participation grade who consistently has informed things to say in class could improve their participation grade to 80%. The final class participation grade (attendance + class discussion) will count for **5%** of your final grade.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

All students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the policies of the Georgia Tech Honor Code with respect to behavior and academic honesty. Anyone engaging in acts that violate these policies, such as cheating, will be penalized. For more information on the Honor Code, see the Office of Student Integrity website at www.osi.gatech.edu and the text of the honor code at www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code. ***If you are not familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, ASK! Being uninformed of the policies does not absolve you from the responsibility of following them!***

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad orienting question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following learning outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following career-ready competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion