**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**SP538 PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR 2008-09**

**Module Convenor**

Dr Tendayi Viki, (GTV) Lecturer in Forensic Psychology. Room E1.11, Keynes College, internal extension: 4110, direct external line: (01227) 824110, email: G.T.Viki@kent.ac.uk

**Module Tutors**

**Course teachers:**

Dr Afroditi Pina, (AP) Lecturer in Forensic Psychology. Room E1.15, Keynes College, internal extension: 3781, direct external line: (01227) 823781, e-mail: A.Pina@kent.ac.uk

Dr Theresa Gannon (TAG) Senior in Forensic Psychology. Room E1.18, Keynes College, internal extension: 4827, direct external line: (01227) 824827, e-mail: T.A.Gannon@kent.ac.uk

**Seminar Leaders:**

Ms Manuela Thomae, Research Student, OC2.01, Olive Cottages, Keynes College, email mt96@kent.ac.uk (MT)

Ms Agnes Lech, Research Student, Ag. 05, Olive Cottages, Keynes College, email aml26@kent.ac.uk (AL)

**TA:**
Emily Blake, email eab28@kent.ac.uk (EB)

**Time and Location**

**Lectures: Spring Term:** Mondays, 10 - 11, RLT1.

**Seminars:** Seminars will be held weekly as follows:

**Group 1:** 09.00-10.00 Thursdays, KS8 – Manuela Thomae
**Group 2:** 10.00-11.00 Thursdays, KS8 – Manuela Thomae
**Group 3:** 12.00-13.00 Thursdays, KS9 – Emily Blake
**Group 4:** 13.00-14.00 Thursdays, KS9 – Emily Blake
**Group 5:** 11.00-12.00 Fridays, KS9 - Agnes Lech
**Group 6:** 12.00-13.00 Fridays, KS9 - Agnes Lech
**Group 7:** 11.00-12.00, Thursdays, KS9 – Manuela Thomae
**Group 8:** 13.00-14.00, Fridays, KS8 – Emily Blake

**Summary Intended Learning Outcomes**

- Possess an understanding of criminological theory regarding the origins of offending
• Obtain a basic knowledge of techniques for the study of offender behaviour and its contribution to police work.
• Develop an understanding of the role of the victim in criminal behaviour
• Have a basic knowledge of the function of restorative justice for victims and offenders
• Possess a basic understanding of rational decision making in offences conducted by people who make non-normal decisions, e.g. psychopaths, sex offenders
• Understand more fully the reality of the functions of different parts of the Criminal Justice System

Introduction

This course examines the topic of criminality from a broad psychological perspective. It begins by examining the relationship between law, criminal behaviour and morality and moves on to consider how criminal behaviour might originate. The role of victims in creating, defining and reporting crime is analyzed, and the psychological consequences of crime for victims and potential victims are explored. Gender issues in relation to criminal behaviour and victimization are considered. The role of opportunism in criminal decision-making is examined in relation to environmental factors and the justifications and excuses related to offending are explored. The origins of the criminal tendency in childhood are detailed and the concept of psychopathy and its role in crime is highlighted and examined. Finally, the study of offence behaviour and the contribution of investigative psychology to police work are discussed.

When discussing each topic area our aim will be to evaluate each topic in sufficient depth for you to be able to: (a) understand all the relevant the conceptual issues through a knowledge of the historical debates and current issues within of each topic, (b) evaluate critically the theories and research we will present, and (c) become more proficient in developing and responding to theoretical arguments through the discussions you will undertake in seminars. Teaching will be by weekly lectures and seminars; attendance at lectures and seminars is compulsory.

Assessment

Your attention is drawn to the following information to be found on the departmental website:

- Regulations relating to coursework deadlines
  www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/studying/learning-resources/assessment.htm#deadlines

- Guidelines on plagiarism and duplication of material
  www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/studying/learning-resources/plagiarism.html

- Guideline Criteria for Assessment of Stage 2 and 3 Undergraduate Work
  http://www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/studying/learning-resources/criteria2.html

Teaching is by weekly lectures and seminars. The Faculty of Social Sciences conventions on assessment and examination apply to all students taking this course.
To complete this course you must submit one piece of coursework consisting of an essay of 3000 words (contributing 50% of your final mark), and sit a written multiple choice examination (contributing 50% of your final mark).

*In the case of short-term exchange students unable to sit the exam, these piece(s) of assessment may be replaced by a single piece of coursework of increased length.*

**Module Evaluation**

You will be asked to provide feedback on this module by completing a module evaluation questionnaire. The questionnaires will be considered at a special meeting of the departmental Learning and Teaching Committee and the minutes of the meeting will be published on the departmental website at www.kent.ac.uk/psychology-local/minutes/ltc/index.htm.

**Main Texts**

**Main Readings and References**


**Also recommended for reference:**


**For a legal perspective:**


**Teaching Programme**

You should note that attendance at lectures, seminars and supervisions, and the submission of written work, are obligatory. For further information see the Faculty of Social Sciences Stage 2 and 3 Handbook.

**Week 13**

**Lecture 1:** Morality, Social Control and Law (GTV)

Required Reading: GMS Ch. 2.

Is law based on morality? Are there Universal norms of behaviour? The concept of legal socialisation. Can governments be immoral or criminal?

**Seminar 1:** Psychology and Law: Different Perspectives and Common Themes.
Week 14

**Lecture 2:** Criminality and its Origins (GTV)
Required Reading: RB, Ch. 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Are people consistently more or less criminal? How valid is the concept of a “criminal career”? Is criminality versatile? What kind of people commit criminal acts? Age and gender in relation to crime.

**Seminar 2:** Morality and explanations for the origins of criminal behaviour—Psychological vs other perspectives.

Week 15

**Lecture 3:** Topic 3: Victim/Offender Mediation and Criminality (GTV)
Required Reading: GMS Ch. 5;
**Seminar 3:** Creating, defining and reporting crime. Victim/offender mediation

Week 16

**Lecture 4:** Gender issues in research into offenders and victims (GTV)
This lecture considers the role that gender plays in research by looking at its relevance for both offenders and victims. Gender bias in research on the origins of criminal behaviour. The social significance of criminal behaviour in adolescence.

**Seminar 4:** Gender and crime: Issues and concerns.

Week 17

NO LECTURE OR SEMINARS: READING WEEK

Week 18

**Lecture 5:** Rape and Sexual Violence (GTV)
This lecture considers rape, sexual violence and the criminal justice system’s responses to rapists and victims. Evaluations of rape and rape victims, by lay people and the members of criminal justice system: Social psychological factors.

**Seminar 5:** Perception and evaluations of sexual violence

Week 19

**Lecture 6:** Justifications and Excuses for Criminal Behaviour (GTV)
Required Reading: GMS Chs. 1 & 4; Hollin Ch. 3 & 7.
Is criminal behaviour rational? The circumstance of crime. Crime and opportunity. The consequences of committing crime. Justifications and excuses. Attributions of responsibility. From the rationalising to the reasoning criminal: a reasonable step to take? Rationalising greed and violence: what has attribution theory to offer the discussion of “criminal tendencies”?
Seminar 6: Causes of Criminal Behaviour

Week 20

Lecture 7: Causes and treatment of delinquency (GTV)

This lecture examines the causes and treatment of delinquency. What type of crimes do young people commit? How do they understand what they are doing? Do early interventions work? Should they just be locked up?

Seminar 7: Criminogenic or Not? Can we identify what distinguishes young offenders from young people?

Week 21

Lecture 8: Psychopathy and Offending (TAG)

How valid is the concept of “psychopathic personality”? What is the relationship between psychopathy and criminality? Can psychopaths change? Are psychopathy and personality disorder merely “in the eye of the beholder”? Are psychopaths born or made?

Seminar 8: Mad, Bad, or just plain evil?

Week 22

Lecture 9: Theories of General Violence (AP)

This lecture introduces basic concepts lined to theories of general violence. Do we need a specific theory to explain aggressive and violent behaviour? How do general theories of offending link to these? Are there different explanations for ‘expressive’ and instrumental offences? Do we look at violent men and women differently and do they commit different types of violent offence?

Seminar 9: Fatal assault or murder – are there differences?

Week 23

Lecture 10: Theories of Domestic Violence (AP)

This lecture builds on our understanding of violence from the previous lecture and asks whether those who commit domestic assaults are similar to those who commit assault generally. We explore structural and individual explanations for this type of offending and how the context of the violence affects our responses to this type of violence.

Seminar 10: Patriarchy or Pathology? Which is more useful for psychologists addressing Domestic Violence?

Week 24

REVISION AND REVIEW LECTURE SESSION (GTV)
Seminar Discussion Topics and Core Background Readings

You should prepare for each seminar by reading at least two of the papers/chapters listed for that week.

Seminar 1: Psychology and Law - Different Perspectives and Common Themes.
What functions do psychologists perform in relation to legal issues? In what circumstances might evidence from psychologists be treated as more valid or reliable than that from other professions? Where does morality sit in a criminal and a legal context?


The development of criminal behaviour: vulnerabilities and protectors. Can some criminal acts ever be justifiable?


Thompson, L.D.G. (1999), Substance abuse and criminality. Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 12 (6), 653-657


Seminar 3: Victims of Crime
Who are the victims and what are the effects of Victimisation? Does the justice
system serve the needs of all victims? Can restorative justice work? Should we fear crime?


Seminar 4: Gender and crime: Issues and concerns.
This seminar considers the role that gender plays in research by looking at its relevance for both offenders and victims. Gender bias in research on the origins of criminal behaviour. The social significance of criminal behaviour in adolescence.


Seminar 5: Perception and evaluations of sexual violence
This seminar considers rape, sexual violence and the criminal justice systems responses to rapists and victims. Evaluations of rape and rape victims, by lay people and the members of criminal justice system: Social psychological factors.


Seminar 6: Causes of Criminal Behaviour
Is criminal behaviour rational? The circumstance of crime. Crime and opportunity. The consequences of committing crime. Justifications and excuses. Attributions of responsibility. From the rationalising to the reasoning criminal: a reasonable step to take? Rationalising greed and violence: what has attribution theory to offer the discussion of “criminal tendencies”?


**Seminar 7: Criminogenic or Not? Can we identify what distinguishes young offenders from young people?**
This seminar looks at what the research tells us in linked to offending behaviour, what clinicians identify as deficits in offenders and discusses what this might mean for intervention. We particularly look at the notion of social problem solving in assessment and discuss some limitations and potential for further research.


**Seminar 8: Mad, Bad or just plain Evil?**
The media and the public alike tend to think of psychopaths as the personification of evil, but how do most of us see them. This seminar explores our understanding of mad, bad and evil human behaviour.


**Seminar 9: Fatal Assault or Murder – are there differences?**
In the previous seminar we examined our understanding of psychopathic behaviour. This seminar looks at homicide offenders and explores differences and similarities between those who assault and those commit murder. We explore whether we need specific theories and approaches to explain this behaviour and discuss the implications.


**Seminar 10: Patriarchy or pathology? Which is more useful for psychologists addressing domestic violence?**

This seminar will explore some of the competing approaches to domestic violence, identifying the tensions between them, and look at the implications for prevention and intervention. Notions of heterogeneity are introduced and recent research findings discussed.


**Essay titles:**

1. Critically analyse the concept that criminal behaviour is immoral

2. With reference to research evidence, evaluate whether restorative justice works

3. Female offenders are treated with chivalry in the criminal justice system. Discuss with reference to empirical research.

4. Rape is motivated by uncontrollable sexual urges. Discuss with reference to research on the feminist theory.

5. Aggressive behaviour is normal for men. Discuss in relation to both male and female violent offenders
6. Patriarchy or pathology: Which is more useful when addressing domestic violence?

7. How might moral disengagement relate to other factors in the causes of delinquent thinking?

**Deadline for the essay is 12noon (Monday 6 April 2009)**

In the case of short-term exchange students unable to sit the exam, these piece(s) of assessment may be replaced by a single piece of coursework of increased length. The deadline for submission of this piece of work is also 12 noon, Monday 6th April 2009