

An Introduction to Criminology



Teacher – Miss Gaffney

Introduction

We would like to welcome you to this very interesting new course. This will give you a taster of criminology and hopefully get you intrigued and enthusiastic about criminology, just like we are!

An understanding of criminology is relevant to many job roles within the criminal justice sector, social and probation work and sociology and psychology.

WJEC Level 3 Applied Certificate in Criminology is a qualification with elements of psychology, law and sociology.

This is an Applied General qualification. This means it is designed primarily to support learners progressing to university. It has been designed to offer exciting and interesting experiences that focus learning for 16-19 year-old learners and adult learners through applied learning, i.e. through the acquisition of knowledge and understanding in purposeful contexts linked to the criminal justice system.

Course Structure

Unit 1 Changing Awareness of Crime	Internal
Unit 2 Criminological Theories	External
Unit 3 Crime Scene to courtroom	Internal
Unit 4 Crime and Punishment	External

You will complete units 1 and 2 in year 12 and units 3 and 4 in year 13. The internally assessed units (1&3) are carried out in the classroom and you can take your class notes into the exam!

Externally assessed units (2&4) are in the hall and under exam conditions – no notes for this one.

Unit 1: Changing Awareness of Crime

Aim and purpose

The purpose of this unit is for learners to plan campaigns for change relating to crime.

Unit introduction

Not all types of crime are alike. What different types of crime take place in our society? What kinds of crime exist about which we know very little, or which are simply not reported to the police and the media? How do we explain people's reluctance to come forward about crimes of which they have been the victim? Some crimes which seem inoffensive, such as counterfeiting of designer goods, have actually been linked to the funding of more serious crime such as terrorism and people trafficking; so why do people turn a 'blind eye' to these 'mild' crimes? What methods have governments and other agencies used to raise social awareness of these crimes?

Many people learn about the fear and fascination of crime from the media, but is the media a reliable source of information? To what extent are we misled by our tastes in programmes and newspapers about crime? Who decides what behaviours should be against the law? Who gathers information about crime? Can this information be trusted? Can we trust our own instincts?

Humans tend to judge other's behaviour by a variety of moral principles, not all of which are consistent or based on accurate information. We gain our ideas of morality from a variety of sources and one of the most important is the mass media. Police gather information about crime; but the data can be inaccurate. Criminologists have developed procedures to learn about crime, but these too have their limitations.

Knowing about the wide range of different crimes and the reasons people have for not reporting such crimes will provide an understanding of the complexity of behaviours and the social implications of such crimes and criminality. At the end of this unit, you will have gained skills to differentiate between myth and reality when it comes to crime and to recognise that common representations may be misleading and inaccurate. You will have gained the skills to understand the importance of changing public perceptions of crime. You will be able to use and assess a variety of methods used by agencies to raise awareness of crime so that it can be tackled effectively. You will have gained the skills to plan a campaign for change in relation to crime; for example to raise awareness, change attitudes or change reporting behaviour.

Unit 2: Criminological Theories

Aim and purpose

The purpose of this unit is for learners to apply their understanding of the public perceptions of crime and campaigns for change studied in Unit 1 with criminological theories to examine how both are used to set policy.

Unit introduction

How do we decide what behaviour is criminal? What is the difference between criminal behaviour and deviance? How do we explain why people commit crime? What makes someone a serial killer, or abusive to their own families? Criminologists have produced theoretical explanations of why people commit crime, but which is the most useful? Are these theories relevant to all types of crime? What can we learn from the strengths and weaknesses of each? How can these theories be applied to real life scenarios and real life crimes?

Knowing about the different types of crime and the criminological approaches to theory will give you a sharper insight into the kind of thinking used by experts and politicians to explain crime and criminality. Public law makers are informed by theory and apply these theories to their own solutions to the problem of crime. By undertaking this unit, you will learn to support, challenge and evaluate expert opinion and be able to support your ideas with reliable and factual evidence.

At the end of this unit you will have gained the skills to evaluate some criminological theories and know there are debates within the different theories. You will understand how changes in criminological theory have influenced policy. You will also have gained the skills to apply the theories to a specific crime or criminal in order to understand both the behaviour and the theory.

Unit 3: Crime Scene to Court Room

Aim and purpose

Through this unit, learners will develop the understanding and skills needed to examine information in order to review the justice of verdicts in criminal cases.

Unit introduction

What are the roles of personnel involved when a crime is detected? What investigative techniques are available to investigators to help to identify the culprit? Do techniques differ depending on the type of crime being investigated? What happens to a suspect once charged by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)? What safeguards are in place to ensure a suspect has a fair trial?

The criminal trial process involves many different people and agencies. Learning about the roles of these will give you a clearer insight into what happens once a crime is detected and the process that leads to either a guilty or non-guilty verdict. There are strict rules as to how evidence is collected from a crime scene and also strict rules governing the giving of evidence in court; learning about these rules will allow you to review the trial process and assess whether the aims of the criminal justice system have been met. You may be familiar with the role of the jury in the Crown Court, but you may not be aware of the many different factors that influence jury decision-making. By undertaking this unit, you will be able to assess the use of lay people in determining the fate of a suspect and evaluate the criminal trial process from crime scene to courtroom.

A miscarriage of justice occurs when an innocent person goes to prison and when the guilty person is still free and unpunished. At the end of this unit you will have gained the skills to review criminal cases, evaluating the evidence in the cases to determine whether the verdict is safe and just.

Unit 4: Crime and Punishment

Aim and purpose

The purpose of this unit is for learners to develop skills in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the process of social control in delivering policy in practice.

Unit introduction

Why do most of us tend to obey the law even when to do so is against our own interests? What social institutions have we developed to ensure that people do obey laws? What happens to those who violate our legal system? Why do we punish people? How do we punish people? What organisations do we have in our society to control criminality or those who will not abide by the social rules that most of us follow? We spend a great deal of taxpayers' money on social control, so how effective are these organisations in dealing with criminality?

Most people in our society are law-abiding and unwilling to break laws. Law-breaking is frequently of the petty variety, so serious crime and repeat offending is often restricted to a few people who cannot or will not abide by the rules that most of us consider to be so important. Society has had to develop a complex system of mechanisms, processes and organisations to ensure that people do not break the law. If they do commit crime, society needs to be protected from their behaviour. These social institutions each have different mechanisms, ideologies and policies. You will learn something of their variety, how they work and their effectiveness in preventing and protecting us from criminality.

Through this unit, you will learn about the criminal justice system in England and Wales and how it operates to achieve social control. You will have gained an understanding of the organisations which are part of our system of social control and their effectiveness in achieving their objectives. As such, you will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the process of social control in delivering policy in different contexts.

To complete an introductory course on criminology please click on the link below.

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/introduction-crime-and-criminology/content-section-0?intro=1>

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Once completed – give me feedback on which were your favourite aspects.

Further Reading

Alpaslan, Z. (2012) 'Is street art a crime? An attempt at examining street art using criminology', *Advances in Applied Sociology*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 53–8.

Cohen, S. (1973) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, London, Routledge.

If you prefer to watch TV shows and documentaries

1. People Versus OJ Simpson – Netflix
2. Amanda Knox – Netflix
3. Now they see us - Netflix
4. I am killer - Netflix

This might be something you wouldn't have thought of as a first pick, but psychologically, this is a very interesting topic. In *I am a Killer*, criminals who have received the death penalty relay the events for which they have been convicted from their own perspective. Speaking from death row, these criminals give you a very different side to the stories you hear about on the news. Along with the stories, the events are re-enacted without being too graphic. Do these killers feel guilty? Some do, but not all respond in a way you might want to see (with remorse).

Some come across as (surprisingly?) regular people, while others seem closer to the "stereotypical" image you may have of a murderer. This can make the series unsettling at times, but also turns it into a very compelling watch. *I am a Killer* doesn't veer either way of the judgement, you're left to make up your own mind about what has happened. How guilty do you think they are? It's a well thought-out series, and definitely interesting for anyone interested in psychology. Especially for fans of criminology, forensic psychology and social psychology; this is a good one.

5. **Mindhunter - Netflix**

This one is topically related to *I am a Killer*, but is set in the late 1970s. As you may know, compared to all the big fields of science – chemistry, physics, biology etc. – psychology is quite young. During the time the series is set criminal psychology and profiling were just about starting to gain serious interest. The premise of the series revolves around FBI agents and a psychologist from the FBI's behavioural science

unit who interview serial killers in the hopes of gaining insight as to why these people turned out this way. They hope to be able to apply this knowledge to solving future cases.

VIDEOS

Type criminology into youtube and take your pick.

6. **Mods & Rockers** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFL54R9g5Io>

7. **Jamie Bulger**
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=jamie+bulger+documentary

8. **Young gunman Panorama** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3O3bh59dRA>

9. **Hillsborough** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU5b7kfwVkA>

OJ Simpson - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugdTdHiVfYI&t=3s>
if you have Netflix, please watch <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80083977>

10. **Stephen Lawrence** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsHwKPE0mjU&t=28s> -

Select two of the above YouTube docs and create a fact sheet.

I hope that you enjoy working through these tasks and gaining an insight into Criminology. I hope this taster of criminology has given you an insight into the subject and a desire to find out more– I look forward to seeing you in September.

Any questions regarding the course structure or course content, just email me

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