

Week 1: Chapter 1

- Spiritual explanations -- events result from the influence of otherworldly powers
- Feudal lords had battles with each other, believing that god would give victory to the righteous party
- Spiritual explanations for crime today -- people who commit crimes are sinners and can be saved by religious conversion
- Natural explanations use objects and events in the real world to explain crime
- Scientific theories are a type of natural explanation that make statements about the relationship between observable phenomena, and can be falsified
- Research -- assertions of the theory are tested against the observed world of facts
- Correlation -- things tend to vary systematically in relation to each other
- Theoretical rationale -- a reason to believe that causation exists between two variables that are correlated
- Time sequence -- determined the direction of causation between two variables
- Absence of spuriousness -- the two variables in the correlational relationship are not both caused by another factor
- Causal relationships are always a statement of probability, not certainty
- Three frames of reference in criminology
 - One: crime is the product of the free choice of the individual, who first assesses the benefits of committing the crime against its costs. Therefore, create a system of punishment that increases the costs and decreases the benefits of committing crime to deter people from doing so
 - Two: criminal behaviour is determined by biological, psychological and social factors outside the control of the individual. This is the view of positivist criminologists, who believe that humans are not self-determining agents that are free to do as they wish
 - Three: the causes of criminal behaviours are similar to the causes of legal behaviours, and so investigating the causes of crime is a futile effort. Criminologists of this view seek to explain why some behaviours are legally defined as criminal while other similar behaviours are not

Week 2: Chapter 2

- The USA had a Great American Crime Decline from the 1990s onwards till present day
- Two approaches to explaining why US had such high levels of violence by the 1990s
 - Liberal argument -- increase in crime related to sociological root causes, an example of which is poverty
 - Conservative argument -- increase in crime due to moral poverty, where children didn't learn right from wrong and participated in things like drug abuse
- 1960s -- explosion of both property and violent crimes
- 1980s -- violent crime increased, property crime levelled off
- 1990s -- both violent and property crime decreased, violent crime diminished more
- Conservative book -- *Body Count*

- Authors predicted crime would soar further by the mid 1990s due to an increase in juveniles in the population and the emergence of “super predator” offenders
- Super predators -- act out in extreme violence at the slightest sense of being disrespected and have no value for victim’s life
- Poverty, which was crucial to liberal arguments, was not an important factor causing crime to these authors as during periods of increased government spending on social programs that created more opportunities and greater economic prosperity during the 1960s, crime still soared
- *Body Count* also argued against the liberal notion that racism and racial disproportionality in the justice system is a source of crime by saying that different races simply commit different amounts of crime
- Making prisons tougher will not work as most criminals do not believe they will end up in prison
- Utilising the death penalty would be futile as the legal system is set up to protect most murderers from execution
- Gun policies (either increase or decrease in guns) have no impact on crime
- Crime is not caused by economic poverty but moral poverty
- Moral poverty -- youth with no empathy or impulse control, early drug use, lack of loving parents or guardians
- Presence of moral poverty / health was the driving force of crime regardless of the child’s race, socioeconomic status or any other demographic
- Solutions for the problem of the drug-crime connection -- stigmatising drug use, boosting family, church, school and media institutions, or improving tougher measures through better implementation of punishment, supervision and policing, as government had previously been too lenient on criminals
- Elliott Currie’s liberal book -- *Crime and Punishment in America*
 - Attempted to dismantle the notion that stricter punishment was the answer and argued that an economic form of poverty was behind the crime increase
 - An increasing number of people were being imprisoned, particularly black men, partly due to the war on drugs
 - Rise in poverty, economic inequality and lack of social spending led to an increase in crime rates
 - Increased dollars spent on prison and incarceration were taken from public services such as education and housing, especially services for poor children
 - Rebutted *Body Count*’s claim of leniency by saying low imprisonment rates were due to poor rate of arrest and convictions, not leniency
 - Solutions would be attacking the crime problem through prevention, social action, and reforming the justice system with a kind-handed approach
 - Four areas that would work if properly implemented -- preventing child abuse and neglect, enhancing children’s social and intellectual development, providing support and guidance to vulnerable adolescents, and working intensively with juvenile offenders

- Social action to create non-criminogenic environments -- reducing poverty with higher wages and an improved social security system
- Rather than tough approaches such as extreme incarceration, boot camps and punitive probation, America should identify rehabilitation programs that do work and implement them on a large scale
- Both *Body Count* and *Crime and Punishment in America* believed in changing adolescents' environments, highlighted family health, and envisioned a future where crime would remain high
- Two explanations for crime decline
 - Constantly shifting factors -- economic measures, population demographics, police strength, and imprisonment rates
 - Phenomena occurring prior to the crime rate drop -- emergence of crack epidemic, legalisation of abortion, and unleaded gasoline
- Logically, places with more income inequality, unemployment, and poverty had higher rates of crime than places with more employed and wealthy people as poor people committed more crimes in places with opportunities for profitable crime
- When the economy is good, although there is supposedly less reason for people to commit crime, there is more to take for criminals
- Difficult to gauge the effect of economic problems on crime in areas where there are many related problems such as divorce, single-parent families, and poor housing
- Income inequality was present in the US in the 1990s, but the GDP and employment rates increased, and inequality did not seem to substantially impact crime
- Explanations for the crime drop in the 1990s
 - The demographic also changed in the 1990s as baby boomers aged out of crime -- large amount of babies being born led to more people being around to commit crime making the crime rates go up prior to the 1990s
 - The amount of law enforcement also increased in the 1990s and the increased number of police led to the decline in crime
 - Prison expansion through the 1990s also led to the decrease in crime due to the incarceration effect of physically removing offenders from society as well as the deterrence effect
 - Crack cocaine epidemic -- crack cocaine became extremely popular in the 1980s and led to violence and homicides due to territoriality of gangs that controlled the crack market, which decreased in the 1990s as crack cocaine began to decline
 - Legalisation of abortion led to a decline in crime as it reduces the number of unwanted children who were at greater risk for committing crime
 - Tetraethyl lead, a molecule used very commonly after World War II, was responsible for the crime epidemic and crime decline as it had neurological effects on children causing them to develop ADHD, increased aggressiveness, and increased impulsiveness leading them to be more likely to commit crime
- Explanations for New York's crime drop being much larger than other cities in the US
 - Large changes in policing -- new police, tactics, management

- Hot spots policing -- aggressive patrol, surveillance, and enforcement in the most criminogenic areas that have repetitive patterns of violent crime
- Targeting of drug markets -- getting drugs off streets
- Compstat -- managerial concept involving the gathering of crime information in a timely manner, mapping crimes, and having meetings with leaders of geographical divisions accountable for crime activity in their area
- Targeting of gun reduction and increased size of police force and manpower
- Some criminologists believe that by addressing only what they view as the root causes of crime, such as social structure and economic measures, crime can be reduced, while others take the more pragmatic view that deeply entrenched societal factors are immovable in the short and mid term and crime can be reduced more efficiently by managing opportunity, deterrence, and routine activities, and that resources should be allocated to these aspects

Week 2: Chapter 14

- Traditional criminological theories explained crimes of men and there were few that explained crimes of women and of the few that existed, most were simplistic and relied heavily on stereotypes
- Traditional theories were also gender neutral and applied universally to women and men, failing to explain why men commit more crimes than women
- In the 1970s women were moving out of traditional homebound roles and taking on more masculine roles making them more likely to commit crimes
- Schools of feminist criminology
 - Liberal -- filling in gaps, working with existing structure of traditional criminology, correcting distortions, promote women's rights, opportunities and roles
 - Radical -- central concept of patriarchy that dominates in society
 - Marxist -- root of male dominance lies in men's ownership and control of the means of economic production, sexual division of labour, women's actions that threaten male dominance are crimes, law a direct instrument of men's oppression
 - Socialist -- natural reproductive differences between genders underlie male-female relationships, as division of labour occurred due to women being preoccupied with caring for their offspring
 - Postmodern -- discourse sets aside certain women as criminal women
- Generalisability problem -- whether traditional criminological theories can be generalised to explain female criminal behaviour
 - Safer approach, but male-oriented criminology theories have little value in explaining female criminality
- Gender ratio problem -- why women are more likely than men to commit crime
 - Run the risk of not being theoretical enough
- Relationship between gender and crime is strong and undeniable
- First half of twentieth century
 - Criminology theories tended to explain all crime in terms of biological and psychological disorders