

**DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CRIMINOLOGY  
GRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

**REVISED PROTOCOL AND  
STUDY GUIDE**

**Design & Purpose**

The comprehensive exam option provides an alternate means for master's degree candidates to demonstrate competency in three basic domains. Each of the exams is designed to draw primarily from one or more core courses, supplemented by elective courses. Each exam should be viewed in a broader context and may integrate knowledge from other areas. For example, answers to questions in the research methodology area might incorporate examples of design and analysis from policing or corrections. Conversely, discussions of specific policy directions in the general criminal justice area might draw on the criminological theory area by identifying and discussing theories of crime underlying particular policies or programs. The three areas for examination are:

1.     *General Criminal Justice*  
This part of the exam will primarily draw upon CJCR 5010 and 5005 supplemented by 5007, 5020, 5026, 5030, 5031, 5040, 5070, 5500, and 5957.
2.     *Criminological Theory*  
This section will primarily draw upon CJCR 5000 and CJCR 5040 supplemented by 5010, 5050, 5070, 5580 and 5800.
3.     *Research Methods & Statistics*  
This portion of the exam will primarily draw upon CJCR 5850 and 5950 supplemented by 5020, 5030, and 5957.

**Evaluation**

Examinations in all three areas will be evaluated in terms of demonstration of the following:

1.     Breadth of knowledge: as evidenced by familiarity with significant current and historical issues, concepts and terminology across the exam area.
2.     Depth of knowledge: as demonstrated by detailed analysis of central topics in the exam area.
3.     Synthesis and integration of knowledge: as shown by connecting ideas, concepts, skills and information from different areas within the graduate studies, both in the examination area and across other examination areas.
4.     Display of critical thinking: as characterized by responses extending beyond presentation of facts and descriptions, to analyze through deconstructing the logic and identifying underlying assumptions and assessing supportive evidence.

## **Policies & Procedures**

The comprehensive exam will be administered twice annually, once in the Fall semester and once in the Spring semester. The exam dates will be selected by the graduate coordinator and/or faculty and will be approximately one week from the graduate office deadline for oral defenses. Candidates for the exam must provide a written request to take the exam during the first two weeks of the semester in which they wish to take the exam. The request must be submitted to the graduate coordinator for the department. An online form is available from the department's website.

Candidates who elect to take the exam must be currently enrolled in the semester that the exam is taken. Candidates must have completed 27 semester hours, including the 18 core hours before taking the exam. Candidates must have completed all conditions for admission to the program and have been admitted to candidacy by the graduate office before taking the exam.

A sub-committee of three faculty members for each of the three areas will prepare and grade questions. The format of each examination area will consist of three to four questions, 2 of which the candidate must elect to answer. The exam will cover three areas with 2 hours allotted for each. The exam will be administered during the course of one day. The candidate may take a 15-minute break between the area exams, but will not be allowed to take a break during the 2-hour area exam. A lunch hour may be provided between exams at the discretion of the graduate coordinator. Candidates will respond to each question in their own handwriting on paper provided. Books, notes, and laptop computers will not be allowed in the testing room.

Candidates must pass all three areas. In the event that some, but not all areas are passed, it is only required that the failed area(s) be repeated. In the event of a first-time failure of any portion(s) of the exam, candidates will have an opportunity to repeat any failed exam area(s) the following semester or later. Candidates must be continually enrolled until the exam area(s) are passed. In the event of a second failure of any exam area(s), the student will be required to repeat coursework supporting those failed areas prior to a final examination attempt. Any third attempt at the comprehensive examination will be final.

The examination will not contain any information identifying the candidate to faculty graders. Three faculty graders will independently and simultaneously read and grade the candidate's responses and assign a Pass or Fail with supporting reasons. The majority of assessment of graders will determine whether the student passes or fails each area. Grading will be completed and reported to all candidates within 15 working days from the date of submission of exams. In the event of a failure, the chair of the sub-committee for the failed area(s) will prepare a statement for the student reflecting the collective judgment of the graders.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### I. General Criminal Justice Area

1. Be familiar with current developments and trends in criminal justice. For example, what, if anything, is new in policing? What is different about policing today? What is new in the courts? What are the most recent trends in corrections?
2. Be prepared to discuss the effectiveness of current criminal justice practices (e.g., capital punishment, selective incapacitation, etc.). Be ready to discuss whether current practices are achieving the goals of the criminal justice system.
3. Be prepared to give examples of current criminal justice practices and policies and be prepared to discuss research on such practices and policies. What does the research say about the wisdom and effectiveness of current policies and practices? What does the research indicate we should be doing to change the criminal justice system?
4. Know the goals of the criminal justice system and be prepared to discuss them in relation to current developments in criminal justice.
5. Be prepared to discuss ethical issues in criminal justice. Review the ethical theories and know the principles of each. Be prepared to apply the theories to current ethical controversies in criminal justice.
6. Be able to explain the relationship of law with society. In particular, review the contributions of the three classical sociologists (i.e., Weber, Durkheim, and Marx) to sociology of law.
7. "The American System of Justice is a success." First, present the best evidence and arguments in support of this statement. Second, present the best evidence and arguments against this statement. Both of the sides of the argument are expected to be convincing.
8. One of the major challenges facing criminologists is the explanation of the recent "crime bust." Contrary to the expectations of many, since the early 1990s index crime rates in the U.S. have undergone their greatest decline in more than a half-century. Suppose you are questioned by a reporter who says "I am doing a story on the decline in violent crime in the United States and what accounts for them." Drawing upon your knowledge of both trends in violent crime as well as criminal justice policy, outline the answer you would give to this inquiring media reporter.
9. How are the main social institutions (i.e., economy, polity, family, education, etc.) related to crime and its control? How does the U.S. compare with other countries in terms of these social institutions? How does the U.S. compare with other countries in terms of crime? What makes the United States such a "violent" country?
10. Describe five crime control policies in the criminal justice system and their effectiveness in reducing crime. Are these crime control policies guided by theory and/or data? What additional three crime control policies would reduce/prevent crime in the long-term? Are these guided by theory and/or data? Be sure to back up your answer with references to authority.

11. What do we know about the workings of appellate courts and what don't we know? What types of cases are more likely to appear on dockets of appellate courts and why? Why is research on appellate courts in some ways more important than research on the U.S. Supreme Court?
12. Describe what was so ground-breaking about the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Roe v. Wade (1973) and whether or not the decision reflected public opinion on the issue of abortion at the time of the decision. How have Supreme Court decisions since Roe v. Wade affected a woman's legal right to an abortion? Have public attitudes toward abortion changed since 1973? Historically and politically, how can you explain the increase in anti-abortion activity, particularly violent activity? Do we need a separate theory to explain anti-abortion violence than we use to explain criminal violence? Why or why not?
13. Would you expect the U.S. Supreme Court's and lower appellate courts' agenda and decision making to be affected by the September 11 attack and the war on terrorism we are now engaged in? Why or why not? How and why does the political climate since 9/11 affect the current administration of justice in this country? In what ways are/will the legal proceedings against apprehended, accused terrorists be setting policy? Do we need separate theories for terrorists than we do for ordinary street criminals? Why or why not? How would you describe the attachment style and long-term orientation of any one of the current accused terrorists in custody in the United States? Your answer should be supported by authority and describe the effects of 9/11 on all aspects of the justice system.
14. Describe what we know about the causes of juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and victimization, and how the known causes are or are not being addressed by crime control policy. Select one crime control policy for each, describe its intended purpose, and whether the policy is effective in achieving this purpose. Do we need different theories to explain juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and victimization? What empirical evidence exists to support your position?
15. According to Gottfredson and Hirschi, what is the nature of crime, criminality, human nature, and self-control? What are the implications of their theory for preventing specific crimes? For preventing crimes 20 years from now? What are the implications of their theory for criminal justice mechanisms of social control like law enforcement, courts, and corrections? What empirical support is there for their theory? Generally in the history of science, new theories that challenge the traditional way of viewing the subject matter are considered a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift typically results in strong resistance from adherents of old theories. In what ways could self-control theory be viewed as a paradigm shift? Despite the empirical evidence supporting it, why do you think there is so much resistance to it? Do you think self-control theory is general enough to explain non-criminal public health problems that result from lifestyles such as HIV, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and lung cancer? Why or why not?
16. Describe what we know about the importance of attachment in normal emotional development? What are the effects of early attachments on adults? What can heal disturbed attachments? What policy implications does the research literature on attachment have for raising well-adjusted children who do not engage in delinquent acts? How could you incorporate what we know about "good-enough" parenting in the research on attachment into self-control theory?
17. Explain the historical development of the police in America and how this has influenced policing policies and culture.

18. Discuss the organizational structure of the police and how this affects police operations. What were the advantages and disadvantages.
19. Know the ethical dilemmas in policing, including the corruption of noble cause and how noble cause corruption is different from economic corruption.
20. Describe police culture in America. How does the culture influence the way police officers interact with society? How does police culture affect the community policing concept?
21. Discuss the American Juvenile Justice System. First, trace its history with emphasis on the philosophy of the juvenile system and significant developments (e.g., juvenile court, significant case decisions). Include a section on the differences in terminology and why there are such differences. Finally, discuss the current state of delinquency rates and the juvenile justice system.
22. Comment on the infamous Martinson report. Thoroughly explain Gendreau's principles of effective intervention with offenders. Develop a mock treatment program based on his suggestions while paying attention to Martinson's concerns.
23. Comment on the disproportionate numbers of African-Americans in the U.S. correctional system. What explanations are advanced to account for this disparity?
24. Provide a succinct overview of the extent of white collar crime in the U.S. What theories have been advanced in recent years to explain white collar crime? Provide detailed examples to illustrate these perspectives. How well do criminological theories in general explain white collar crime?
25. Comment on the growth in prison populations in recent years. What possible social or policy-related factors have contributed to this imprisonment binge? According to Blumstein and Beck (1999), what single factor seems to have increased prison populations in the past 10-20 years?
26. Explain treatment approaches for offenders with chemical dependencies. To what extent are these needs being met in our current system? Are prisons free from drugs? How do drugs enter correctional institutions? What solutions might decrease the entry of drugs into correctional facilities?
27. Trace the involvement of females in the justice system from the Middle Ages. Describe the typical female offender today. How does the criminal justice system reify traditional gender roles?
28. Discuss the routine activities approach to crime and criminal justice. What is crime prevention through environmental design? Explain local design against crime and situational crime prevention.

## **II. Criminological Theory Area**

1. Review the major theories in criminology. Know the macro level and micro level theories. Be prepared to discuss the social and psychological orientations of these theories.
2. Be prepared to discuss the rational choice direction of many theories and how they support or contradict other theories (e.g., labeling theory).
3. Review the theories regarding feminist criminology. What has been the historical development of these theories? Do the theories of feminist criminology accurately explain differences in gender with respect to crime?
4. Using several social psychological theories of crime, discuss how amenable gang violence is to empirical investigation. Suggest a possible line of analysis for your topic. To do this, you need to specify a researchable question. You need to specify the limits of your analysis. Your conclusion should assess the utility and/or importance of the perspectives you have selected for testing. Remember, this is a theory essay. The main points should focus on the relative applicability of this particular type of social psychology for empirical research.
5. Hirschi perhaps has been the most influential criminologist over the past 30 years. His formulation of "bonding theory" and later his general theory of crime has garnered considerable attention, leading to ample empirical tests of his ideas as well as to abundant contention and debate. Imagine that you have been invited to a symposium that has as its purpose the description and evaluation of Hirschi's lifetime theoretical accomplishments. You have been asked to deliver a succinct, 20-minute critical evaluation. In drafting this essay, remember that your session organizer wants you to deliver a paper that is fresh and has some teeth, but at the same time Hirschi sits on the panel and the room is filled with his supporters.
6. Provide an overview to the public on the significant issues and findings regarding the effects of biomedical factors on criminal behavior. You are expected to present an explanation of how these various factors are believed to affect criminality. Make sure to review the ways we study genetic factors, as well as some of the following: perinatal/neurodevelopmental factors, neuropsychological/neurological factors, neurochemical factors, and psychological factors. Finally, include a brief discussion on biosocial interactions.
7. Trace the evolution of the Chicago/Ecological School of Criminology. Provide the basic assumptions, variables, and propositions that were used by Shaw and McKay to explain the distribution of crime in Chicago, as well as findings of recent studies that have tested the effects of these variables and propositions in modern cities. Finally, discuss some of the policy implications that Sampson says can be derived from this recent research and can help communities reduce crime.
8. Trace the Classical School and deterrence theory from its beginnings to recent studies. Make sure to include key theorists, basic assumptions, concepts, propositions, significant historical events, types of research, research findings, major criticisms, and the significance of the Classical/Neoclassical School on modern criminal justice.
9. Outline critical and conflict criminology. Provide a Marxist interpretation of crime and criminal justice. Who are the main theorists associated with Marxist criminology? What do they have to say?

10. Distinguish between theoretical integration, theoretical elaboration, and theoretical absorption. Outline two or three attempts at theoretical integration. Be sure to fully explain the different components of the theories. Have these integrated theories been tested? What are some examples of empirical tests of integrated theories?
11. Discuss the age/crime debate. What is lambda? Explain the different stages of the criminal career. Why did this concept create controversy within the criminological community? Contrast the idea of a criminal career with a more general theory of crime.
12. Be prepared to explain the recent advancements in developmental criminology. How is this line of research related to neurological health, childhood behavioral disorders, and birth cohorts? Discuss the Dunedin study. How has this longitudinal design helped advance developmental criminology?

### **III. Research Methodology and Statistics Area**

1. Be prepared to apply longitudinal and cross-sectional designs to research questions. Know the limitations and advantages of each design and the appropriate applications of each.
2. Review the levels of measurement (nominal, ordinal, interval/ratio) and be prepared to identify variables and statistical procedures based on these levels.
3. Be familiar with sampling strategies (i.e., surveys, interviews, sampling procedure) and be prepared to apply one or more of these strategies in a research problem. Discuss validity/reliability of each.
4. Review the various types of univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistical procedures and be prepared to apply these to appropriate research problems. Review the risks associated with Type I and Type II errors.
5. Know how to interpret SPSS output from Chi-Square, Lambda, Gamma, t-tests, Analysis of Variance, Correlation, and Ordinary Least Squares Regression, etc.
6. Be prepared to interpret tables from journal articles related to criminal justice and criminology.
7. Understand how to interpret multiple regression models.

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