

Short Course on Criminal Psychology Module Outline



Week 1: Foundations of Criminal Psychology

Content: Definition and scope of criminal psychology, myths about crime, the biopsychosocial approach, ethics and responsibility.

Models/Theories: Biopsychosocial Model, Social Learning Theory, Trait Theory.

Empirical evidence: Longitudinal studies on risk factors for offending and meta-analytic findings on multifactorial causes of crime.

Practical (Group): Analyse a short offender vignette using biological, psychological, and social explanations.

Reading: Bartol & Bartol (2017). *Criminal Behavior: A Psychological Approach*.

Week 2: Psychological Theories of Criminal Behaviour

Content: Personality and crime, cognition and moral reasoning, aggression, psychopathy and antisocial traits.

Models/Theories: Psychodynamic Theory, Cognitive Theory of Crime, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Psychopathy (Hare).

Empirical evidence: Research on cognitive distortions in offenders and validation studies of psychopathy assessments.

Practical (Group): Map theoretical explanations onto a real criminal case and justify the most fitting framework.

Reading: Blackburn (1993). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct*.

Week 3: Developmental Pathways and Risk Factors

Content: Childhood adversity, attachment disruptions, adolescent brain development, pathways into and out of crime.

Models/Theories: Attachment Theory, Developmental Psychopathology, Life-Course Theory of Crime.

Empirical evidence: Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and longitudinal research on early onset offending.

Practical (Group): Construct a developmental timeline identifying risk and protective factors for a hypothetical offender.

Reading: Farrington (2003). *Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*.

Week 4: Applied Criminal Psychology in Justice Contexts

Content: Profiling and its limitations, victim psychology, interrogation and confession, rehabilitation and risk assessment.

Models/Theories: Cognitive Interview Model, Trauma-Informed Practice, Risk-Need-Responsivity Model.

Empirical evidence: Research on false confessions, memory suggestibility, and effectiveness of rehabilitation programs.

Practical (Group): Evaluate an interrogation scenario and identify psychological risks and ethical concerns.

Reading: Gudjonsson (2018). *The Psychology of False Confessions*.

Week 5: 50 Question MCQ Examination (2hr)

Content examined:

- Foundational criminal psychology concepts
- Major psychological theories of offending
- Developmental and trauma pathways into crime
- Ethical application of psychology in criminal justice contexts.