CRCJ4002 - Theoretical debates
Syllabus
Fall 2009

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CONTENT

CRCJ4002 is an introductory course to major contemporary debates animating theoretical criminology. Its 2009 edition focuses on the ‘new punitiveness’ thesis.

It has been suggested that there is nowadays a criminological and political consensus that the ‘public’ is increasingly punitive, and that ‘cruelty’ is no longer an unacceptable emotion to be publicly displayed towards criminalized individuals. Mass incarceration, zero tolerance policies, the adultification of minors, and the resurgence of indeterminate sentences are taken by criminologists as some of the symptoms of a ‘new punitiveness’ in liberal democratic societies. The course invites the students to meet, and actively engage with, different explanations of this ‘punitive turn’: a) social structure and ethnicity; b) the prison-industrial complex; c) populism, opinion polls and the media; d) the ‘culture of control’ proper to late modernity; e) de-civilizing processes; f) postmodernity. The course also locates these debates in the Canadian context.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, the students will have been introduced to the major explanations and criticisms of the ‘new punitiveness’, enabling them to:

- Assess critically political and mainstream criminological discourses on the need to punish (and to punish severely);
- Assess critically political and mainstream criminological discourses on the relationship between ‘public opinion’ and crime control policies;
- Locate change and stability in Canadian crime control policies in sociological and international contexts;
- Locate change and stability in Canadian penological rationales in sociological and international contexts;
- Mobilize critical theoretical lenses in their civic, professional, and intellectual engagements with criminalization and penalization discourses and practices.
MATERIAL

Students are expected to read the articles and book chapters detailed in the schedule (see below) before class. All required readings can be downloaded from, and printed off, WebCT.

Please also consider the recommended readings at the end of the syllabus.

EVALUATION

First assignment (40%) Due: October 23
A critical integrative discussion of the analysis of the ‘new punitiveness’ through the prism of either a) social structure, ethnicity, and the prison industrial complex, or b) populism, opinion polls and the media. Mobilizing the central arguments of the required readings associated with option a) (Christie, 2000; Wacquant, 2005, 2001; Welch, 2003 - Lectures II & IV), or with option b) (Chevigny, 2003; Franko Aas, 2005; Pratt, 2007; Sparks, 2001 - Lectures V & VI), you will present, in a paper of 8-11 pages (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages), a critical analysis of the punitive turn. How can social structure, ethnicity and the prison industrial complex, or populism, opinion polls and the media, provide - if it can - a useful theoretical framework to interpret the punitive turn? What are - if any - the limits of this framework?

Second assignment (60%) Due: December 8
A critical sociological analysis of a phenomenon related to contemporary criminalization and/or penalization discourses and practices. In a paper of 17-20 pages (annexes, bibliography and cover page do not count as pages), you will rigorously analyze, from a theoretically informed socio-criminological viewpoint, a contemporary manifestation of, or resistance to, the punitive turn. You are expected to display your understanding of one or more major explanation of the punitive turn in using it to interpret the phenomenon that you choose to study. A portion of the conclusion should reflect on the limits inherent to the theoretical framework and empirical material mobilized in your work. Examples of possible studies include: the implementation of zero tolerance policing practices in Toronto; the resurgence of indeterminate sentences in Canada; the politics of the death penalty in the U.S.A.; the transformation of political discourses on the causes crime in France; the making of sex offenders registry and community notification laws in Canada; the politico-legal activism of a given victim’s representatives in New Brunswick; ‘three-strike’ laws in California, etc.

Some remarks:

- Evaluation will be guided by the following criteria:
  - Quality (clarity, rigor, precision, justification, depth, exhaustiveness);
  - Originality;
  - Finesse (dodging common sense, considering alternative points of view, sharp but prudent and well supported affirmations);
- I really don’t care which font you use but choose a reasonable size, justify your text, use 1.5 line spacing, insert page numbers;
- Make a cover page;
- Secure your work with staples;
- Print with black ink (except for eventual pictures, figures and so on);
- Make sure all cited work appears in the bibliography (and by the way, I really suggest you don’t try to rely on plagiarism…);
- I don’t and won’t accept submission of assignments through emails;
- Any late assignment is penalized at -10% per business day (except on exceptional circumstances with supporting documentation);
- Any assignment which is not directly handed in to me in class has to be dropped in the Criminology drop box (C562 Loeb) no later than 4.30pm on the due date or the above penalty is enforced.
SCHEDULE

Part I - Introduction

I - September 11: The ‘new punitiveness’ thesis
Major symptoms of the punitive turn in liberal democracies (post-disciplinary prisons, mass incarceration, expressive penalty, etc.); overview of the principal sociological explanations of the punitive turn (the prison-industrial complex, ‘culture of control’, postmodernity, etc.).


Part II - Making sense of ‘the new punitiveness’

II - September 18: Social structure and ethnicity
Crime control as a tool to manage surplus population; the ‘remaking of race’ through crime control policies; the (USA) prison as ‘hyperghetto’; the overrepresentation of Aboriginals in Canadian penal institutions.


III - September 25: The prison industrial complex
The industry of crime control; the privatization of prisons and the commodification of prisoners; crime as an unlimited resource; prison labour.


IV - October 2: Populism, opinion polls and the media (I)
Populist and intolerant penal policies; the mediatisation and politicization of crime related issues; the ‘destatisticalization’ of crime; the ‘victim industry’; fear of crime.


October 9: University Day (no class)

VI - October 16: Populism, opinion polls & the media (II)
Populist and intolerant penal policies; the mediatisation and politicization of crime related issues; the ‘destatisticalization’ of crime; the ‘victim industry’, fear of crime (continued).


October 23: No class
VII - October 30: The ‘culture of control’
Societal changes and ‘Late Modernity’: the culture of ‘high crime societies’; the ‘exclusive society’.

VIII - November 6: (De)civilizing processes
Civilizing and decivilizing processes; transformations in the internalization of restraints.

IX - November 13: Postmodernity
Postmodernity as a socio-historical configuration vs postmodernism as a social practice; the ‘postmodern condition’; a new penal economy?

Part III - A Canadian Way?

X - November 20: The Canadian case (I)
Constructing and punishing Canadian young offenders; symbol and substance in the making and mobilization of The Youth Criminal Justice Act of 2002 *** conditional to the respect of the above schedule ***

XI - November 27: The Canadian case (II)

Part IV - Conclusion

XII - December 4: The limits of ‘the new punitiveness’ thesis
SOME RECOMMENDED READINGS


Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website:
http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website:
http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

**Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations** in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term. For more information visit the PMC website at
http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/acad_accom.html