UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Criminology

2627-3-E1401A040

Learning objectives

Knowledge and Ability to Understand
By the end of the course, students will have acquired a solid understanding of the epistemological foundations of criminology, its historical development, the main criminological theories, and the principal methods of criminological research. They will also be able to critically understand crime, violence, victimisation, and social control by situating these phenomena within their legal, social, and cultural contexts.

Applied knowledge and understanding
Students will be able to apply the theoretical and methodological knowledge acquired during the course to the analysis of concrete cases and contemporary criminological issues. They will be able to use key criminological concepts and analytical tools, drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives and innovative research methods to interpret crime and evaluate prevention and intervention strategies.

Autonomy of judgment
By the end of the course, students will have developed the ability to formulate independent and critically informed judgments on major criminological issues. They will be able to compare different theoretical perspectives and assess the social, legal, and ethical implications of crime prevention and criminal justice policies.

Communication skills
Students will acquire the ability to communicate and discuss criminological issues using appropriate criminological and interdisciplinary terminology, presenting well-structured and evidence-based arguments.

Ability to learn independently
Students will acquire the theoretical and methodological tools needed to update their knowledge independently, critically interpret emerging criminological issues, and apply the competencies developed during the course to national and international criminological contexts.

Contents

The course introduces students to the main approaches in criminology, examining crime, deviance, violence, victimisation, and systems of social control through an interdisciplinary perspective. Particular attention will be devoted to the epistemological foundations of the discipline, the methods of criminological research, the major theories of crime, and crime prevention and criminal justice policies. The course will also provide an introduction to selected developments in contemporary criminology, including narrative criminology, cultural criminology, and green criminology, highlighting their contribution to understanding contemporary social transformations and emerging forms of crime and victimisation.

Detailed program

The course provides a critical introduction to the main approaches in contemporary criminology, combining theoretical reflection with the empirical analysis of crime and its social transformations.
The course will cover the following topics:
• the origins, historical development, and scope of criminology;
• the epistemological foundations of criminology and criminological research methods;
• interpreting criminological data;
• the major criminological theories and their contemporary developments;
• micro-sociological and interactionist approaches to the study of violence – included gender-based violence;
• violence in its individual, collective, and ecological dimensions;
• the social perception and construction of crime;
• processes of victimisation;
• qualitative research methods in the study of crime, violence, and conflict;
• socio-environmental conflicts and environmental crime;
• contemporary perspectives in criminology, with particular reference to “narrative criminology”, “cultural criminology”, and “green criminology”;
• desistance from crime;
• crime prevention, harm reduction, and contemporary intervention strategies.

Prerequisites

No specific prerequisites are required.

Teaching methods

The course combines lectures with interactive teaching methods designed to encourage students' active participation and the critical application of the knowledge acquired. Alongside the presentation of the main theoretical approaches, students will engage with case studies, guided discussions, audiovisual materials, and empirical research, as well as class discussions on contemporary criminological issues.
The course consists of 10 hours of lecture-based teaching (DE) followed by 32 hours of interactive teaching (DI).

Assessment methods

Assessment consists of an oral examination designed to evaluate students' knowledge of the course contents and of the examination texts, their critical understanding of the main theoretical and methodological approaches, and their ability to apply them to the analysis of criminological phenomena. During the examination, students are expected to demonstrate the ability to use appropriate criminological terminology, establish connections between different topics covered in the course, and develop independent and well-reasoned arguments.
As part of the oral examination, students may also choose to discuss a coursework paper previously agreed upon with the lecturer. The paper does not replace any part of the examination syllabus but constitutes an optional in-depth study of a specific topic covered in the course. It requires the reading and discussion of one or more additional scholarly sources agreed upon with the lecturer and should demonstrate critical analysis, appropriate engagement with the academic literature, and independent reflection. The discussion of the paper contributes to the overall assessment.
No mid-term assessments are scheduled.
The final mark is based on the student's knowledge of the course contents, critical understanding, ability to apply criminological concepts and analytical tools, quality of argumentation, and appropriate use of disciplinary terminology.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

Students may choose ***one*** of the following study pathways, all of which are equivalent for the purposes of the final examination.

*Pathway 1 *

1. Marotta, G., & Cornacchia, L. *Criminologia. Storia, teorie, metodi*. Cedam, 2024.
2. Ceretti, A., & Natali, L. *Io volevo ucciderla. Per una criminologia dell'incontro*. Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 2022.

*Pathway 2 *

1. Marotta, G., Cornacchia, L., *Criminologia. Storia, teorie, metodi*. Cedam, 2024.
2. Ceretti, A., Cornelli, R., *Per una pace possibile. Responsabilità, giustizia e riparazione al tempo delle guerre*. Feltrinelli, 2026.
3. Ceretti A, Natali L (2015). “Strani frutti. Uno sguardo criminologico e visuale alla comprensione dei linciaggi come tortura pubblica”. In P. Di Lucia, L. Mancini (a cura di), La giustizia vendicatoria. Pisa: ETS, pp. 179-190. (pdf available)
4. Ceretti, A, Natali, L (2019). Criminologia del genocidio, interazionismo radicale e processi di violentizzazione. Il genocidio ruandese. RASSEGNA ITALIANA DI CRIMINOLOGIA, 13, pp. 174-185. (pdf available)

Pathway 3

1. Curti, S. *Criminologia e sociologia della devianza. Un'antologia critica*. Wolters Kluwer, 2025.
2. Natali, L. *Green criminology. Prospettive emergenti sui crimini ambientali*. Giappichelli, 2015.(pdf available)

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | CLIMATE ACTION | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS