

# Term Paper - Criminology

## Writing Intensive Course

### Student Learning Outcome

Identify how criminological theories are applied in both real-world practice and policy development.

### Assignment Overview

You will complete a term paper that applies a criminological theory to a real-world case and explores what society can learn from it. The final paper will be developed through three stages across the semester. You will receive instructor feedback at each step and will have the opportunity to revise for a higher grade.

### Scaffolded Term Paper Structure

#### Step 1: Find a Real-Life Case

Choose a real-world event or case (from news media, online sources, court records, or documentaries) that involves crime or justice. Summarize the event in your own words and describe why it stands out or deserves analysis.

#### Step 2: Annotated Bibliography Assignment

Submit an annotated bibliography with 6–8 sources that will serve as the foundation for your research paper.

#### Step 3: Apply a Criminological Theory

Select a criminological theory we have studied in class that helps explain the case. Clearly define the theory and explain all of its main ideas. Show how this theory helps us understand the causes, motivations, or societal responses involved in your case.

#### Step 4: Submit a Full Draft of Your Term Paper

Submit a complete draft of your term paper (8–10 pages) based on the work you've done this semester. This draft should include all the major parts of your paper so far, even if some areas still need polishing.

#### Step 5: Final Term Paper Submission

Now that you have submitted your full draft and received feedback, it's time to revise and submit your final version of the term paper. This paper is your capstone assignment and should demonstrate your ability to conduct sustained, critical analysis using criminological theories.

## Step 1: The Case

**Task:** Submit a 1–2-page proposal identifying:

- The chosen crime case and a brief summary of its key details (who, what, when, where, and why).
- Why is this case significant or interesting?
- A preliminary research question (e.g., “Which criminological theory best explains the motivations behind Ted Bundy’s crimes?”).

## Step 2: Annotated Bibliography Assignment

### Task

Submit an annotated bibliography with 6–8 sources that will serve as the foundation for your research paper. Your bibliography must include:

- At least 2 sources that provide details about your chosen case (e.g., news articles, documentaries, or court records).
- At least 4 academic sources that discuss criminological theories relevant to your analysis.

### For each source, include:

1. APA citation (7th edition).
2. A 3–4 sentence summary of the source’s main argument or key information.
3. A brief explanation of how you will use the source in your paper. For example: *“This source explains Strain Theory, which I will apply to the offender’s background.”*

### Purpose:

This assignment is designed to help you build a strong foundation for your research paper by engaging with credible, relevant sources. It ensures you are prepared to apply criminological theories effectively and use evidence-based analysis in your writing.

How to write: <https://guides.library.unr.edu/apacitation/annotatedbib>

## Step 3: Application of the Theory

### I. Introduction

Introduce the overall topic: applying criminological theories to a specific case. Briefly mention which case you will be analyzing (if relevant). Provide a sentence or two explaining the purpose of the paper and what the reader can expect in the following sections.

#### Purpose Statement

Clearly state the aims of the assignment: to summarize relevant theories, apply them to the case, critically evaluate, and conclude.

### II. Theory Summary

In this section, present the theory you plan to apply. This is where you define the theory, outline key concepts, and summarize how it explains crime in a general sense.

**Theory:** [Name of Theory]

**Key Concepts:** Define the key terms and main points (e.g., social bonds, self-control, strain, etc.).

**Explanation of Crime:** Briefly explain how this theory accounts for criminal or deviant behavior.

### III. Application of Theory to the Case

After introducing the theory, you will apply it to your specific case. This is where you connect the general ideas of the theories to concrete details from the case.

#### Theory Application

Show how the key concepts of the theory manifest in the case. Provide specific examples or behaviors from the case that align with (or contradict) what the theory predicts.

### IV. Critical Evaluation

- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Which aspects of the theory best explain the case (strengths)?
- What does the theory leave out or fail to explain about the case (weaknesses)?
- Practical Implications (Optional)
- Reflect on whether this theory have real-world implications for prevention, intervention, or policy.

### V. Conclusion

#### Summary of Findings

Recap the main points from your theory applications and critical evaluation. Briefly restate how the theories explain the key aspects of the crime or case.

## **Final Reflections**

Share any concluding thoughts on the theory's overall usefulness or limitations. Suggest areas for future research or real-world strategies that could emerge from these theoretical insights.

## **VI. APA Citations/References**

- Include a separate references page (or section at the end) listing all sources cited.
- Ensure they follow current APA guidelines (7<sup>th</sup> ed.).
- Double-check in-text citations within your paper for correct APA format.

## **General Tips**

### **Stay Organized with Headings**

- Use clear subheadings for the theory summary and application.
- This makes it easier for the reader to follow your logic.

### **Balance Summary vs. Application**

- Keep the summary sections brief and focused on key ideas.
- Devote more space to applying those ideas to the case, showing you understand how the theory works in practice.

### **Integrate Evidence**

- Whenever possible, cite actual text, data, or facts from the case to support how you apply the theory.

### **APA Style**

- Remember to paraphrase or quote accurately and cite all sources.
- The references page should match all in-text citations.
- Use proper headings (Level 1, Level 2, etc.) in APA style to structure your paper.

*In short, your assignment will read smoothly if you begin with general theory overview, then move into specific application, and finally focus on its strengths and weaknesses. End with a concise conclusion and an APA reference list. This structure provides logical flow, ensuring you cover all required components thoroughly.*

## **Step 4 Assignment: Submit a Full Draft of Your Term Paper**

Submit a complete draft of your term paper (8–10 pages) based on the work you've done this semester. This draft should include all the major parts of your paper so far, even if some areas still need polishing. Make sure to include the following sections:

### **1. Introduction**

- Open with a clear and engaging introduction.
- End with a thesis statement that explains the focus of your paper.

### **2. Case Overview**

- Describe the case you've chosen to analyze.
- Give enough background so that someone unfamiliar with the case can understand its key details.
- Explain why this case is important or interesting to study.

### **3. Theory Application**

- Apply the chosen theory to your case (from Step 3).
- Support your analysis with specific examples and evidence from your sources.

### **4. Critical Overview of the Theory**

- Compare how well the theory explains the case.
- Discuss the strengths and limitations of the theory in this context.

### **5. Preliminary Conclusion**

- Wrap up your draft with a brief conclusion that summarizes your key findings.
- You can leave room for ideas you plan to develop more in the final version.

### **6. References**

#### **Citations & References**

Be sure to cite all your sources properly throughout the paper using APA 7 style. Include a References page at the end of your draft. This is essential for academic integrity and will help you avoid plagiarism.

## Step 5: Final Term Paper Submission

**Length:** 8–10 pages

**Formatting:** Times New Roman, 12 pt font, double-spaced, APA 7 citation style

### Overview

Now that you have submitted your full draft and received feedback, it's time to revise and submit your final version of the term paper. This paper is your capstone assignment and should demonstrate your ability to conduct sustained, critical analysis using criminological theories.

### Task

Submit the final, polished version of your term paper. This version should reflect thoughtful revisions based on instructor and/or peer feedback. All sections should be clearly written, logically organized, and thoroughly edited for clarity, grammar, and citation accuracy.

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### Paper Requirements:

Your final paper must include the following:

#### 1. Introduction

- Engaging opening that introduces your topic and its relevance
- A strong thesis statement that clearly articulates your argument or analytical focus

#### 2. Case Overview

- Detailed and coherent summary of your case or issue
- Explanation of why this case matters in the context of criminological inquiry

#### 3. Theory Application

- Application of **one criminological theory** studied in class
- Clear connections between theory and case evidence
- Support with scholarly sources and/or primary documentation

#### 4. Critical Analysis of the Theory

- Insight into what the theory helps us understand—and what it may overlook
- Demonstration of your analytical thinking and ability to weigh competing perspectives

#### 5. Conclusion

- A well-developed conclusion that synthesizes your key findings
- Reflection on broader implications or areas for further inquiry

#### 6. References

- Complete APA 7–style References page

- Minimum of **5 scholarly sources** required
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### **Evaluation Criteria:**

Your final paper will be graded based on:

- **Depth of Analysis:** How well do you engage with the case and theories?
  - **Organization and Structure:** Logical flow between sections
  - **Use of Sources:** Integration and citation of scholarly material
  - **Critical Thinking:** Comparison and evaluation of theories
  - **Revision and Improvement:** Evidence of thoughtful edits since the draft
  - **Writing Mechanics:** Clarity, grammar, APA formatting
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### **Submission Instructions:**

Submit as a Word or PDF document via Brightspace.