

## Theory & Methods Comprehensive Exam

August 2017

### Instructions

The exam consists of four questions: two theory questions and two methods questions. You must respond to one theory question and one methods question. Make sure you carefully read and respond to all parts of each question.

The August 2017 exam will be distributed on **Friday August 11, 2017 between 9:00am and 12:00pm** by the Department's business manager, Donna Cronin. Both a paper and electronic copy of your completed examination must be submitted to her on **Friday August 18, 2017 between 9:00am and 12:00pm**. Late examinations will not be accepted and will result in a failing score. Please note that once you receive the comprehensive examination questions, you are required to submit an examination by the deadline; otherwise your exam will receive a failing score. If you experience extenuating circumstances that interfere with your ability to complete your comprehensive exam, you should notify the graduate program director immediately. **Please make sure your exam complies with the following submission requirements:**

- ☐ You have written a response to one of the theory questions (10-15 pages not including the cover page and reference list).
- ☐ You have written a response to one of the methods questions (10-15 pages not including the cover page and reference list).
- ☐ You do not identify yourself anywhere within the document other than on the two cover pages. You will be assigned a separate identification code for each question so your answers can be linked to your name after grading is complete.
- ☐ You have a separate cover page for each answer with your name, a clear indication of the question you have chosen to answer, and the identification code you have been assigned for that question.
- ☐ You have a separate identification code for each answer that is typed on both the cover page and header or the top right-hand corner of each page of your answer.
- ☐ You have separate reference sections for each answer that contains a list of references and source material that you have cited in your answers.
- ☐ You follow the APA format, with 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spacing, and 1-inch margins throughout your answers.
- ☐ You have checked your document to ensure that you have not plagiarized. Any finding of plagiarism will result in a failing score on the exam. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please see <http://plagiarism.org/>.
- ☐ You provide a signed honor pledge indicating that you neither gave nor received assistance with the comprehensive examination.

A committee of the entire regular graduate faculty (excepting faculty members on leave or on sabbatical) will grade all examination questions. To pass the exam, at least 2/3 of the grading faculty members must give each of your responses a passing score (pass or high pass). To earn a high pass, at least 90% of the grading faculty must assign a grade of "high pass" to each of your responses. If you fail the examination, you will be permitted to retake it one additional time.

### **Theory Questions**

1. In a recent article published in the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, Gabbidon and Martin (2010) identified the most significant books in criminology and criminal justice. Their research was based on data collected from a large sample of scholars in the field who were asked to nominate the most significant book publication in criminology and criminal justice. Assume you were one of the respondents. First, identify the criteria you think are critical for judging the theoretical significance of scholarly work. Second, identify the three most theoretically significant books in the field based on your criteria. Provide justifications for each book.
2. There are several theories in criminology that suggest a multi-level approach to crime, such that macro-level factors influence micro-level processes that then lead to crime. Identify a theory that makes this claim. Describe how this theory integrates the macro- and micro-level to explain crime. Review the existing empirical literature testing the theory and assess whether there is support for a multi-level explanation of crime.

### **Methods Questions**

1. A maxim of social science is that the world is multivariate. As a result, criminology and criminal justice research studies frequently test hypothesized relationships between dependent variables and one or more independent variables, but also often include "control" variables. What factors should be considered when deciding on proper control variables? How is the inclusion of control variables relevant to making causal inferences? What other research design choices can be made to demonstrate hypothesized relationships are causal, as opposed to just correlational? Use examples from empirical research to demonstrate.
2. You have received a substantial grant from the National Institute of Justice to study school-based arrests and the school-to-prison pipeline. Describe in detail what your study will look like. Your study design may be quantitative, qualitative, or an integration of the two (mixed-methods). In your proposal narrative, be sure to include:
  - A statement of the problem
  - The research question(s) and/or hypotheses that will be addressed
  - A detailed description of research design and methods, including data collection strategies, a description of the sample, variables (or information) collected, analysis plan, and the strategies you will use to ensure the internal and external validity of your results
  - Implications for criminal justice policy, practice, and theory