

Theory & Methods Comprehensive Exam

January 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 January 2017 exam will be distributed on Tuesday 1/3/2017 by the Department's administrative specialist, Shamauri Jenkins. Both a paper and electronic copy of your completed examination must be submitted to her by noon on Tuesday 1/10/2017. 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 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 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 $\frac{2}{3}$ 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. There has long been a debate in the field about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of theoretical integration. Outline the arguments on both sides of the debate (i.e., for and against) incorporating two leading theories of crime from the list below as examples. Make sure to incorporate the historical roots and current empirical standing of the theories to bolster your arguments. Conclude your paper with your stance on the debate based on the arguments presented.
 - Social learning theory
 - Social bond theory
 - General strain theory
 - Self-control theory
 - Rational choice theory

2. Using at least two criminological theories, explain violent offending by males and females. In your response, discuss the merits of using each theory to explain any differences in offending patterns between both sexes.

Methods Questions

1. The National Institute of Justice's [CrimeSolutions.gov](https://www.crimesolutions.gov) examines research evidence to rate the effectiveness of criminal justice programs. CrimeSolutions.gov specifies as part of their rating and review process that "nonexperimental, qualitative, ethnographic and case-study research is collected if it adds contextual information to the program description, but is not used to determine the program's evidence rating." Only randomized field experiments and quasi-experimental research designs are considered as evidence of a program's effectiveness. Discuss the implications of this rule by reviewing the relative strengths and weaknesses of true- and quasi-experimental designs versus non-experimental, qualitative, ethnographic, and case-study designs.
2. An important theme of the Black Lives Matter movement is that blacks historically have been and continue to be disproportionately questioned, stopped, cited, harassed, arrested, and killed by law enforcement officers. Critically assess the historical and empirical evidence in support of this claim. What are the strengths and limitations of the findings in this literature? What methodological steps should we take to better understand this set of problems in the future?