

# What is Criminology?

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What makes people do bad things, and how do our rules (both religious and legal) deal with it? Criminology is like a deep dive into crime. It's not just about what's legal or illegal; it's about morality, society, and even religion. Studying crime isn't just schoolwork; it's about understanding fairness and what it means to be human. There are old ideas about why people break the rules, like the idea of free will, and newer ideas about how society affects people (Gray, 2024). How can we measure crime while remembering that real people are involved? It's hard to be both accurate and understanding. When we look at things like poverty and broken families that often lead to crime, shouldn't we remember to care for those who are struggling? The justice system is supposed to judge and help, but does it always show mercy? When we try to prevent crime, should we focus on punishment, or are there better ways to make things right? Criminology means looking at the whole picture and believing that things can get better. By studying theories and data (Sacau-Fontenla & Morais, 2024), we can try to understand crime and create a more just society.

What is criminology really about? It's about trying to figure out crime, where it comes from, how it shows up, and how it affects society. It's not just about laws; it's about big questions like: Why do people do bad things? How does society play a role? And how can we help people and society heal? Criminology is like a science that looks at crime as a social problem. It looks at what criminals do, how laws are made, and how society reacts to crime (Mehta et al., 2020). This makes us think about whether our laws match up with what's morally right.

Criminology covers a lot of ground, but it's all connected. It looks at patterns of criminal behavior, and also at inequalities that might lead to crime. To understand it all, we need to pull in ideas from different fields like sociology, psychology, religion, law, and ethics. We need to think about what makes people choose to commit crimes. We also need to look at how the police, courts, and prisons work, and whether they're fair (Gray, 2024). Criminology asks us: How can we measure crime accurately? And how can we prevent crime in a way that helps people change?

Criminology isn't just about studying; it's about thinking deeply about what's broken in human relationships and how to fix it. It asks us to balance being kind and holding people responsible. It asks us to hope for change, not just control. It asks: Can we really understand crime without thinking about what's right and wrong? Criminology is all about asking these kinds of questions (Sacau-Fontenla & Morais, 2024) and thinking about how people can mess up and how they can find grace.

Criminological theories have changed a lot over time as people have tried to figure out crime. People used to explain crime through religion, thinking it was caused by sin or evil spirits. During the Renaissance, people started thinking about crime as breaking a social agreement instead of just disobeying God. This led to the idea that people have free will and choose to commit crimes (the classical school).

But is that the whole story? In the 1800s, people started using science to understand crime, looking for the reasons behind it. Cesare Lombroso thought that some people were born criminals, but that idea has been mostly rejected. Still, it made people think about whether biology plays a role in crime. It makes us think about whether people are born with a tendency to do wrong but can still find redemption.

Sociology also played a role. Durkheim said that when society changes quickly, people can feel lost and start breaking the rules. This makes us wonder whether crime is a personal problem or a sign of a sick society. Later theories looked at how society influences people's behavior and challenged the idea of simple labels like sinner and saint (Mehta et al., 2020). The history of criminology is about trying to balance fairness, mercy, law, and understanding (Gray, 2024).

What are the main ideas that help us understand crime? Criminology has different theories that look at crime in different ways. Is crime a result of something wrong with the person, a problem in society, or inequalities in the system? The Classical School says people make rational choices, and crime happens when they think it's worth it. But is everyone really that rational and independent? The Positivist School looks at biological and psychological reasons for crime, asking whether criminals are driven by things they can't control. This makes religious thinkers wonder whether grace can overcome even those limitations.

Sociological theories look at how crime is connected to society and culture. Strain theory says that when people can't achieve their goals through legitimate means, they might turn to crime (Mehta et al., 2020). This makes us ask whether society is fair to everyone. Labeling theory says that how society reacts to people can push them toward crime. Conflict theory says that powerful people use the law to stay in control, not to achieve justice for all.

Modern theories, like critical criminology and feminist theories, look at how different forms of oppression intersect and acknowledge the voices that are often ignored. We need to ask whose stories are being told and whose are being hidden. Criminological theories

aren't just about explaining behavior; they're about asking ethical questions about justice: How can we be both compassionate and responsible? Can the legal system be both judgmental and merciful? Thinking about these things makes criminology more than just a field of study; it's a search for understanding human weakness in the light of what's right (Gray, 2024).

Measuring crime is more than just counting; it's about asking tough questions about what crime is and how society works. Defining crime is tricky because it shows up in so many different ways. Crime statistics are often seen as straightforward, but they're actually influenced by things like legal definitions, police priorities, and cultural attitudes. We rely on official data like police records, but we have to wonder about what's missing: the crimes that go unreported (Mehta et al., 2020). This makes us question how much we can trust statistics.

There are other ways to measure crime, like surveys where people report their own crimes or experiences as victims. But these methods can be affected by people's memories and biases. There's a tension between wanting accurate numbers and understanding the complexities of crime. Can we measure crime ethically, with humility and awareness of its limitations?

Enforcement practices vary from place to place, showing that justice is connected to geography (Sacau-Fontenla & Morais, 2024). This makes us think about how power shapes data collection, and which crimes get noticed and which don't. We need to think about whether we're judging fairly or just reinforcing injustice.

But there's hope: By improving how we measure crime and being aware of the limitations, we can find ways to help people and society heal. By accepting the complexities of crime, we show that we're committed to finding a truth that goes beyond just numbers--a truth that can help turn brokenness into restoration (Gray, 2024). Knowledge can be a way to break harmful cycles instead of just controlling people.

Social issues, like where you live and who you hang with, can really shape whether someone ends up breaking the law. Can you even separate a person from what's going on around them every day? Things like family and the rules of society for sure play a big role in whether people start and keep doing bad things. How do you balance the idea that people make their own choices with the fact that society pushes them in certain directions? This back-and-forth gives people who study crime a lot to think about.

Your family is the first place you learn what's right and wrong, but it can also be where people first get into trouble. If parents don't guide their kids well or just ignore them, it can create a space where bad behavior can grow. Friends also have a big influence. Young people in bad groups might start to see themselves as rebels against society. So, criminal behavior isn't always just a random thing; it can be a reaction from people who feel left out.

Money problems make things even harder. If people are always struggling to survive, they might not care as much about doing things the right way. When it seems like there's no way to get ahead legally, some people might turn to crime.

Deep-down inequalities in how things are set up can also keep people down. Issues like racism can mess with how people see the world and make them feel like they don't belong, which can lead to them acting out against what they see as unfair. But there's still hope. If people work together and show each other compassion, things can change.

All these social things that push people toward crime mean we need to be understanding and realize that criminal acts come from a mix of personal problems and problems in society. Maybe we should think about fixing people instead of just punishing them.

Justice is like a goal we try to reach with our courts and laws. The criminal justice system has three parts: cops, courts, and prisons. Each one has a job to do in keeping order and making sure things are fair. The police are like watchdogs, trying to find people doing wrong. It's a tough job to be strong but also understanding and to punish people but also be kind. The courts have to look at the evidence without taking sides. The prisons are where we try to change people. Prison is not just to punish them but also to give them a chance to turn their lives around. But can just locking someone up really change them? Maybe they also need education, mentors, and help getting back into society.

The way the system is set up is supposed to balance justice and mercy, which is something religions also talk about. Each part affects the others, and if something goes wrong in one part, it messes up the whole system. Cops and lawyers have some freedom to make choices, which can make things unfair. When we judge how good the system is, we need to be honest about its problems. Right now, there are inequalities, like people of color getting harsher sentences. We need to fix these problems so that justice doesn't just become a way to get revenge.

Is it possible for our courts and laws to truly be fair? Maybe the answer is not just in the laws themselves but in always thinking about what's right and showing compassion. If we look at it that way, the criminal justice system is more than just a machine; it's a promise to try to fix what's broken in society.

Trying to reduce crime means changing how we think about it. It's not just about reacting to crime but about trying to fix the reasons people do it in the first place. Preventing crime is like trying to fix what's wrong with humanity. We need to look at both the outside things that push people toward crime and the inside emptiness that draws them to it. Programs that bring people together can help, but they won't work if we don't deal with the feelings of being alone and hopeless that often lead to crime. Programs that combine understanding how people think with religious ideas can offer ways to change people instead of just holding them back.

When we try to stop crime, we need to balance punishment with trying to make things right. Meeting to talk things out can help offenders face what they did and make amends to the community. Therapies that help people change how they think can also help them take responsibility for their actions, which is like the process of becoming a better person. Programs for young people who get into trouble early can help them avoid a life of crime and find something meaningful to do. But do these ideas really deal with the underlying problems like poverty and prejudice that keep people in cycles of crime? If we ignore these things, our efforts to prevent crime won't really change anything.

There's potential to come up with new ways to fight crime by mixing faith-based ideas with regular methods. Concepts like forgiveness can help us see past the labels of offender and victim and help the community heal. Trying to prevent and stop crime is not just a technical thing; it's a chance for us to take part in fixing what's broken and offering hope. This means we have to ask ourselves whether we're willing to challenge the way things are and try a more compassionate approach, or whether we'll just keep punishing people without giving them a chance to change.

The study of crime makes you think about the connection between human flaws and the way society is set up, which is kind of like the old battle between good and evil. Thinking about crime means looking deeper than just the bad acts themselves and trying to understand what's going on with both science and a spiritual perspective. Looking at different ideas about crime shows us a mix of viewpoints that reflect old questions about free will, temptation, and justice. Crime numbers are like a mirror, showing us the problems in society and calling us to recognize inequalities that we might not see on the surface. How do we balance these tough issues with the religious ideas that tell us to be merciful and try to make things right? Social influences shape how people act, which makes us wonder whether crime is a choice or a result of broken relationships in the community. The criminal justice system is a part of this big picture--an imperfect but sincere attempt to apply ideas of fairness and restoration in a messy world.

Hope is most real in the efforts to prevent and stop crime, where strategies designed to make things right connect with ideas of healing and change. The study of crime goes beyond science and becomes a conversation between law and grace, urging us to seek change instead of just punishment. This leads us to think about a kind of justice that tries to heal instead of just get even--a justice that shows compassion through our actions.

## References

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