

## **The European Underworld, 1800-2000: A Social and Cultural History**

### Course Overview

In his essay on “The Usefulness of Crime,” Karl Marx suggested that criminals were a productive force in society: they spurred the creation of new laws, police, the criminal justice system and its bureaucracy, and the morality of the middle classes. Taking Marx’s cue, this course explores the contributions of the European criminal underworld to “legitimate” society. Lectures will present criminal micro-histories as case studies that illustrate the transformative impact of criminality social relations, culture, and political power. Course readings are accordingly weighted toward primary documents of criminal biography and cultural texts such as novels and films.

The first unit of the course outlines a comparative history of crime and punishment in nineteenth-century Europe. The specter of the urban “dangerous classes” compelled states to alter their use of capital punishment, criminalize traditional economies, and introduce new forms of police. The exercise of these novel control strategies both domestically and imperially bolstered the institutional and ideological apparatus of the state.

In the second unit we explore the internal dynamics of the underworld from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This period was marked by shifting tactics as both criminals and detectives became more organized, skilled, and professional.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the “transnationalization” of criminality and policing. In the final unit of the course, case studies in robbery, soccer hooliganism, and drug trafficking will demonstrate how crime is more than a comparative European phenomenon—indeed, it is a transnational social feature connected by criminal networks and international police forces. The course concludes by looking at the patterns of urban revolt by former colonial subjects and immigrants in the late twentieth century.

### Course Objectives

- To reveal how European states “used” crime to extend their power through institutions such as law courts, prisons, and police forces.
- To portray crime as a transnational phenomenon that highlights the movement of men, money, and commodities across borders, thereby linking together networks of criminals and police forces in Europe.
- To demonstrate how criminality relates to other major themes in European history: urbanization and industrialization, imperialism, technological change, warfare, consumerism, and immigration.
- Students will engage with primary source material—police reports, court records, memoirs—as part of their assigned reading and will be expected to use primary sources in their essays and presentations.
- Students will be exposed to selections from prominent historians who have written about crime (e.g. E.P. Thompson and Richard Evans).

### Textbooks

In addition to a Course Packet (hereafter CP) of primary sources, the following texts will be placed on library reserve:

Clive Emsley, *Crime and English Society, 1750-1900* (London, 1987)

Eamon Carrabine et al., *Crime in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2002)

Eric A. Johnson, *Urbanization and crime: Germany, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, 1995)

### Assignments and Grading

Students will complete two written assignments and one oral presentation. The first written assignment is a three-page research memorandum in which students will briefly discuss three primary sources relating to lectures in Units I and II of the course. These memoranda may serve as the platform for the students' second written assignment, an essay of 8-10 pages on one of the lecture topics (or on a topic in consultation with me). The oral presentation is a group assignment in which 3-4 students will lead discussion (Weeks 9 through 12) on selected topics relating to crime and popular culture. Students will be encouraged to consult newspapers, government documents, as well as digitized collections (such as the Old Bailey Records and the John Johnson collection of broadside ballads) for these assignments. Publications by the League of Nations, United Nations, and the European Union are all accessible in Memorial Library and provide students with ample source material on various aspects of transnational crime.

Grading: In-class participation (15%), Midterm exam (15%), Research memorandum (10%), Essay (20%), Presentation (20%), Final exam (20%).

## **Unit I: New Problems and New Solutions in Crime, 1800-1870**

### Week 1: Capital Punishment and the Spectacle of State Power: The Case of Forgery and Coining

*Reading:* Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995, pp. 3-31 on the execution of Damiens); *The life of Robert Avery, who was executed at Winchester, for forgery, March 23, 1805* (CP); Patrick Colquhoun, "On the Coinage of Counterfeit Money," pp. 171-212 (CP)

### Week 2: Policing the Dangerous Classes during the Industrial Revolution

*Reading:* Eardley Wilmot, "A letter to the magistrates of England on the increase of crime" (1827) (CP); Selections from the *Police Gazette* (CP); Patrick Colquhoun, *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* (1795), Preface, pp. 1-28, 93-109, 501-566; Adolphe Quetelet [trans. S. Sylvester], *Research on the Propensity for Crime at Different Ages* (CP), pp. 3-15, 19-23, 64-75; John Styles, "The Emergence of the Police: Explaining Police Reform in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England," *British Journal of Criminology*, 27 (1987), pp. 15-22

### Week 3: Era of Penal Transformation: Humanitarianism, Reform, and the Rise of the Prison

*Reading:* Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution*, Chapter 5, "The Wheel, the Sword, and the Axe" (pp. 191-239); V.A.C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, Chapter 3, "Carnival or Consent?" (pp. 90-105); Selections from Jeremy Bentham, "Panopticon," in *Works* (1843), pp. 37-66; Ralph Rashleigh, *Adventures of an Outlaw: The Memoirs of Ralph Rashleigh, a penal exile in Australia, 1825-1844* (CP), pp. 1-17, 48-63, 74-78

Week 4: The Criminal Empire: Thugs, Dacoits, and Criminal Tribes in British India

*Reading:* Selected documents on thuggee, suttee, and dacoity in British India (CP); *Report on the Working of the Criminal Tribes Act in the Bombay Presidency* (1926) (CP)

**Unit II: The Era of Criminal Sophistication, 1870-1950**

Week 5: The Professionalization of Criminals and Reorganization of Detective Forces

*Reading:* Billy Hill, "So I Bought a Set of Burglar's Tools," in *Boss of Britain's Underworld* (1955) (CP); Vidocq, *The Personal Memoirs of the First Great Detective* (CP) (pages TBA); Habitual Criminals Act (CP); Randall McGowen, "Getting to Know the Criminal Class in Nineteenth-Century England," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 14 (1990), 33-54; Richard J. Evans, "Police and society from absolutism to dictatorship," in *Rereading German History* (1997), pp. 65-86

**Research memorandum due**

Week 6: Modern Highwaymen: Motorization, Wireless, and the Impact of Technological Change on the Forms of Crime and its Detection

*Reading:* Documents on the Case of Dr. Crippen (CP); Documents on the Formation of the Flying Squad (CP); Alfred Morain, "The Scientific Detective," in *The Underworld of Paris* (1931) (CP), pp. 13-25

Week 7: Homes fit for Heroes? Demobilized Soldiers' Participation in Violent Crime

[No reading this week] Film—*They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947)

**Midterm Exam**

Week 8: Shoplifters, Drug Peddlers, and Prostitutes: How Female Criminality Transformed Criminology

*Reading:* Selected primary documents on kleptomania and shoplifting (CP); Cesare Lombroso, *The Female Offender* (CP), pp. 103-133; G. Aschaffenburg (trans. A. Albrecht), *Crime and its Repression* (1913); Richard J. Evans, "Prostitution, state, and society in Imperial Germany," *Past & Present* No. 70 (1976), 106-129

Week 9: Confidence Tricksters, The White Slave Traffic, and Dangerous Drugs: The Origins of International Criminal Cooperation

*Reading:* Cecil Bishop, "White Slave Traffic," in *Women and Crime* (1931); Christabel Pankhurst, "The truth about white slavery" (1913) (CP); J. Hardie, *The Queenie Gerald Case: A Public Scandal: White Slavery in a Piccadilly Flat* (1915) (CP); Alfred Morain, "The White Slave Traffic and the Drug Traffic," in *The Underworld of Paris* (CP), pp. 255-265

**Begin student presentations**

Week 10: The Criminal as Hero? Depictions of Crime in Popular Culture

*Reading:* E.W. Hornung, *Raffles: The Amateur Cracksmen* (1899) pp. 3-140; Martin Wiener, "The de-moralizing of criminality," *Reconstructing the Criminal* (1990) (CP), pp. 215-256; E. Carrabine et al., *Crime in Modern Britain*, Chapter 5: "Crime and popular culture"

### Unit III: Crime without Borders, 1950-2000

#### Week 11: The Aristocrats of Crime: Armed Robbers and Criminal Self-Fashioning

Reading: Robert Allerton and Tony Parker, *The Courage of His Convictions* (1962) (CP), pp. 19-82; Bruce Reynolds, *The Autobiography of a Thief* (1995) (CP) pp. TBA; Film—*The Italian Job*

#### Week 12: Fight Club: The History and Sociology of Soccer Hooliganism

Reading: John King, *The Football Factory*; R. De Biasi, “The policing of hooliganism in Italy” (1997); R. Giulianotti, “Football and the Politics of Carnival,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 30 (1995), pp. 191-223

#### Week 13: Advanced Disciples of Margaret Thatcher? The Criminal Entrepreneurship of Drug Traffickers

Reading: Film—*Layer Cake*; Howard Parker, *U.K. Drugs Unlimited* (2001) (CP), pp. 1-30; House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, *Drug Trafficking and Related Serious Crime* (1989); J.W.E. Sheptycki, “Transnational Policing and the Making of a Postmodern State,” *British Journal of Criminology* Vol. 35, No. 4 (1995), 613-635

#### Week 14: Crime, Ideology, and Popular Respect for the Law

Reading: Film—*Dixon of Dock Green*; Selected data from the *British Crime Survey* (available online); E. Carrabine et al., *Crime in Modern Britain*, Chapter 3: “Crime and everyday life”

### Essays due

#### Week 15: The Empire Strikes Back? Inner-City Riots in Western Europe

Revolt in immigrant and ethnic minority communities; the crowd; riot

Reading: E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* No. 50 (1971), pp. 76-136; Lord Scarman, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Inquiry* (1981); John Lea, “Social Crime Revisited,” *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 3 (1999), pp. 307-326

### Final Exam TBA