

## **Economics of Crime (Bachelor + Master Seminar)**

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### **Course description**

This course is aimed at bachelor's and master's students, and it focuses on the economic study of crime. In particular, we will view criminals – different from the traditional approach of criminologists or sociologists – as utility-maximizing decision makers and study how incentives change criminal behavior. To do so, we will focus on socio-economic determinants of crime and how crime can be deterred. More specifically, we will discuss how unemployment, poverty, and education lead to criminal behavior, and how police, incapacitation and death penalty reduce crime. We will also discuss the topics of guns and alcohol.

### **Requirements**

- Students will choose a paper from the reading list (main reading) and present it in the seminar (25 min.). Moreover, students will write a short seminar paper (max. 10 pages), which summarizes and critically evaluates the chosen paper.
- Students are expected to read the main reading of all presentations and to participate actively (with questions and comments) in the discussion. To ensure active participation, each presentation will be assigned randomly a discussant who will shortly criticize and discuss the presented paper.
- In preparation for their own presentation, students are expected to have read some of the further readings for their topic to have a wider understanding of their own topic.
- ⇒ The final grade is calculated like the following: Active seminar participation (20%) + seminar presentation (25min, 30%) + paper summary (50%).

### **Learning goals**

- Students are able to name and discuss determinants of criminal behavior
- Students are able to summarize and evaluate scientific papers
- Students are able to present and discuss scientific papers
- Students are able to write a scientific paper

### **Semester dates**

- General information meeting: 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2025; 11:00-12:30
- First draft of paper: 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2026; 11:55 (To be uploaded on ILIAS!)
- 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Presentation Meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2026; 9:00-18:00
- Final paper: 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2026; 11:55 (To be uploaded on ILIAS!)

## Assignment of Topics

The assignment of topics will work like the following:

- I will use a matching algorithm to try to fulfill the topic preferences of all.
- In particular, you have to go to the following website and order the topics in line with your preferences (the one you like most on the first spots - the one you like a bit less on later spots):
- <https://www.pollandmatch.com/polls/04886902-749e-424d-b71a-b49dfac8b803/vote>
- You have time until exactly: 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2025; 11:55
- Students without an order will be assigned a topic of my choosing!

**Topics** (the main references will be provided in the seminar)

1. Crime Trends
2. The Economic Approach to Crime
3. The Economic Approach to Organized Crime
4. Unemployment and Poverty
5. Education
6. Youth Crime and Social Interaction Effects
7. Unfavorable family structures and crime
8. Family and crime
9. Immigration
10. Police
11. Police force
12. Consequences of courts and bail
13. Incapacitation
14. Death Penalty
15. Arguments pro Guns
16. Arguments against Guns
17. Racial bias (in policing)
18. Private police
19. Surveillance
20. Private security
21. Human trafficking
22. Behavior of criminals
23. Behavior of cops
24. Mental health and crime
25. Gang membership
26. Peer effects
27. Alcohol
28. Narcotics
29. Gambling and crime
30. Video games and violence
31. Internet and crime
32. Corporate Crime
33. Consequences of crime