

Criminology Minor Proposal

I. Statement of Proposal:

The Sociology Convening Group proposes the development of a Criminology minor that will be available to all non-Sociology majors beginning in Fall, 2011. This minor, which pulls together thematically consistent coursework across multiple disciplines (sociology, law and society, and psychology), will be of great service to Ramapo College and its students. A Criminology minor will make more effective use of existing resources, and will provide a large pool of interested students with a credential that will enhance their marketability to prospective employers across a wide range of fields. While faculty from several convening groups will contribute to this minor, it will be housed under the auspices of the Sociology Convening Group in the School of Social Science and Human Services (SSHS). More specifically, Paul Reck, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Ramapo College and an experienced Criminologist, will oversee and coordinate this minor. An examination of Criminology minors at other colleges and universities suggests that our proposed minor is comparable to the criteria set forth in these institutions' programs.

II. Rationale for and Goals of the Criminology Minor:

A Criminology Minor is aligned with the mission of the college as well as the mission of SSHS.

A Criminology minor, which would encompass a core of five courses providing sociological, psychological, and legal foundations for examining crime and societal responses to crime, is consistent with the missions of both Ramapo College and the School of Social Science and Human Services (SSHS)¹. Consistent with Ramapo College's mission to promote "intercultural understanding,"² and SSHS's mission to cultivate "greater sensitivity to and understanding of the varieties of human sensibility and experience, within as well as outside our own culture,"³ a Criminology minor would encourage students outside of the Sociology major to develop greater understanding of a substantive and professional area that touches fundamental social, political, and economic aspects of American society. More specifically, the cluster of courses constituting this minor would sharpen students understanding of how various ideological and institutional mechanisms not only replicate stratification and racial inequality, but also obfuscate the processes by which such stratification and inequality is generated and reproduced within the context of the criminal justice system. By developing the analytical tools necessary to identify how these ideological and institutional mechanisms operate, often in insidious, seemingly "neutral" ways, students would be positioned to critically examine conventional explanations of criminal behavior that locate blame largely in intractable, seemingly hardwired cultural behaviors, as well as color- and class-blind assumptions regarding institutional practices at all levels of the criminal justice system. Accordingly, the courses encompassing this minor would, consistent with the mission of SSHS, "expose [students] to insightful analyses of prevailing societal patterns which impede cultural reconciliation and insight, such as divisions based on race, gender, disability, social class, national origin and differing cultural backgrounds."⁴ This minor would also expose a wider range of students to the increasingly international character of

¹ See Appendix A for the list of courses encompassing the Criminology Minor.

² See Ramapo College Mission Statement at: ww2.ramapo.edu/libfiles/ER/Faculty.../Mission_Statement%20.doc

³ See SSHS Mission Statement at: <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/sshs/>

⁴ See SSHS Mission Statement at: <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/sshs/>

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crime-related issues, such as the criminalization of immigration, crimes within the context of war, including the handling of “enemy combatants,” and anti-terrorist policies and practices at home and abroad. Consistent with Ramapo College’s emphasis on international education,⁵ a Criminology minor would sensitize students to not only how international cultural, social, and political factors shape criminal behavior and responses of the U.S. criminal justice system to that behavior, but also how policies and practices (e.g., racial, ethnic, and religious profiling) within the U.S. have ramifications abroad.

A Criminology minor also is consistent with the idea of “thematic learning communities,” which is a central pillar of Ramapo College’s mission.⁶ Several extant courses in Ramapo College’s curriculum address in some significant way the causes of and responses to crime in the United States. A Criminology minor would not only acknowledge this criminological theme, but would allow for this theme to coalesce in a more meaningful, coherent way for students. As noted below, students graduating with this minor would enhance their attractiveness to employers in a variety of fields that overlap with the criminal justice system in some way. Students who complete the minor would have a more comprehensive understanding of the social forces that shape outcomes in the criminal justice system, thereby increasing their professional flexibility and adaptability as criminological issues change and evolve.

In addition to furthering Ramapo College’s goals relating to intercultural understanding, international education, and thematic learning communities, a Criminology minor would be consistent with Ramapo College’s commitment to an “interdisciplinary curriculum”⁷ by encompassing courses that straddle at least two different majors. Although the four required courses that would constitute this minor are Sociology courses, the required fifth course would come from either Psychology or Law and Society. The inclusion of courses from at least two different disciplines under the umbrella of the minor would allow students to assess important criminological issues through the lenses of different disciplines. In turn, students would have a broader capacity to dissect and analyze criminological issues.

In sum, a Criminology minor would be consistent with the “programmatic mission” of Ramapo College⁸, and therefore would be consistent with the requirements of the N.J. Presidents’ Council’s Academic Issues Committee Manual (ACIM)⁹.

Feasibility of Criminology Minor

A Criminology minor is feasible both in terms of resources and its potential impact on existing programs and schools. A Criminology minor would encompass existing courses and would not require the allocation of any additional resources for implementation. However, while the Criminology minor would not require the development of any new courses or the hiring of any

⁵ See Ramapo College Mission Statement at: ww2.ramapo.edu/libfiles/ER/Faculty.../Mission_Statement%20.doc

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⁷ See Ramapo College Mission Statement at: ww2.ramapo.edu/libfiles/ER/Faculty.../Mission_Statement%20.doc

⁸ See p. 14 of the N.J. Presidents’ Council’s Academic Issues Committee Manual at [http://njpc.org/newsandupdates/pdf/AIC_Manual\(2010-11\).pdf](http://njpc.org/newsandupdates/pdf/AIC_Manual(2010-11).pdf).

⁹ See p. 14 of the N.J. Presidents’ Council’s Academic Issues Committee Manual at [http://njpc.org/newsandupdates/pdf/AIC_Manual\(2010-11\).pdf](http://njpc.org/newsandupdates/pdf/AIC_Manual(2010-11).pdf).

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new faculty, this minor would not involve repackaging of existing courses. Rather, it would simply involve executing some substantive changes in the minor's required courses that have already been implemented. Dr. Paul Reck, an experienced Criminologist who contributed to the development of a successful Criminology minor program during his eleven years of teaching Criminology and Race Relations at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, has internally restructured aspects of the minor's four required Sociology courses – Introduction to Sociology (SOC1 101), Criminology (SOC1 245), Sociology of Deviance (SOC1 315), and Sociology of Race Relations (SOC1 215) – to reflect ongoing developments and concerns within the field of contemporary Criminology. The thematic overlap of these courses makes it logical to cluster them together under the unifying principle of a minor program. Dr. Reck has interwoven three overarching themes pertaining to the social construction of crime and criminals, processes of racial, ethnic, and class stratification and its replication, and human rights, into these courses. Specific topics and sub-themes included under these three overarching themes are the increasing criminalization of behaviors, selective criminalization of groups and behaviors, the racialization of crime, social control of groups and segments of the population through surveillance, crime as it relates to a culture of fear, the broadening of the phenomenon of racial profiling, the increasingly global reach of the criminal justice system, particularly in terms of the system's widening entanglement with immigration and anti-terrorism policies, the types of normative processes (*e.g.*, authorization, dehumanization, and routinization) that facilitate human rights abuses by “normal” individuals, and the political economy of expanding incarceration. The human rights focus of this Criminology program sets it apart from other Criminology and Criminal Justice minors offered in the tri-state area. No other programs integrate human rights issues and perspectives into their core courses.

A Criminology minor also is feasible in terms of its impact on other existing programs at Ramapo. This minor would in no way disrupt or undermine other extant programs at Ramapo College. Rather, it would afford a broad range of interested students an opportunity to diversify their credentials. A Criminology minor would not siphon away students from other programs, but instead would reward students who express an interest in this substantive area.

Moreover, in light of the apparent demand (see below), the minor would allow for the required, revamped extant courses to service a larger percentage of current Ramapo students, as well as augment the number of applicants to Ramapo College. Accordingly, a Criminology minor would likely generate revenue for the college.

While offering a Criminology minor would not make Ramapo College unique in that respect, as some schools, most notably, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, offer a Criminology minor¹⁰, it would nevertheless distinguish Ramapo College from the majority of New Jersey colleges and universities, which either offer a Criminal Justice minor (*see, e.g.*, Montclair State University¹¹, Kean University¹², and Fairleigh Dickinson University¹³), or no minor in either Criminology or Criminal Justice (*see, e.g.*, William Paterson University¹⁴). A Criminology minor at Ramapo

¹⁰ See information regarding Rutgers University's Criminology minor at: <http://sociology.rutgers.edu/ugradcriminology.html>

¹¹ See information regarding Montclair State University's Criminal Justice minor at: http://www.montclair.edu/catalog/view_requirements.php?CurriculumID=860

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College would have a broader focus than that of a Criminal Justice minor at any of the aforementioned universities. Typically a Criminal Justice minor provides a narrower, more technical approach to understanding the various mechanisms of the criminal justice system, whereas a Criminology minor, such as the one being proposed at Ramapo College (and that offered by Rutgers University-New Brunswick), examines the broader sociological implications – in tandem with psychological, political, economic, and legal factors – shaping outcomes within the criminal justice system. Consequently, students who obtain a Criminology minor have broader analytical skills, which should make them more attractive applicants to employers outside of traditional criminal justice-related fields such as police work, corrections, parole, youth work, counseling, public and social service administration.

Student Interest in a Criminology Minor

While we have not undertaken a college-wide survey of students to assess possible interest in a Criminology minor, Assistant Professor Paul Reck found that approximately two out of three of his students not currently majoring in Sociology (62%) expressed an interest in a Criminology minor¹⁵. The popularity of the Criminology minor at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, where there are approximately twice as many Criminology minors as Sociology majors¹⁶, suggests that a Criminology minor would likely generate student interest at Ramapo College. Indeed, Professor Reck, who taught Criminology and Race Relations at Rutgers University-New Brunswick for eleven years, can attest to the popularity of the Criminology certificate/minor¹⁷ at Rutgers. A large percentage of the students in Dr. Reck's classes at Rutgers were drawn in by the prospect of earning a Criminology certificate.

In addition to interest from current Ramapo College students, there is anecdotal evidence from the both Dr. Henri Lustiger-Thaler, the Sociology Convener¹⁸, and Peter Rice, Director of

¹² See information regarding Kean University's Criminal Justice minor at:

<http://www.kean.edu/~crimjust/forms/CJ%20Graduation%20Minor%20Form.pdf>

¹³ See information regarding Fairleigh Dickinson's Criminal Justice minor at:

<http://view.fdu.edu/default.aspx?id=6218>

¹⁴ See information regarding William Paterson's minors at: <http://cms.wpunj.edu/career-advisement/academic-advising/students/minors.dot>

¹⁵ These results are not to be taken as indicative of general student interest in a Criminology minor across the current Ramapo student population, as all of the students in Professor Reck's survey are enrolled in classes that would be credited towards the minor, and therefore would have more interest than other students in such a minor.

¹⁶ Conversation with Jeanette Danner, Administrative Assistant, Rutgers University-New Brunswick Sociology Department on October 13, 2010. For more information, please contact Ms. Danner at jdanner@sociology.rutgers.edu, or Dr. Stephen Hansell, Undergraduate Director of Rutgers University-New Brunswick Sociology Department at shansell@rci.rutgers.edu.

¹⁷ The current Criminology minor at Rutgers University-New Brunswick was formerly known as a "Criminology certificate." The requirements for the minor are no different from those that had been required for the certificate. The minor, like the certificate, required the following six courses: Introduction to Criminal Justice, Introduction to Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Introduction to Sociology, Criminology, and Race Relations (see <http://sociology.rutgers.edu/ugradcriminology.html>). In addition students had to select one elective offered by the Criminal Justice Program, and one of the following three courses: Sociology of Deviant Behavior, Sociology of Mental Illness, or Law and Society (see <http://sociology.rutgers.edu/ugradcriminology.html>).

¹⁸ Conversation with Dr. Henri Lustiger-Thaler on October 28, 2010.

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Admissions¹⁹, that a significant percentage of the students inquiring about the Sociology Program have expressed an interest in Criminology. Moreover, the majority of students inquiring about Sociology at the most recent Open House on November 14, 2010 expressed an interest in Criminology.

A Criminology minor is likely to be attractive to prospective students due to the criminal justice-related internships that are available through the Sociology courses constituting the minor. These internships, through a partnership with the Cahill Center, afford students the opportunity to gain relevant, real world work experiences and build social networks that will facilitate securing employment upon graduation.

Association with the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Tolerance

Besides the lure of potential criminal justice-related internships available through the Criminology minor, students are likely to be attracted to the Criminology program's unique partnership with the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Tolerance in Manhattan. Students who register for the Criminology course will have access to the Tolerance Center's interactive workshops and training sessions that examine the criminal justice system, particular various aspects of law enforcement, from a human rights perspective. These workshops, which run the gamut from issues pertaining to street stops and frisks to those dealing with torture and genocide, would provide students with a comprehensive sensitization to human rights issues in the context of criminal justice system processes. No other Criminology programs in the New York metropolitan area currently afford students such an opportunity. Access to Tolerance Center's workshops and training sessions, which are increasingly being sought out by various law enforcement-related entities, is likely to appeal to both students who are contemplating a career in law enforcement, as well as students who have an interest in becoming involved in human rights advocacy work for various non-profit organizations.

A Criminology minor is also likely to be attractive to students in non-Sociology majors who plan on going into fields that overlap with the criminal justice system to some degree, such as social work, education, and counseling/psychology. Students who plan on going into these fields would likely see having a Criminology minor as potentially enhancing their marketability to prospective employers.

In sum, the potential interest in a Criminology minor expressed by current and prospective students, coupled with the attractiveness of such minor as a means of enhancing students' credentials for future employment, suggests that a Criminology minor would be a great service to the college. A minor would likely accommodate a large body of students, and draw in students who have an interest in Criminology but have plans to major in another discipline.

¹⁹ Conversation with Peter Rice on September 28, 2010.

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Appendix A: Courses Required for the Criminology Minor

The Criminology Minor, which would be offered to non-Sociology majors, would consist of five courses. All students would have to take the following FOUR courses:

- 1) Criminology (SOC 245)
- 2) Sociology of Deviance (SOC 315)
- 3) Sociology of Race Relations (SOC 215)
- 4) Introduction to Sociology (SOC 101)

In addition, students would have to take ONE of the following courses:

- 1) Introduction to Psychology (PSYC 101)
- 2) Introduction to Law and Society (LAWS 131)