

Zemiology: Harm Beyond Crime

Responsible Faculty Instructor:

Dhyuthi Velugula [dvelgula@jgu.edu.in]

Lecturer

Credits: 4

Credits Type:

Cross-registration:

Pre-requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION (COURSE VISION):

This course offers an engaging exploration of Zemiology, a unique and increasingly influential perspective within criminology that shifts focus from traditional crime to the study of harm and injury in society. Unlike conventional criminology, which primarily concentrates on criminal acts and law enforcement, zemiology examines the broader social, economic, and political factors that cause harm to individuals and communities, regardless of whether those harms are classified as "crimes" by law.

Throughout the 14 weeks, students will critically analyse different types of harm, including state violence, environmental degradation, social inequality, and institutional neglect. The course will introduce theoretical foundations, historical developments, and current debates within zemiology, highlighting its importance for understanding contemporary social issues. Students will also explore how different perspectives—such as critical theory, social justice, and environmentalism—contribute to the understanding of harm.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

This course emphasizes active learning through discussions, case studies, and assessments, encouraging students to think critically about how harm manifests in various contexts and what societal responses are appropriate. By the end, students will be equipped with a nuanced understanding of harm beyond legal definitions and will be encouraged to develop their own critical perspectives on societal well-being and justice.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Weightage in %	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessment Tasks/Activities
Critical reflection on and engagement with the course content	20%	Thought exercise based on classroom discussion.	Weekly Reflection Journals
Design practical and evidence-based harm reduction policies. Demonstrate understanding of policy-making processes and social impacts. Critically evaluate potential challenges and ethical considerations.	20%	Review of existing harm reduction policies and their effectiveness. Group brainstorming sessions to develop innovative ideas.	Policy Proposal
Synthesize course concepts and theoretical perspectives in their presentation. Communicate findings effectively to an audience.	20%	Research sessions and consultation with instructor. Development of presentation slides and visual aids. Formal class presentations with Q&A.	Presentation & Viva
Active involvement in class discussions and activities.	10%	Participation in classroom activities like discussions and debates.	Class Participation

READING LIST (upto 10 select readings):

1. Garside, R., 2013. Addressing social harm: Better regulation versus social transformation. *Revista Crítica Penal y Poder*, 5, pp.247-265.
2. Davis, H. and White, H., 2023. For a zemiology of politics. *Journal of White Collar and Corporate Crime*, 4(2), pp.88-99.
3. Scott, S., 2017. Labour exploitation and work-based harm., Chapter 2
4. Passas, N., 2005. Lawful but awful: 'Legal corporate crimes'. *The journal of socio-economics*, 34(6), pp.771-786.
5. Pemberton, S., 2007. Social harm future (s): exploring the potential of the social harm approach. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 48(1), pp.27-41.

6. Klimecki, R. and Parker, M., 2025. Business ethics, law and zemiology: The criminology of social and environmental harm. *Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility*, 34(4), pp.1886-1896.
7. Kleinman, S. and Copp, M., 2009. Denying social harm: Students' resistance to lessons about inequality. *Teaching Sociology*, 37(3), pp.283-293.
8. Addison, M., 2023. Framing stigma as an avoidable social harm that widens inequality. *The Sociological Review*, 71(2), pp.296-314.
9. Sharpe, V.A. and Faden, A.I., 1998. Medical harm: Historical, conceptual and ethical dimensions of iatrogenic illness. Cambridge University Press., Chapter 1
10. Wright, E.J., 2023. Decolonizing Zemiology: outlining and remedying the blindness to (Post) colonialism within the study of social harm. *Critical criminology*, 31(1), pp.127-144.

WEEKLY READING PLAN (WEEKLY OUTLINE):

A weekly plan is provided below:

Topics	Weeks
Introduction to Zemiology: Overview of zemiology, its origins, and how it differs from traditional criminology. Discussion of the importance of studying harm beyond legal definitions.	1
The Concept of Harm: Exploring what constitutes harm, including physical, psychological, social, and environmental harms.	2
Historical Perspectives on Harm: Historical examples of societal harm, such as colonialism, war, and systemic oppression.	3
State Violence and Institutional Harm: Analysis of harm caused by governments, including police brutality, surveillance, and systemic injustice.	4
Corporate Harm and Economic Exploitation: Examination of harm caused by corporations, such as environmental pollution, labour exploitation, and consumer safety.	5

Environmental Harm and Ecocide: Focus on harm to ecosystems, climate change, and the concept of ecocide.	6
Social Inequality and Harm: How social inequalities—race, class, gender—generate and perpetuate harm.	7
Health and Medical Harm: Harm caused by healthcare systems, pharmaceutical practices, and medical negligence.	8
Harm in the Digital Age: Cyberbullying, data breaches, misinformation, and digital surveillance as modern harms. Social ills created by extended use of technology.	9
Critical Perspectives and Theories in Zemiology: Introduction to critical theories, including postcolonial theory and international relations theory, that analyse harm.	10
Policy and Harm Reduction: Examining current harm reduction strategies and alternative policy approaches.	11
Activism and Social Movements Against Harm: Case studies of activism aimed at reducing harm, such as environmental movements, anti-police brutality protests, etc.	12
Future Directions and Student Presentations: Students present their final projects and discuss emerging issues and innovations in addressing societal harm	13
REVISION WEEK	14

Annexure 1

Pitch for the Elective Course: "Zemiology: An Exploration of Harm Beyond Crime"

This is an elective course proposal titled "Zemiology: An Exploration of Harm Beyond Crime" for inclusion in the law school curriculum. This course aims to expand students' understanding of social harm beyond traditional criminal law paradigms, equipping future legal professionals with critical insights into the broader social, ethical, and structural dimensions of harm that pervade contemporary society.

Legal education has historically centred on crime, justice, and the criminal process. While these are vital, they often overlook the pervasive, complex, and insidious forms of harm that do not neatly fit within criminal statutes. Issues such as environmental degradation, corporate misconduct, state violence, and systemic inequality cause profound social injury but frequently evade traditional legal remedies or are framed outside the scope of criminal law.

This gap underscores the importance of introducing students to Zemiology, a multi-disciplinary approach that examines the causes, consequences, and responses to social injury. By integrating zemiology into the law curriculum, we can cultivate a more nuanced, socially conscious legal perspective that recognizes harm as a multifaceted phenomenon extending beyond formally recognized crimes.

The course aims to achieve several key learning outcomes:

- Critical Understanding: Students will critically analyse the concept of social harm, understanding its various forms, causes, and societal impacts.
- Analytical Skills: Students will develop skills to evaluate the effectiveness of legal and policy responses to harm.
- Practical Engagement: Through case studies, debates, and policy proposals, students will engage actively with issues of social justice, ethics, and law reform.
- Future Use: The course prepares future legal practitioners to recognize and address harms that may fall outside traditional legal frameworks but are nonetheless morally and socially significant.

This course complements our existing curriculum by bridging law, sociology, and ethics, fostering interdisciplinary competence essential for contemporary legal practice. It equips students to:

- Recognize the limitations of criminal law in addressing social harm.
- Develop legal and policy strategies that mitigate harm beyond criminal sanctions.
- Understand the societal roots of legal issues, promoting holistic approaches to justice.
- Engage critically with issues like environmental justice, corporate accountability, and human rights.

Moreover, the course aligns with current societal challenges—climate change, systemic racism, corporate misconduct—by providing students with an analytical framework to understand and respond to these complex problems.

In an era marked by complex social challenges, legal professionals must look beyond traditional paradigms to understand and address the roots and ramifications of social harm. 'Zemiology: Harm Beyond Crime' offers a timely, innovative addition to our curriculum, one that cultivates socially conscious, ethically grounded, and critically aware legal practitioners.

I am confident that this course will significantly enhance our law school's academic offerings and prepare our students to be leaders in justice and social reform. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and to collaborate on its successful implementation.