

SO277-15 Victims and Victimology

26/27

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Hannah Marshall

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

85% coursework, 15% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Whose claims of victimisation are more likely to be believed and why? What role should victims play in the criminal justice process? How have victim-activists influenced policy and practice? How do people make sense of experiences of victimisation?

Once described as 'criminology's wayward subdiscipline' (Rock: 2007:41) 'victimology' provides us with the opportunity to engage with a hugely important, but often overlooked, figure in relation to crime: the victim. This module will enable students to identify the ways in which 'victim' exists as a socially constructed category, the boundaries of which are heavily policed. Drawing on theoretical work in victimology, we will explore who is more likely to have their experiences of victimisation recognised as such and why. We will examine the roles and experiences of victims within the criminal justice system, drawing on case studies from a variety of international contexts. We will explore how people navigate the aftermath of experiences of victimisation both at an individual and collective level. Finally, we will analyse the utility of 'victim' as a concept and reflect on alternative ways of thinking about harm.

Module aims

This module aims to provide students with an introduction to victimology: the study of victimisation and victimhood. As such, it has three main aims:

To evaluate key concepts, theories and arguments in victimological theory. Students will critically

reflect on theoretical insights into the social construction of victim status. We will explore how dynamics of power, including those relating to race, gender and class, influence who finds themselves more or less able to make a claim to victimhood, and have these claims accepted. To analyse the issues and challenges facing victims of crime in a variety of social, historical and political contexts around the world. This will include the discussion of victims' experiences of the justice system, their role within it, and the impact of victim activist movements. Case studies will include transitional justice, modern day slavery, and the experiences of victims of rape and domestic abuse in court. We will explore the contributions of narrative and visual victimology to examine how victims make sense of their experiences. To critically reflect on the utility of 'victim' as a concept. We will interrogate the dichotomisation of victims and offenders in light of the prevalence of overlapping experiences of victimisation and offending, explore critiques of the victim label from victim-survivor movements, and discuss research that calls for alternative ways of thinking about and responding to harm.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Wk1: Theories I: Blaming the victim? Positivist victimology and its radical and feminist critics

Wk2: Theories II: Who has access to victim status? Critical victimology and the 'ideal victim'

Wk3: The role of victims within the criminal justice system

Wk4: What do victims want? Experiences of victims in criminal justice systems and beyond

WK5: Relationships between victimisation and offending

WK7: Victim activism and victims in the media

WK8: Narrative and visual victimology: victims of war crimes and transitional justice

WK9: Victimhood as a political tool

WK10: Beyond victimhood

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of key schools of victimological theory including: positivist, feminist, radical and critical victimology.
- 2) Critically reflect on the socially-constructed nature of victim status, and the implications of this for criminal justice policy and practice.
- 3) Develop of understanding of the key challenges facing victims in a variety of different contexts.
- 4) Evaluate the utility of 'victim' as a concept and explore alternatives.
- 5) Demonstrate an understanding of how victim's experiences are constructed and expressed, through engagement with visual and narrative victimology.
- 6) Develop skills in assessing and evaluating relevant literature for seminar discussions, presentations, independent study, research and essays.
- 7) Develop skills in engaging with mediums such as news and current affairs, podcasts, media representations of victims, to connect academic research and debates to current events and cases.

- 8) Address the aims and objectives of the module demonstrating close engagement with module materials.

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Interdisciplinary

The module will draw upon research from a range of disciplines including: Sociology and Criminology (across all weeks) as well as making connections with research from Political Science (in week eight, which explores the experiences of victims of war crimes and processes of transitional justice), Psychology (in week four, which explores victims' needs in the aftermath of victimisation, and week eight) and Media Studies (in week seven, which explores media representations of victims).

International

The following weeks will draw on case studies from a variety of international contexts:

Week seven: Victim activism and victims in the media will use a case study of activism and media reporting around violence experienced by indigenous women in North America

Week eight: Narrative and visual victimology: victims of war crimes and transitional justice will draw on case studies in Uganda and South Africa

Week nine: Victimhood as a political tool: the case of modern day slavery will draw on case studies from Nigeria and Vietnam.

Week ten: Beyond Victimhood: will explore the insights that decolonising movements in criminology provide in terms of thinking beyond concepts of victim and offender.

Subject specific skills

Research and analytical skills

Critical Reading

Critical Writing

Literature searches and referencing

Cross-cultural understanding (see details of the international focus of the module below)

Transferable skills

Communication skills

Research and analytical skills

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	52 hours (35%)
Assessment	80 hours (53%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

52 hours of private study will be spent reading for seminars and preparing for and producing the assessments.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group D

Assessment component	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Creative task and reflective piece	85%	68 hours	Yes (extension)

Students have two options for assessment:

Option one: Guidance document (1000 words) + reflective piece (2000 words)

Guidance document: Produce a guidance document aimed at either the police, the courts, or the media that explores how they can best respond to a specific demographic of victim (e.g. children, the elderly, people with learning disabilities) and/or type of victimisation (e.g. fraud, domestic abuse, theft, murder).

Reflective piece: Produce a reflective piece explaining the choices that you have made in your guidance document. You should engage with the theoretical and empirical research discussed during the module in detail to justify these decisions.

Option two: Blog post (1000 words) + reflective piece (2000 words)

Weighting**Study time****Eligible for self-certification**

Blog post: Choose one of the three media representations of issues of victimisation discussed during the weekly lectures. (These will include a documentary on 'modern slavery', a documentary on 'transitional justice' and a documentary on 'victim activism'). Write a blog post aimed at a non-expert public audience that improves on the representation of victims and victimisation provided in the documentary.

Reflective piece Write a reflective piece critiquing the original media representation and explaining what you have done differently in your blog post. You should engage in detail with the theoretical and empirical research discussed during the module to justify your choices.

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Oral assessment

15%

12 hours

Yes (extension)

Students will be provided with a choice of six images laid out on a table. Students will be given two

minutes to: "Pick an image that best represents what justice means to you". Students will then have

the remainder of the assessment to "tell us about why you chose your image" and to "tell us what connections can you draw between these ideas and any of the concepts or theories in Victimology that

we have learnt about during the module so far". The aim of the task is to allow students to consolidate

their ideas of what 'just' treatment of victims looks like. Knowing their answer to this question is an

important foundation for developing their final assessment. Logistics: Assessments will be conducted

in week five, in order to scaffold students towards their final assessment, which is due in December.

Assessments would be held in the module convenor's office. The assessment will be conducted by the

module convenor, with the support of the module GTA. The support of the module GTA would provide

valuable assistance with running of the assessments e.g. keeping time, recording the assessment,

and uploading the recording for moderation. This would also provide an opportunity for the module

GTA to gain assessment experience. Disability accommodations: Assessment slots can be extended for

students who receive extra time in exams. Stop the clock breaks can be provided. For students with

visual impairments, sounds will be provided instead of pictures and assessment slots will be

Weighting

Study time

Eligible for self-certification

extended

to provide students with time to listen to these sounds. Provisions for illness or travel disruption: Students may request to complete their assessment via Teams if they are unable to attend in person.

Students who are unable to complete their assessment via Teams will be required to resit the assessment over the summer.

Provisions to prevent academic misconduct: The selection of available images will be rotated throughout the day. Students will be asked not to communicate with other students about the assessment. Students will be provided with a pen and paper to make notes if they

want to, but may not take the paper away with them. Students will not be permitted to use phones,

laptops, or notes during the assessment. Preparation: Students will complete a preparation activity to

revise key concepts during the seminar in week four. The module convenor will record a mock with the

GTA and make the video available on Moodle. Full details of the assessment will be provided in the week one lecture.

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Verbal feedback on students' ideas, arguments and developing analyses during seminars. Written feedback on both assessments.

[Past exam papers for SO277](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- SO277