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Swimming Upstream: Teaching State Crime to Students at American Universities

Jeffrey Ian Ross and Dawn L. Rothe

Over the past two decades, a growing number of criminologists have conducted rigorous research on state crime and have tried to disseminate it widely by developing academic courses that specifically address crimes of the state. However, teaching this subject, like other controversial matters, is not as straightforward as some might expect. This paper presents a framework for understanding the teaching of state crime in undergraduate and graduate programs in American universities. In order to convey the current experience, the authors surveyed colleagues who have conducted research on state crime and taught courses on this subject matter, and then analyzed the results. Based on these findings, the writers conclude that the demands of the criminology and criminal justice curriculum, the focus on "mainstream" street crime in these course offerings, and the general practitioner-oriented goals of our students prevent the wide-scale adoption of classes on state-crime and serve to have it marginalized in the typical American university.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, a growing number of criminologists have conducted research on state crime and have tried to disseminate it widely (e.g., Barak 1991; Friedrichs 1998; Friedrichs and Friedrichs 2002; Kauzlarich and Kramer 1998; Kramer and Michalowski 2006; Kramer et al. 2005; Ross 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Rothe and Friedrichs 2006; Rothe and Mullins 2006). Naturally, some of our colleagues have tried to teach courses on this subject matter. But teaching the subject is not as straightforward as some might expect. It goes without saying that, in any given academic field, teaching about subjects that are peripheral to the core curriculum presents several challenges that are not necessarily present with classes that are part of the mainstream course offerings. This is evident in the subject matter of genocide (Day, Vandiver, and Janikowski 2003) and in the field of white-collar crime in general (Wright and Friedrichs 1991).

As scholars have noted (Day et al. 2003), teaching about genocide is difficult on a number of levels. The main issue involves the amount of background

knowledge necessary to understand specific cases of the crimes. For example, some familiarity with the history, politics, economics, and culture of the state(s) involved is essential in order to understand the events. This is especially true when teaching this and similar crimes (e.g., crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression, torture, use of child soldiers, and state-sponsored terrorism) to undergraduate students, who may be unaware of any political or catastrophic events outside of their own narrow experiences, which are often circumscribed by their demographics.

As noted by Day et al. (2003), an additional challenge involved in teaching such subject matters is the difficulty in communicating the horror associated with crimes that are entirely beyond most students' personal experiences. Day et al. (2003:10) state,

Students in American universities may have some personal experience of violence, but only the very few who are themselves refugees have experienced anything like forced expulsion, internment in camps, or mass rape, torture, and murder. There are many difficulties involved in trying to communicate such suffering to students who have no comparable experiences. There is a risk that the victims of such extreme violence may seem distant and unreal, their experiences unimaginable, and thus incomprehensible. A failure to convey the realities of individual experience can make the whole topic seem abstract and unreal.

Unlike crimes of the state, the issues associated with street crime and the resultant victimization are far less removed for these students and are thus easier to understand and identify with.

Furthermore, the undergraduate and graduate criminology/criminal justice curriculum presents numerous challenges and opportunities. At a bare minimum, the success or failure, however defined, in instructing any class is dependent on a number of factors, including: the expertise of the professor, the sophistication of the students, and the organizational culture of the university. Much of this revolves around the politics of teaching, the perceptions of students and colleagues, and a vocabulary that is possibly inaccessible. Nowhere is this more evident than with topics subsumed within state crimes and its episteme and etiology (Day et al. 2003). As such, the authors were curious to know what instructors have discovered while teaching a course dealing in whole or in part with state crime.¹

To understand the current experience and perceived challenges of teaching crimes of the state to students, the researchers constructed a survey and distributed it to colleagues who have conducted research and taught courses on state crime. This kind of research is not unprecedented. For example, the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* and *Teaching Sociology* routinely publish articles that offer similar research (see Geiss 1992; Payne and Gainey 2000;

1. State crime has been defined as any action that violates international public law, and/or a states' own domestic law when these actions are committed by individual actors acting on behalf of, or in the name of, the state (Rothe and Mullins 2006:2-3).

Schwartz 1991; Wozniak 2001), but no publication has expressly examined the subject of teaching state crime.

Method

In September/October 2006, the authors emailed a survey² to 15 colleagues who have conducted research on state crime and/or teach classes on state crime. Through a process of snowball sampling, the survey respondents were asked if they knew of other scholars who taught course(s) on crimes of the state. Based on the feedback, additional surveys were submitted to all names provided, requesting that they participate in the survey if they had taught a state crime class or taught about state crime as major unit of another class. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items, including open- and close-ended questions (see Appendix) regarding the kinds of materials they ask students to read, their impressions of how much students³ benefited from taking the course, and their teacher evaluations. Once we received the surveys from both the original sample and those attained using the snowball sampling method, we compiled the data to search for patterns of experiences, including opportunities and/or instructors experienced teaching this subject matter.

We first separated the data into two main categories based on whether the respondents taught a state crime course(s) or a different topical course in which the subject of state crime was a major component. This enabled us to compare the perceptions of the respondents who teach state crime as a separate course and those who teach a unit of it within a larger subject matter. The purpose of this separation was to focus on issues associated with temporal order and the approach of materials, enrollment, texts, and student comprehension and course evaluations. We were then able to analyze the respondents who do not teach a full course on state crime for similar experiences or perceptions (e.g., Appendix, question 3). Having delineated these responses, we then merged the data for commonalities of experiences in teaching the subject matter and in the approach taken (e.g., questions 6, 9, 14 and the open-ended questions for 1 and 2), along with other similar experiences or perceptions.

Prior to discussing the findings, it is worth noting that the sample size of this survey was indeed small and non-representative of college and university level criminology/criminal justice instructors. While this is an issue in terms of unbiased representation and generalizability, our intent was not to make sweeping or generalizable statements of faculty experience, but rather to focus on the

2. The survey was conducted informally and generated additional comments through the snowball method with an 80 percent response rate. We also drew from several conversations we have shared with our colleagues.

3. Readers should note that this is not a traditional survey where questions were chosen because they would minimize problems of validity and reliability; nor was there any sort of pretesting in order to fine-tune the instrument as typically associated with surveys aimed at generalizing and/or for any type of multivariate statistical analysis.

experience of those who teach the subject matter as a course. We also felt confident that, based on published state-crime literature, the sample is representative of those who teach entire courses on state crime (either as a course listed in the curriculum or as a seminar) or who teach this subject as a substantive unit within a similarly related topic (e.g., white-collar crime, corporate-government crime, or political crime). Further, as we generated the method for creating our pool—wherein the first respondents were chosen because they are known state crime scholars, they teach state crime courses, or they were referred by the respondents as additional participants who teach state crime—we acknowledge that the sample is biased to instructors sympathetic to the concept of state crime. However, we found no way to correct this, since the study required the participation of those who have created courses or major components of courses on crimes of the state.

Findings and Discussion

The following section reviews our findings in five areas: offering a course on state crime, texts selected and used, the method of delivery/course content, student comprehension, and evaluations. We then conclude with a synthesis of the themes that emerged and a potential agenda for future research.

Course Offerings on State Crime

Teaching a course on state crime at a university is often based on the related department's logistics, which seem to dictate course offerings far more often than do faculty or student interest. Logistical concerns include whether or not a course on state crime is taught, what it would be called, and/or where it would fit into the formal course numbering system if it were to be offered. As 90 percent of the respondents noted, their institutions do not offer a course specifically on state crime as a part of the official curriculum or as a topical class that is routinely offered (e.g., every spring or fall semester). When the course is taught, 15 percent of the respondents noted that it was given a generic name (e.g., "Criminal Behavior" or the basic "Seminar"). In these situations, it is up to the discretion of the instructor who wants to teach the class to choose which kind of crime or topic within criminology/criminal justice on which they want to focus. In such cases, the predetermined course offerings limited the class listings, resulting in no other options for teaching the course besides using a generic title. In such cases, students often must rely on word of mouth to learn the specific subject matter prior to the new course catalog being printed. In all, 75 percent of the respondents reported teaching courses that included a major unit of state crime within another seminar, experimental course or under a generic number listed as a topical course for criminology/criminal justice (e.g., corporate-governmental crime, state-corporate crime,

political crime, or human rights). In their responses, the participants indicated similar barriers to teaching a course within an entire semester focused on state crime at their institutions. For example, one theme that emerged was the factor of departmental size, which can limit the extra courses that could be taught while not sacrificing the core classes students are required to take. Twenty-five percent of the respondents also noted that because of the size of the department, the few criminology/criminal justice faculty members, and the number of criminology/criminal justice majors, their energies have been devoted to more required curriculum needs. This idea was reflected in 50 percent of the open-ended responses, which noted the issue of time limitations based on teaching load and core curriculum preparations and/or the lack of faculty members to teach the required courses on a regular basis.

Other logistical issues noted by the survey responders included trying to change an existing course title (e.g., "Political Crime" to "State Crime") or trying to get approval during curriculum-change time for a course listed as state crime. As noted by one participant, the need to create a syllabus, justification, and identifying alternative faculty who could teach the course required a lot of redundant and time-consuming paperwork that acted as a deterrent in light of the already pressing demands of a normal semester.

In general, three main barriers emerge from the data for instructors who teach or want to teach a course on state crime: (1) the size of the department—the ratio of faculty to the number of criminology/criminal justice majors; (2) the inability to alter the curriculum that appears in a catalog at the appropriate time and/or the difficulties associated with entering new courses during curriculum changes; and (3) the normal demands of the department regarding teaching loads and the time necessary for new course preparation. Although these issues are not significant to teaching a course on state crime and are general concerns with adding or teaching a specialized class within other subfields, they do suggest that the university demands and bureaucratic setting impact the numbers of courses offered on state crime.

Selecting a Class Text/Readings

As with subjects that are, relatively speaking, new subfields or marginal subject matters within the larger scope of the field, a hindrance to teaching state crime concerns the choice of an appropriate text. After all, textbooks play a major role in education, particularly at introductory levels in universities (Grobstein 2007). For the most part, students and faculty members view textbooks as integral components of courses. Further, most undergraduate and graduate students are very much dependent on traditional texts.

According to those surveyed, finding an suitable class text to use when teaching state crime is difficult. Most books on the subject matter of state crime that are currently on the market (e.g., Barak 1991; Friedrichs 1998; Grabosky 1989; Green and Ward 2004; Heyman 1999; Kauzlarich and Kramer 1998; Pearce 1976;

Rothe and Mullins 2006) are narrowly focused, not current, expensive, or intellectually inaccessible for many undergraduate students. Additionally, at this moment in time, there is not a text—in the traditional textbook sense—for state crime. Existing texts that incorporate crimes of the state also do so in a somewhat limited fashion compared to the rest of the materials covered in the book. As such, they cannot be used exclusively.

The results from our data suggest that the difficulty of selecting a text was an issue for 100 percent of the respondents. While the concern was consensual, there were different takes on the identification of the issue at hand. For 75 percent of the participants, the issue was the lack of a text in general. The following comment sums up the general feelings of those who viewed the lack of text as problematic: “No difficulty—clearly nothing suitable.” While voicing concern over the lack of available texts, participants did note that they have turned to using monographs or anthologies, as “there are only a few good books out there ... no texts” focused solely on state crime. However, even when incorporating the monographs or anthologies into their classes, 65 percent used original source materials to compensate for the lack of texts.

There seemed to be a general trend of concern regarding the final choice of materials to use. Nonetheless, a text selection, once done, presented still more reservations and concerns, particularly since the number of scholars specializing in state crimes is rather small in comparison to those who specialize in other, more traditional criminology topics. Oftentimes, state crime scholars who teach a course (or a substantive section) on crimes of the state are also authors of anthologies or monographs or have written several articles on the subject and typically opt for using their own work in the classroom setting.

The data also raised additional concerns surrounding the issue of materials used for teaching state crime. These concerns were related more to the logistics of the materials. Examples noted included student access in the form of creating course packs that contained original articles, abiding by copyright regulations for copying limited pages of texts, and/or access at university libraries to the journals (electronically or hard copies). Of course, these are common problems for any instructor who uses a number of supplements. However, if there is not a suitable text that can also be used, these minor issues become more problematic due to the scale of required materials to supplement. Although there were other, more minor concerns reflected in the data, the core barrier was clearly the lack of an available textbook. This general lack in the market raises other issues that we tried to identify with this survey—namely how the courses are delivered and what content is used to teach crimes of the state.

Method of Delivery/Course Content

One of our main questions regarding course content focused on the standards used to define state crime that were being taught (see Appendix, question 9). As was recently noted by Rothe and Friedrichs (2006), the controversy over the

appropriate definition of crimes of the state continues, as standards used for defining state crime remain problematic and have not been fully resolved (e.g., social harm, legalistic—domestic and/or international, or human rights). However, they state that “In general, most critical criminologists studying state crime agree that using international law (customary, codified treaties, charters, and the newly emerged criminal law) constitute a basic foundation for defining state crime” (Rothe and Friedrichs 2006:151). As such, our question seems to have relevance to the larger issue of the growth of the field as well as the topics that are taught to students in these courses. Based on our findings, we concur with Rothe and Friedrichs that the definitional debate of what state crime is and what standards to apply still remains.

For example, 15 percent of the respondents state that they only use a legalistic perspective (domestic and international) in their research, although they do present additional standards to students so they are aware of the multiple means by which state crimes have been defined (e.g., social harm, analogous harms, and human rights). One respondent indicated that he used solely a social harm perspective for both teaching and research. The remaining 80 percent of the participants stated that they use a plethora of standards including crimes of omission and commission. As noted by one respondent, “I do spend a lot of time on socially harmful problems but always describe them as analogous to legally prohibited behavior (or omissions).” Another respondent mentioned a deep ecology perspective (i.e., valuing species and ecosystems).

Approaches to teaching these standards also varied. One of the methods (e.g., using international law) was recently discussed in Kauzlarich and Matthews’ (2006) recent article. Their approach is to turn to the field of international law and to have students begin by reading the United Nations Charter, then look at a real-life example; the US invasion and occupation of Iraq (2003 to present). Having students consult, on their own, the widely accepted language concerning conditions under which a country can wage war conceptually opens the students up to the topic of state crime. They characterize this as a framing issue and base their theoretical understanding on the work of Lakoff (2002). In our survey, we found that the standards used to define crimes of the state are generally taught in the beginning of the course, though 10 percent of the respondents noted that they spend a great deal of time toward the end of the course explaining international law in relation to controls for the behaviors. However, there was a theme that emerged from the responses received in the survey of common difficulties associated with teaching international law and issues of controls. As noted by one of the respondents,

[A] recurring theme when dealing with legal standards including international humanitarian law is having students who are a part of a National Guard or military Reserve unit in the course. When I begin to cover the basics of international law, especially international humanitarian law (e.g., Geneva), they will begin to ask a number of questions (typically out side of class but on occasion in class) as what I present is not what the Department of Defense gives them in terms of education. While at first they are skeptical of my presentation, when they find

I have published articles and books on international law and social control mechanisms they begin to realize that DoD was simply lying to them. (I get this a lot with my presentations on the ICC). This term will make Geneva more interesting for my course due to the current debate in congress over Common Article 3 and the proposed legislation to "translate" it. Apparently current military members get little in the way of instruction on IHL and related areas, what they do get it vague, inaccurate and often ideologically driven.

Unlike teaching about controls of traditional crime, students are often unable to grasp the notion of international mechanisms. It is conceptually difficult for them to separate the illegal act from non-prosecution. As noted by a participant, "[I]f we are fortunate enough that they grasp such behaviors as violations of human right principles, humanitarian laws, or customary law, they are unable to understand the complexities behind the international political and legal arena working that prevent prosecutions and/or active policies to constrain state crime." As noted by another respondent, student responses such as "[W]hy isn't anything being done?" are often given when "extant social control modalities are discussed (e.g., ICC, ICJ, UNSC) and the general ineffectiveness of them is examined They do perceive the social harms and criminal nature of the activities and seem most concerned at the paucity of international control modalities."

An additional question we posed regarded the types of state criminality being taught. Namely, was the focus on crimes committed by the United States, other countries, or both? Based on the responses, we found that all respondents teach by using examples of US criminality as well as that of additional foreign governments. This is often accomplished through using current examples (from the US invasion of Iraq to the genocide in Darfur) or a comparative approach.

The standard used to determine what is or is not a crime, coupled with teaching students about the criminality of their own country as well as those they generally know nothing about, presents other challenges. As some scholars have noted (Day et al. 2003), teaching about genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other forms of state criminality is difficult on a number of levels. The main issue involves the amount of background knowledge necessary to understand specific cases of the crimes. For example, some familiarity with the history, politics, economics, and culture of the state(s) involved is essential in order to understand the events. This is especially true when teaching crimes of the state to undergraduate students, who may often be unaware of any political or catastrophic events outside of their own narrow experiences, which are often circumscribed by their demographics (removed for review, 2006). As noted by Day et al. (2003), an additional challenge involved in teaching such subject matters is the difficulty in communicating the horror associated with crimes that are entirely beyond most students' personal experience. Day et al. (2003:10) state,

Students in American universities may have some personal experience of violence, but only the very few who are themselves refugees have experienced

anything like forced expulsion, internment in camps, or mass rape, torture, and murder. There are many difficulties involved in trying to communicate such suffering to students who have no comparable experiences. There is a risk that the victims of such extreme violence may seem distant and unreal, their experiences unimaginable, and thus incomprehensible. A failure to convey the realities of individual experience can make the whole topic seem abstract and unreal.

As such, lecturing to students or asking them to read statistics wherein hundreds of thousands of people have been victimized by a state conveys little to nothing of the victims' experience. Additionally, students often find it difficult to stay interested in subject matters that are presented solely in a lecture format.

Films, on the other hand, can assist students with understanding the emotional context of the case. This is especially relevant, since we now teach to a largely visual generation that is able to more readily identify with images and visual movement than with traditional forms of printed text. As noted by Paris (1997), the current generation's view of the world has been "largely formed and shaped through visual culture." As such, visual media can be "a powerful pedagogical tool" in the classroom. The inclusion of visual imagery can also represent an event more readily to a learner than the traditional reading of a text. This can allow students to identify more quickly with what are often viewed as abstract concepts and far-removed events. A common approach used by the respondents of our survey to address these issues included the use of films as a supplement to readings and lectures. As was noted, movies can bridge the gap between abstract and distant cases and can also act as an enhancement to information presented to students in different formats.

For example, after a handful of lectures, one instructor shows the students the documentary *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*, about the 1993 armed standoff between the Branch Davidians and both the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This screening has a noticeable effect: it draws the students out and forces them to connect the movie with the materials they read or learned via lectures. Other films used by the instructors surveyed to teach state crime include *General Electric: Nuclear Deception*; *Outfoxed*; *Stalin: Man of Steel*; *Chernobyl*; *Hotel Rwanda*; *The Killing Fields*; and/or *Schindler's List*.; *Serpico*; *Prince of the City*; *The Control Room*; *Sometimes in April: Death in Gaza*; and *The Unconstitutional War on Iraq*.

An additional alternative to the use of films is field trip exercises—for example, one instructor uses an optional assignment for extra credit in which the students visit the Holocaust Museum and Spy Museum in nearby Washington, DC. They would do this on their own time, provide documentation that they had visited, and write a one-page summary of what they saw, liked, and disliked. Other alternatives included having students go to university-sponsored events where topics related to the crimes under investigation were discussed. Other approaches attempting to minimize the conceptual difficulties associated

with the complexities of state crime include beginning the course with topics more familiar to students, leading up to crimes of the state rather than at the beginning of the course.⁴ It has been suggested that this could be one of the reasons why students have many conceptual difficulties. One of our colleagues teaches a course titled "Towards a Sociology of Killing," which examines subjects such as murder and assassination, and then slowly moves to issues of states killing their own citizens through means such as the death penalty and genocide.

Themes of Student Comprehension

Regardless of the subject matter and/or standards used in teaching, students tend to initially be enthusiastic, but when it comes time to do the actual work, they disengage and, in general, demonstrate poor levels of complex understanding. As noted, most instructors of state crime spend time at the beginning of the course explaining the difference between crimes of commission and crimes of omission as well as the different standards for defining state criminality. Yet it is always distressing that these students do not really know how to apply these standards to cases. Helping students grasp or apply a theoretical understanding to states' actions proves to be a challenge. This is especially the situation when they are asked to take a case of state crime, apply a standard for defining it as a crime, and utilize a theoretical model to explain the behaviors of state actors, and/or suggest policies that could potentially act to control or constrain future incidents.

For example, the respondents were asked to rate their perception of the students' difficulty in grasping crimes committed by the United States using a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being no difficulty and 5 being extreme difficulty). Thirty-seven percent rated their students with a 4; 50 percent responded with a 2, as little difficulty; and 12 percent ranked their students with a 2.5. As such, only 37 percent perceived their students as having serious difficulty with grasping the crimes by the United States. However, this difficulty seemed to increase when instructors had to offer their perception of students' understanding of crimes committed by other governments. For example, 37 percent of the respondents gave ratings of 4, while 37 percent more rated the students' difficulty with a 3, and 36 percent ranked the difficulty at a 2. Thus, 74 percent of the respondents perceived their students' difficulty in understanding these concepts as very difficult. It was noted that conceptual issues included getting students to

wrap their heads around organizational structure and global pressures toward harmful state actions There is a strong tendency to see the political and the economic worlds as separate or, if connected, only by the mendacity of specific

4. Frank Pearce (personal communication July 2006).

corrupt individuals. Constructing a sociological understanding of state crime is the hardest task.

As we noted earlier, this is common with teaching about complex issues such as state crime (Day et al. 2003).

Despite students' difficulties in grasping the complexities of state crime and regardless of the issues associated with teaching courses on this topic, these classes remain popular. For example, the survey respondents noted that every semester, their courses reach full capacity, and they still have students trying to enroll. Of the survey respondents, 63 percent stated that they have students trying to get into their capped courses.

Based on the previously discussed obstacles and difficulties, we wondered why so many students would still want to enroll in the course or one in which a substantial core of the semester covered state crime. Several themes emerged. There were practical reasons given, including; "[F]its their schedule" and "Some students are really interested in 'non-traditional' crimes, but I think in reality demand is high because we have a skimpy selection of elective courses for Criminal Justice majors, who comprise the majority of students in the course." Another colleague shared similar reasoning with the "[C]ourses also count a major requirement. C, L, and J (crime, law, and justice) is also part of a number of minors in other departments on campus." However, some rationales included a general high level of interest in overall courses in which state crime is taught (e.g., White Collar Crime; Crime, Law and Justice: A Global Perspective).

Additionally, it has been noted that other departments or university organizations promote or offer such courses. As one scholar shared, at his university, the faculty adviser for Amnesty International and Students for Social Justice recommends those courses to his students. There were also responses that suggested this topic was of a growing interest to their students both before and during the semester. For example, "The course was interesting and informative," "This course was very informative and brought new views and ideas to mind," and "The class was interesting and fun." A high percentage of students report that it is "eye opening compared to other class offerings" and "brings up and addresses topics not usually covered in other CJ classes."

Respondents noted that the reason why these courses are typically overenrolled may be based on the prior relationships that instructors have established with students in other courses: "I tend to get a number of students that I had before that sign up for the course because I am teaching it." No matter what explanation is suggested to address the numbers of students taking a state crime course, the obstacles and difficulties raise an additional question that merits discussion: Why do student evaluations generally not reflect any of the aforementioned problems? In general, it was noted by the survey participants that most students are very complimentary. Student comments shared by the survey respondents included "gained greater knowledge of state crime," "The idea of state crime was fairly new to me. I was exposed to new concepts and

ideas,” “I have a better understanding of the material,” and “I now have a better understanding and terms to define state crimes where before this class there were no clear ways to articulate these types of crimes and behaviours.”

Conclusion

Based on the responses received from our survey, several themes emerged regarding the challenges to teaching state crime and the obstacles to the widespread adoption of this course within the required core classes that were not necessarily present in other core curriculum. One such obstacle was the logistical issues associated with offering a course on state crime. Themes that emerged from the survey respondents included the size of the department (the faculty-to-student ratio); the ability to offer courses that are not in the formal curriculum; the demands of the normal teaching load; the topic’s suitability to fit into the existing courses; and the ability to change the curriculum catalog to provide a more systematic availability of the course.

Another key theme emerged from the data: the lack of an appropriate undergraduate- or graduate-level textbook on state crime that can offer the basic types, costs associated with such acts, theoretical understandings, and policy implications. Such a lack may indeed reinforce the remaining debate over the standards and definitions that are used for determining a behavior as state crime. Similarly, Rothe and Friedrichs noted (2006),

The sub-field of white collar crime scholarship continues to be plagued by some definitional controversies, more than sixty-five years after Sutherland’s introduced the concept to the discipline, and one would hope that crimes of the state criminology could at least partially avoid this fate.

Ideally, an increased adoption of state crime courses in the criminology/criminal justice curriculum could succeed in resolving some of these conceptual issues. Nonetheless, the demands of the curriculum and the general practitioner-oriented goals of our students constrain the wide-scale adoption of this class and serve to have it marginalized in the typical university curriculum. Further, the focus on “mainstream” street crime in the criminology and criminal justice academic curriculum acts as an additional barrier to the legitimacy of the topic itself within a typical university (Savelsberg, King, and Cleveland 2002; Savelsberg; Savelsberg, Cleveland, and King 2004).

The constraints and conceptual difficulties associated with teaching state crime that were reflected in the survey responses appear to be symptomatic of larger issues: perhaps more general within academe or maybe it is limited to courses that tend to be marginalized even within the larger professional organizations in which they are couched (e.g., American Society of Criminology). Nevertheless, while such barriers exist in the adoption of state crime in the traditional curriculum, our hope is that such courses will make their way into

the formal requirements similarly to how courses on white-collar crime have done so over the last two decades.

In conclusion, we pose the question of why—given the constraints of the curriculum, practitioner-oriented goals of students, and the focus on mainstream street crime—there appears to be a growing interest among students in taking a class on state crime. Simultaneously, there appears to be a growing acceptance of and interest in crimes of the state among criminologists. As was noted by David Friedrichs at the 2004, 2005, and 2006 Annual Meetings of the American Society of Criminology, panels on the topic of state crime which drew standing-room-only audiences. Is this a sign of a measurable growth of interest in crimes of the state among criminologists, or were many of those attending doing so more as citizens concerned about the war in Iraq? We may not yet have an answer to either of these questions; however, such interest does suggest the potential for a significant expansion of criminological attention to crimes of the state among scholars and students as well as a systematic incorporation of state crime classes within the criminology/criminal justice core curriculum.

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Appendix A. Teaching State Crime Survey

1. Have you taught a course specifically titled "State Crime"?
If so, would you please summarize your experiences, both good and bad?
2. Have you taught a course which included a substantial section on state crime?
If so, would you please summarize your experiences, both good and bad?
3. If you have not taught a course on state crime, please explain the reasons (e.g., institutional or departmental restrictions, student body, etc.).
4. Did you have difficulty selecting an appropriate text for your course on state crime?
a. Yes b. No
5. Do you use supplemental readings for the course?
a. Yes b. No
6. Do you use an international approach (teach on state crimes occurring by other states (non-US)?
a. Yes b. No
7. How much difficulty do your students experience in understanding US state crime? Give a score of 1-5. 1 is very little or no difficulty.
8. How much difficulty do your students experience in understanding state crimes by other countries? Give a score of 1-5. 1 is very little or no difficulty.
9. Which approach do you use in teaching what constitutes state crime?
 - i. Legalistic
Domestic law: International law:
 - ii. Social harm based
 - iii. Human rights
 - iv. All the above
 - v. Other
10. What is the typical enrollment for the course?
11. Is your course enrollment-capped?
a. Yes b. No
12. If yes to the above question, do you often have students trying to still get in?
a. Yes b. No.
**Why do you think so many students take the course?
13. In your student course evaluations, what are some typical comments?
14. Feel free to add any other information or material you deem appropriate that may help give us a sense of your experience (e.g., obstacles, successes, general comments).

15. Is there anyone else you think we should speak to who you has taught a course on state crime or incorporated this topic as a large part of another course?
16. Please attach your most recent syllabus for this course.