

# **Forensic Criminology**

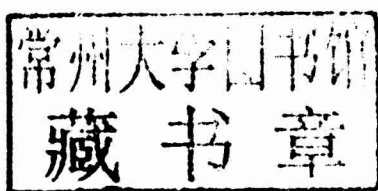
**Andy Williams**

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# Forensic Criminology

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Andy Williams



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# Forensic Criminology

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This text provides an examination of the aetiological development of forensic criminology in the UK. It links the subjects of scientific criminology, criminal investigations, crime scene investigation, forensic science and the legal system and it provides an introduction to the important processes that take place between the crime scene and the courtroom. These processes help identify, define and label the 'criminal' and are crucial for understanding any form of crime within society. The book includes sections on:

- the epistemological and ontological philosophies of the natural sciences;
- the birth of scientific criminology and its search for the criminal 'body';
- the development of early forms of forensic science and crime scene investigation;
- investigating crime;
- information, material and evidence;
- crime analysis and crime mapping;
- scientific support and crime scene examination; and
- forensic science and detection methods and forensics in the courtroom.

The text combines coverage of historical research and contemporary criminal justice process and provides an introduction to the most common forensic practices, procedures and uses that enable the identification and successful prosecution of criminals. *Forensic Criminology* provides a framework for understanding the varieties of information work that exist within current criminal justice practice.

*Forensic Criminology* is essential for students of criminology, criminal justice, criminal investigations and crime science. It is also useful to those criminal justice practitioners wishing to gain a more in-depth understanding of the links between criminology, criminal investigations and forensics techniques.

**Andy Williams** is Principal Lecturer and Programme Area Leader in the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Portsmouth. His main research areas

are forensic criminology; forensic techniques and their uses and interpretation in court; dangerous offenders; public protection and offender profiling. His previous books include: *The Anatomy of Serious Further Offending* (Oxford University Press, with Mike Nash); *The Handbook Of Public Protection* (Willan, co-edited with Mike Nash); and *The Myth of Moral Panics* (Routledge, with Bill Thompson).

‘This long-awaited book will become part of the foundational literature in forensic criminology. It is essential reading for students, practitioners, and academics who wish to fully appreciate the interplay between theoretical/substantive criminology and the practical world of forensic science, as well as everyday investigative and legal decision-making. Fortunately for both criminal justice professionals and general citizenry alike, the gap between theory and practice has just been substantially narrowed.’

*Daniel B. Kennedy, Ph.D., Oakland University and President, Forensic Criminology Associates, Inc., USA*

‘This is a very timely and important book for the progression of forensic criminology. It uses an impressive array of literature and sources to provide a rigorous and robust overview of the historical and theoretical contexts that underpin contemporary forensic practice and relevant criminology. It demonstrates the tangible links between the evolution of criminological thought and its utilisation in forensic practice without adhering to a formulaic description of tasks, science and technologies. Instead, this book offers an interesting and insightful overview of developments in regards to the relevant science, techniques and ideologies, which is augmented by a detailed commentary on their underlining application and development.’

*Dr Paul Smith, Institute of Criminal Justice Studies, University of Portsmouth, UK*

‘A useful point of reference for all students of forensic criminology. This book concisely summarises historical developments and research through to current thinking in a logical framework from crime scene to court room.’

*Terry Lowe, Head of Scientific Services Department, Hampshire Constabulary, UK*

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This has been a difficult book to write and has taken much longer than expected. Thanks go to Routledge for putting up with constant deadline changes that stretched over a year. Particular thanks go to Nicola and Heidi for their immense patience.

I would like to thank key members of the University of Portsmouth, who were open enough to see the potential in developing a forensic strand to an already impressive criminal justice department; and who also gave me the space to develop the Criminology and Forensic Studies course as well as help me through the early ‘sociopathic years’. In particular I would like to thank Mike Nash, Steve Savage and Dave Russell for all their support; and Val and the admin girls who are the best and covered my ass on many occasions! Merging practical policing with academic social science is always difficult, but, with the help of ex-practitioners, it has been fun; and over the last seven years it has been great working with a good bunch of ‘insiders’. Thanks go to Paul, Adrian, Brian and Claire; I hope you have learned as much from me as I have from you (academics are not entirely useless). I would also like to say a big thanks to all the undergraduate Criminology and Forensic Studies students who have passed through the door: you have been entertaining and every day remind me why I do the job I do. Particular thanks to PT and KH for all their help over the last year; a debt I can only repay through copious amounts of wine and pool (10–2)!

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The ultimate academic debt once again goes to BT.

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# Introduction

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### A brave old world

The subject of criminology is regarded as both fascinating and enthralling. The excitement and apparent *sexiness* around the notion of crime and deviant behaviours is of course not new, neither could it be called monolithic. Burke (1994:149–177) highlights how, in early modern Europe, *villains* revealed the standards of the culture in which they belonged. Furthermore, public executions were not only part of the repertoire of public rituals but they were also endowed with a carnivalesque atmosphere (Burke, 1994:196–197; also see Foucault, 1977). Over the last 150 years, the excitement and interest in crime and the criminal have not only been linked but also matched to ideas and developments around *forensics*. Indeed, the mix of crime, criminals and forensics is so potent that it has spawned vast educational, economic, and technological industries that have increasingly influenced our social, cultural and political worlds. When people meet individuals who are *criminologists* or practitioners that deal with offenders, a common response is, ‘oh criminology is very interesting’. Of course, when asked for a cogent augmentation of this statement, further elucidation is often lacking or is distinctly opaque. Criminology does not simply deal with crime and horrific acts of behaviour against human beings; it also has to deal with a broad gamut of social problems – from poverty and injustice (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Dorling, 2011; Jones, 2011) through substance misuse (Stevens, 2011) and violence (Flannery *et al.*, 2007) to mental health issues (Maden, 2007). Despite such issues being intrinsic to much that is studied within criminology, people still vicariously enjoy a good murder mystery or hearing about a violent serial sexual killer. Indeed, serial sexual killers often draw the most attention from the general public and students, with countless undergraduate dissertations entitled ‘Mad or bad’ or ‘Theoretical explanations of serial killing’. It is actually quite surprising that the prevalence and reductive repetitiveness of these issues does not result in supervisors becoming killers themselves! Within the last 50 years, however, the apparent *seductive nature* of the criminal world has influenced a dramatic expansion in the three interlinked areas of criminal investigations, forensic science and criminology. It is not only cultural artefacts



such as books, movies and TV shows that have proliferated in these years (can any reader remember when there were no crime, police, forensic or profiling dramas on TV?); educational programmes, professional bodies and organisations, and the resultant ‘exploitative culture’ (Cohen, 1972:139) have rapidly expanded during this period as well. The underlying thesis in Wiener’s *Reconstructing the Criminal* (1994) suggests it is not possible to think about crime and offenders and the subsequent societal responses without thinking about sociocultural influences. Furthermore, what is designated as a crime as well as components of physical evidence, the narrative of *crimes* and the resultant understanding of offenders and their behaviour are all determined by social and cultural discourses which intersect the areas of criminal investigations, forensic science, the legal system and criminology. This book is about these four areas.

### **The goal of this book**

This book is intended as an introductory text for those wishing to develop a *critical* theoretical and applied understanding of *forensic criminology*, an interdisciplinary field within the social science subject of criminology. It attempts to introduce both students and practitioners to some of the core ideas, theories/concepts and issues that link four different academic subjects and professions – *criminal investigations, forensic science, the legal system* and *criminology*. It critically examines some of the core processes that take place in these four areas and assesses the usefulness that forensic criminology has for the various processes from crime scene to courtroom. In doing so, it discusses the underlying investigative and forensic epistemologies that will aid those who wish to undertake casework in the wide variety of occupations that currently exist within the criminal justice sector, and in related occupations outside of the sector. The core objectives are to *provide social science students with a meaningful understanding of the interplay between forensic science and the legal system; and, through the lens of a criminological analysis, demonstrate the effects of forensic science on the criminal justice system and understandings of criminality*. In recent years the market for *forensically* focused science and social science undergraduate courses has increased dramatically (see below for an expansion on this issue). Forensic elements have been relatively easy to develop and *drop into* the traditional natural science degree programmes; for example, in the last five years, lots of biology departments in UK universities have created ‘forensic biology’ or ‘forensic science’ degrees. What has been more difficult is creating forensic units for social science subjects such as criminology. The reasons behind these difficulties are numerous and include: jurisdictional boundary fighting over the *ownership* of forensics (Abbott, 1998 and 2001; Cohen, 1985); venomous criticism by specific academic disciplines, such as sociology and criminology, of any subject that could be construed as being even vaguely positivistic; and, finally, the lack of knowledge of forensic specialisms within criminology.<sup>1</sup> Despite these inherent difficulties, what has been quite remarkable in the last seven years is the huge