

# KRM 310 (A): CRIMINOLOGY THEORY

## UNIT 1: THE ROLE OF THEORY

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**Theory:** *A highly organized statement of the basic assumptions and logically interrelated assertions about a phenomena (or class of phenomena under study), which attempts to DESCRIBE, PRECITC, EXPLAIN and CONTROL subject matter.*

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### The Goals of Theory

Theory aims to *Describe, Explain, Predict and Control*

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|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Theory as DESCRIPTION</b> | Statements embodied in the theory mesh with what we know about crime and criminals <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Descriptions must have high levels of accuracy, reliability and validity.</li><li>• "What is it?" format.</li></ul>  |
| <b>2. Theory as EXPLANATION</b> | Explanations suggests a deeper penetration into the problem (not a simple description). They account for the very being of the things under study, providing reasons that such phenomena as crimes exist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Why is it? Format.</li></ul>   |
| <b>3. Theory as PREDICTION</b>  | Prediction (the act of foretelling) emphasizes time. It involves identifying when something will occur by specifying the conditions conducive to its occurrence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scientists often express prediction in probabilistic terms, stating the likelihood that, given a set of conditions, some event – in this case crime – will occur.</li><li>• "When is it" format.</li></ul> |
| <b>4. Theory as CONTROL</b>     | This goal is sometimes problematic for criminologists because they may view themselves not as providers of solutions to problems, but rather as value-free observers of the social world. Consequently, they place a premium n pure science at the expense of the pursuit of applied knowledge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The resulting knowledge should serve to control behaviour</li></ul>         |

### **Building Blocks of Theories** (5 Marks)

Assumptions are beyond testing (they constitute the theory's core belief system). Assumptions are taken as given and are either rejected or accepted, but are not subject to