Class Activities

# Chapter 3: The Classical School of Criminological Thought

**Class Activity 1: Beccaria’s Proposed Reforms and Ideas of Justice**

**Done in class**

**Instructions:** Please use “Beccaria’s Proposed Reforms and Ideas of Justice” section. Pick one of Beccaria’s suggested reforms you think is the most important. Take 5 minutes to write why you think this was the most important reform offered by Beccaria.

Some of the reforms you might discuss include:

1. Eliminating the use of torture.
2. Citizens should be tried by a jury of their peers.
3. Laws should be made public and understood.
4. Important stages of the decision-making process of the justice system should be made public and not carried out in secret.
5. The surest but most difficult way to prevent crimes is by perfecting education.

Now, have those who have selected the same reform group together. Explain to the class that only one reform can be done and they need to make an argument why their reform should be the one selected. Have each group prepare their arguments for 10 minutes. Then have each group present their arguments. At the end of class discussion, have them vote on which reform they think should be implemented.

**Class Activity 2: Beccaria’s Concept of Deterrence and the Three Key Elements of Punishment**

**Critical Reflection**

**Instructions:** Bring into class four examples of deterrence you see every day. For each example, answer the following:

1. Which elements of deterrence are present in the sign? (Discuss each one individually.)
2. What is the primary element used to deter? Is the emphasis of this element consistent with Beccaria’s argument? Explain your answer.

Alternatively, you can use the four examples below and have students in class answer the two questions above. Show these four examples of deterrence below (you can transfer them to PowerPoint Slides). The photos were taken by Kimberly D. Dodson and used with permission.



Example 1: Gun Violence



Example 2: Seat Belt Safety



Example 3: Driving Under the Influence



Example 4: Neighborhood Watch

Alternatively, prior to class you can ask students to bring in their own examples of deterrence.

**Class Activity 3: Beccaria’s Conceptualization of Specific and General Deterrence**

**Case Studies**

**Instructions:** Let’s revisit the case studies we used in Chapter 1. Please read each scenario carefully and answer the following questions: (1) If you were the judge, how would you achieve specific deterrence in each scenario? (2) How would you achieve general deterrence? (3) Is your decision consistent with Beccaria’s arguments on the certainty, celerity (swiftness), and severity of punishment?

1. You are a police officer and you are buying a cup of coffee at the local “Stop and Rob” convenience store. You see a juvenile male place a quart of milk inside his jacket. You approach the person and tell him to open his jacket. He complies. He apologizes for his actions. He explains that he could not afford to buy the milk but he needs it for his child. He promises not to do it again and asks you to let him go.
2. A major pharmaceutical company introduces a new weight-loss drug. Although the pharmaceutical company knows that the drug may increase the chances of heart attacks and strokes, the company’s warning label states that, “Product X has no known side effects.” After the drug is linked to hundreds of heart attacks and strokes and dozens of deaths, the company pulls the drug off the market.
3. Laura has had a hard day at work. Before going home, she decides to stop at a local bar and have a couple drinks. After consuming several drinks, she decides to drive home. She runs a red light and crashes head-on into another vehicle. The two occupants of the other vehicle are killed. One of the occupants of the car was 6 months pregnant at the time of the crash. Laura’s blood alcohol content was .18. She has a previous conviction for Driving Under the Influence (DUI).
4. John and Amy have been in a relationship for 10 years. Amy has grown tired of the relationship and has been having an affair with another man for the last 6 months. Amy and her lover make a plan to kill her husband. Amy takes out a $500,000 life insurance policy on her husband. Several weeks later, her lover breaks into Amy’s house and shoots and kills her husband. He takes a few valuables from the house to make it look like a burglary.
5. You and your partner are dispatched to a domestic dispute. When you arrive, you hear loud voices inside the house. You knock on the door and announce that you are with the police department. A small-framed male answers the door. You advise him that you’ve received a call about a domestic dispute. You notice that the man has a small amount of blood dripping from his lower lip, which also appears to be bruised. You ask the man if he is okay or in need of medical attention. In an effeminate voice, he advises you that he and his “roommate” have had a little fight that “got out of hand.” A larger male is standing in the kitchen and he seems irritated that you are there. He speaks up and says “We were arguing and I lost my temper a little.” The smaller male advises you that he does not need medical attention and that he does not want to press charges.