

Practice Midterm Exam
Econ 382: The Economics of Crime

Mr. Easton

NB: These questions are illustrative. In an hour exam, I might ask for four short answers and one longer answer.

Short Answer questions:

Each question should take 5-10 minutes maximum.

1. How might lawyers differ from economists in their concern for “victimless” crimes?
2. Is there any reason to believe that the number of crimes against property are overstated or understated in comparison to the number of crimes against the person?
3. If crime depends on punishment, why not increase the punishment until the crime rate is zero?
4. More police are found in high crime areas. We can conclude that the police cause crime. Discuss.
5. If the technology of crime gets better, should criminals be better off?
6. Since you cannot affect events that have already taken place, what role does the punishment have in the theory of crime? Does this differ from the way in which punishments are currently distributed? [Think of the punishment for the first offence, the punishment for the second offence, etc.]
7. How much is a human life worth?
8. What would be the effect of changing the standard of proof required in a criminal trial from “beyond reasonable doubt” to “the balance of the probabilities”? Would there be a) more convictions; b) more trials; c) better outcomes?

II. Longer Answer Questions (20 minutes each)

1. Does the death penalty reduce crime?.
2. In Gilbert and Sullivan’s operetta “The Mikado”, the Lord High Executioner declares, “Let the punishment fit the crime.” What do you think? Should any two acts, equally heinous, receive the same punishment?
3. It is said that the only certainties in life are death and taxes. What about crime?
4. How much does crime cost us in Canada? Some estimates range up to \$20 billion a year. What issues need to be resolved to answer this question sensibly?
5. In a society in which all people are identical in their productive capacities, we would not expect to observe crime. Discuss.