The enlightenment is the most important event in the history of western civilisation. It was at its peak in the 18th century but began in 16th century – it sought to reform society using reason, logic and knowledge, as opposed to tradition, faith and religion. It challenged the norm and what people thought they knew.

The paradigm of religion and faith was replaced by a paradigm of knowledge. A paradigm is a way of seeing the world, explained by a pattern, model or set of theories.

Statistics were a fairly new phenomenon in the late 1780s, in a thirst for knowledge. The first population census in Britain took place in 1801, police/prison/judicial authorities began producing their own statistical returns and a great mass of numerical data flooded into the public realm.

Chevalier (1973) – there was a determination to know everything, obtain figures for everything, to measure everything.

Lecture 5: historical origins – the rise of scientific criminology

Modern criminology originated in the 18th century, around 1760. Early medical and psychiatric discourses/penology (Rafter, 2009) dominated the subject.

Classicism – Many sources attribute the beginning of criminology to the Classical school. The classical school is largely concerned with the establishment of a reformed, equitable and efficient system of justice (Tierney, 2010).

- Reiner (2012) – this is associated with Beccaria’s 1764 book Dei Delitti e Delle Pene and further development from Blackstone, Bentham etc.
- David garland (1985) - has called the application of the label ‘criminology’ to 18th century thinkers “altogether misleading”
- Concerned with creation of a fairer and better regulated social order.
- Beccaria – said that crimes should be judged by harm they caused to individuals and society – honor, duels, torture, violence, theft, suicide, smuggling.

Neo-classicism – 19th century developments in biological and medical sciences. Retained the core belief that people are guided by reason and freewill. Acknowledges that some people are less capable of exercising them. It remains the guiding principle for modern criminal justice.

Social context – rise of scientific criminology began during Victorian period, when characterised by deep commitment to social reform. During this time there was a move from feudalism to industrialism, rise of capitalism and urbanisation, rise of the middle-classes and private property, formation of a bureaucratic state.

Phrenology and physiognomy – early scientific attempts to find causes of criminality came from physiognomy and phrenology – idea was the close observation of the structure, proportions and contours of the face and skull. This links to Lombrosian theory of biological differences between offenders and non-offenders. British criminology has never been particularly Lombrosian, however.

A university post in Criminology was first created at Birmingham University in 1921, for Maurice Hamblin Smith, a Freudian leaning psychologist.

What also spurred British criminology’s growth was the flight of intellectuals from Nazi Europe in the 1930s. three emigrants established within universities: Leon Radzinowicz at University of Cambridge, Man Grunhut at LSE and Hermann Mannheim at LSE. This is when, Garland said, criminology was instituted as a professional academic discipline in Britain.