

CRIM 100: INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Spring 2024

Online (Asynchronous)

Professor and Teaching Assistant

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This course provides an overview of the criminal legal system in the United States, including law, crime, police, courts, and corrections. We will discuss the organization of the justice system, its goals and procedures, and *critically* evaluate its operation. By the end of the course, you should have a basic understanding of the role of law in the United States, the nature and prevalence of crime, policing practices, the structure and roles of the criminal courts, the goals of punishment, and the correctional system.

You are expected to keep up with the assigned readings and prepare every week. By staying enrolled in this course, you are agreeing to the terms set forth in this syllabus.

Course Modality

This is a *fully asynchronous online course*. That means that we will not be meeting live at the same time. You must *complete your work each week* by the due date (*due Saturday, each week*), but can do so on your own schedule. This also means that, *should you need something, you must be proactive in contacting your teaching assistant and professor*. If you need to meet about something, please email us to set up a virtual meeting.

Mason Core: Social and Behavioral Science

This is a General Education course in the Mason Core social and behavioral sciences category. As such, upon completing this course, you should be able to:

- Explain how individuals, groups, and institutions within the criminal justice system are influenced by contextual factors, including politics, economics, public opinion, and other social factors
- Demonstrate awareness of changes in the social and cultural constructs related to crime and justice
- Use appropriate methods and resources to apply concepts, terminology, principles, and theories from the field of criminal justice in the analysis of significant human issues

Additional Learning Outcomes

In addition to those outlined above, upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand basic principles of collecting, compiling, and analyzing criminal justice-related data and information
- Understand and critically evaluate various perspectives on issues related to the criminal legal system in the United States
- Distinguish between personal opinions/beliefs and empirical evidence
- Be aware of the variety of research interests and expertise of CLS faculty and students

Required Materials

There is one required book for this course (listed below). It is available from the GMU bookstore, as well as Amazon and other online retailers. However, you do need the book by the second week of the semester, so plan to get it as soon as possible. Additional required readings and materials will be posted on Blackboard.

- Lab, Steven P., Marian R. Williams, Jefferson E. Holcomb, Melissa W. Burek, William R. King, and Michael E. Buerger. 2018. *Criminal Justice: The Essentials* (5th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 9780190855871).

<u>Grading Scale</u>				<u>Grade Breakdown</u>	
A	93-100	C+	77-79	Quizzes	50%
A-	90-92	C	73-76	Assignments & Discussions	50%
B+	87-89	C-	70-72		
B	83-86	D	65-69		
B-	80-82	F	64 or below		

Grade Requirements

Weekly Quizzes (50%)

Instead of a few traditional large exams, during the semester, most weeks, you will take several short (5-10 questions) quizzes based on that week's readings and/or video. On these weeks, your quiz must be submitted by 11:59 pm on Saturday. All quizzes will be completed via Blackboard.

*Note: Quizzes may **not** be completed after the deadline without prior approval. See next page for details.*

*Note: You will only have **one chance** to submit each quiz.*

Note: Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped before calculating final grades at the end of term.

Assignments & Discussions (50% of overall grade)

Throughout the semester, you will complete several brief assignments and discussion posts. It is your responsibility to pay attention and be aware of what is due each week.

All assignments and discussions will be posted on and submitted through Blackboard. Every week, they are due by 11:59 pm on Saturday. Assignments will vary but will generally involve you sharing ideas on class topics that go beyond the readings and lecture videos, applying the concepts from class to real scenarios, and/or doing independent research. Discussion prompts will include several questions, each of which must be completed as specified.

*Note: Assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word documents (.doc or .docx files) or as PDFs (.pdf files). Other file-types **will not be graded** and you will receive a grade of '0' for that week.*

Note: Without prior approval, acceptance of late submissions is solely up to my discretion. See next page for details.

Grading and Late/Missed Work Policies

Grading

Quizzes will generally be composed of multiple-choice and true/false questions. They will be graded through Blackboard. Once the due date has passed, the answers and feedback will be available on Blackboard.

Grading of assignments will depend on the specific assignment and will be done through Blackboard. If there is individualized feedback, it will be available on Blackboard.

When completing discussions, you should clearly respond to each part of the prompt that is given. If questions are numbered, your responses should also be numbered so that it is clear where you are answering each part. Discussions will be graded as follows:

<p>You may receive a maximum of 100% if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You fully respond to all parts of the prompt• Your responses meet the stated length requirements (if applicable)• You integrate class readings and materials into your response	<p>You may receive a maximum of 90% if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You fully respond to all parts of the prompt and meet the stated length requirements, but your responses do not integrate class readings and materials	<p>You may receive a maximum of 80% if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You fully respond to all parts of the prompt, but do not meet the stated length requirements and do not integrate class readings and materials	<p>You will receive a maximum of 70% if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You do not fully respond to all parts of the prompt
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NOTE: The table above shows your **maximum possible grade** if you meet those conditions; it does **not** guarantee you that specific grade.

Late/Missed Work

Your work for this class may be completed any time during the week but is always due by 11:59 pm on Saturday of the week it is assigned.

Quizzes may not be taken late without prior approval. (See * below)

Acceptance of late assignments and discussion posts is up to my sole discretion, unless you obtain prior approval.* If you do not obtain prior approval, I may or may not accept late work. If I do accept late work, it may come with a grade penalty, depending on how many days late it is submitted.

*In order to obtain prior approval, you must do so ***the day before*** things are due. In other words, since your work is due on Saturday, you must get approval ***by Friday***. This means that you ***should not wait until the due date to begin your work***, because you will not be given approval for late submission and/or may not receive credit.

Other Class and University Policies

Contacting Us: You should feel free to send the professor and/or teaching assistant an email at any time during the semester if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. If you have any issue that cannot be resolved through email or you would prefer to meet, please email us to arrange a time for a virtual meeting. All virtual meetings will be scheduled through Zoom.

When sending an email to us (and this is good practice for contacting any instructors and TAs!), please:

1. **Use your GMU email** account
2. **Put the course number in the subject line** (so your message is not confused for spam)
3. **Include your name in your email**
4. Write all emails **in a formal, professional manner**.
5. Make sure you **clearly ask whatever question you have or let me know what you need**

We may not respond to emails that do not follow these guidelines. In general, we will **try to respond to emails within 24-48 hours on Monday-Friday. If you email us on a Friday afternoon/evening or over the weekend, you may not hear back until the following week**. Please do not send a follow-up before allowing this time to pass. If you have not heard back from us after this period, feel free to send a gentle reminder.

Note: Please do **not** reach out to us via Blackboard messenger. ***All course communications should be through GMU email.***

Extra Credit and Grading Questions: In general, I do not offer extra credit in this course. If you keep on top of things, this course will be easily manageable; you will have plenty of opportunities to do well. If there is an opportunity for extra credit, I will notify you via Blackboard Announcements.

If you believe an error was made in grading something you submitted, please let your professor and teaching assistant know ASAP and we can discuss it. Otherwise, it is inappropriate to ask us to increase your grade, and we will not do so.

Etiquette: We will be discussing many issues in this class that may be controversial and emotional. I encourage good-faith engagement, discussion, and debate. However, **rudeness and hostility will not be tolerated**. I want you all to **be critical of arguments, not the individuals making those arguments**. We can and will discuss opposing viewpoints and perspectives respectfully.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: George Mason University's Honor Code requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by the Mason Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). Familiarize yourself with this policy and **remember your legal fundamentals: Ignorance of the rules is not a valid defense!**

Note: All graded work for this class must be completed independently. Please be sure that the work you submit in this class is your own, and that you provide proper citations when referencing another person's words or ideas. Instructors are required to report all violations of the Honor Code to the Mason Honor Committee. Violations of the Honor Code may result in a failing grade for the assignment or exam, a failing grade for the course, or any additional penalties determined by the committee, including dismissal from the university.

Accommodations for Special Needs: If you need academic accommodations, please inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Services (703-993-4306; <https://ds.gmu.edu>). All academic accommodations must be made through that office.

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence: George Mason University is committed to providing an environment that is free from discrimination, sexual misconduct, and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>).

As a faculty member and designated "Responsible Employee," I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per university policy. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu).

Counseling and Psychological Services: If you are facing significant life stressors and feeling overwhelmed, there are resources available to help you. These include Counseling and Psychological Services (703) 993-2380, which provides confidential psychological services, including 24/7 crisis intervention. There is also Student Support (703) 993-5376, which helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate resources. Student Support also has an on-line referral system (for non-emergencies only): <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>. The non-emergency number for the GMU police is (703) 993-2810. See <https://ulife.gmu.edu/about-us/offices-of-university-life/> for a full listing of service areas and contact information.

The Writing Center and Mason Library: The Writing Center at Mason (<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu>) is a fantastic and free resource providing information and one-on-one tutoring for all your writing needs. While you will not be writing papers or essays in this class, I want you to know that the Writing Center is available throughout your Mason career should you need assistance before submitting any assignments. They can help with any part of the writing process, from planning and organizing your paper to proof-reading and revising. Their website also has guides on best practices for reading, note-taking, and citing sources. Mason Library also has excellent tutorials on writing, reading, note-taking, giving presentations, time management, and academic integrity. See <https://library.gmu.edu/tutorials> for a full list.

Purdue OWL: As a general resource for any college student, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) is a great resource for tips on writing and citations. In particular, if you are unsure of how to cite materials in your work, be sure to check their website, which is available at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html.

Weekly Schedule

- Notes:
 - “Textbook” denotes Lab et al., *Criminal Justice: The Essentials* (5th ed.) (see details on first page)
 - For the purposes of this class, each week runs from Sunday through Saturday.
 - **The weekly schedule of due dates will be the same throughout the semester.** All work is due each week by 11:59 pm on Saturday.
 - Weekly topic schedule is subject to change as the semester progresses. I will notify you of any changes via Blackboard Announcements as soon as possible.

Week / Dates	Topic	Readings/ Materials	Due This Week	Notes
1: Jan. 16-20	Introductions and course overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post • Quiz* 	*You have two chances for this quiz. However, after this week, you will only have one chance at quizzes.
2: Jan. 21-27	Overview of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, chapters 1-2 • Packer, “Two Models of the Criminal Process” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 	
3: Jan. 28-Feb. 3	Overview of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, chapters 1-2 • Chart, “Theories of Crime” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 	
4: Feb. 4-10	Policing: Goals and structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 3 • NIJ, “Policing Strategies” • CEBCP, “Community Policing and Procedural Justice”* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment • Quiz 	
5: Feb. 11-17	Policing: Controversial issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weichselbaum, “The Problems with Policing the Police” • Bell, “Black Security and the Conundrum of Policing” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post 	
6: Feb. 18-24	Pretrial processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 4 • Kane, “Plea Bargaining and the Innocent” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 	
7: Feb. 25-March 2	Trial process and jury decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 4 • Winter & Greene, “Juror Decision-making” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment • Quiz 	
8: March 3-9	***!!!** SPRING BREAK ***!!!**			

9: March 10-16	Sentencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 4 • Barry-Jester et al., “The New Science of Sentencing”* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 	
10: March 17-23	Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 4 • ABA, “Criminal Appeals” • Waters et al., “Criminal Appeals in State Courts”** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post 	<p>*The ABA site is not a “reading.” It simply lays out some of the ideal purposes and procedures to give you a sense of the legal side of criminal appeals.</p> <p>**The Waters et al. article is dense and full of statistics. I do not expect you to digest every single piece of information. It is just to give you a sense of the broad scope of appeals in the U.S.</p>
11: March 24-30	Overview of punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 5-6 • Carlsmith et al., “Why Do We Punish?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment • Quiz 	
12: March 31-April 6	Community corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbook, Chapter 6 • Editorial, “Opinion: The Problem with Parole” • Miller, “The Endless Trap of American Parole”* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz 	<p>*The Miller article is long, but it’s a pretty easy (and quite interesting) read.</p>
13: April 7-13	Prisons, jails, and mass incarceration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sentencing Project, <i>Report to the United Nations on Racial Disparities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post 	
14: April 14-20	Capital punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norris, “The Death Penalty” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment • Quiz 	
15: April 21-27	Wrongful convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norris et al., “Thirty Years of Innocence” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment • Quiz 	

Note: There is **no final exam** in this class. All work must be completed by the end of the day on **Monday, April 29**