

CRIM 402: PUNISHMENT & CORRECTIONS

COURSE INFORMATION

This is a fully online and asynchronous course. This means that students do not have to be available at the same time each week for class meetings. Instead, students are required to participate weekly and complete assignments by the deadlines listed in the syllabus. A computer with an Internet connection is required.

Recommended prerequisite: CRIM 102

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Janani Umamaheswar
Office location: Enterprise Hall 303
Office hours: By appointment on Zoom
Email address: jumamahe@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Welcome to Punishment & Corrections! Most broadly, this course serves as an in-depth examination of how and why the American criminal legal system punishes offenders. We will consider the theoretical underpinnings of the various forms of punishment we employ, and we will seek to evaluate the historical, social, and political conditions that shape who is punished and how. Though our emphasis will be on the American criminal legal system, we will also examine punishment in other parts of the world to contextualize our own system of punishment. Drawing on diverse sources (including scholarly articles, journalistic accounts, documentaries, and images), we will cover a wide range of topics and debates related to punishment and corrections.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe how the socio-political landscape affects whom we punish, why, and how. In other words, students should have developed a sociological understanding of punishment and corrections in the United States.
2. Assess critically specific punishment policies (e.g.— the death penalty, solitary confinement, etc.) by referring to social scientific research on the effectiveness of these policies.
3. Understand the structure and subculture of correctional facilities in the United States.
4. Grasp how the penal system in America reflects and perpetuates social inequalities based on race, class, and gender.

REQUIRED READINGS

There is no required textbook for this course; all readings are available on Blackboard.

ASSESSMENT

Weekly Flip videos: 50%

- 1) By 11:59 p.m. on Thursday each week, you will submit one short (10 minutes max.) video on Flip in which you informally reflect on the readings for that week.
- 2) By 11:59 p.m. on Sunday each week, you should also submit video responses to two of classmates' videos.

These videos will be graded as follows:

100% if you submitted your video and responded to two of your group members' videos.

75% if you submitted your video and responded to only one of your group members' videos.

50% if you submitted only your own video.

0% if you did not submit any videos that week.

Quizzes: 30% (10% each)

You will complete 3 online, open-book, multiple-choice quizzes (10% each) throughout the semester. The quizzes will be structured as described below:

Quiz 1 will cover all the readings and media from week 2 to week 5 inclusive.

Quiz 2 will cover all the readings and media from week 6 to week 10 inclusive.

Quiz 3 will cover all the readings and media from week 11 to week 14 inclusive.

Infographic assignment: 20%

Infographics are a great way to disseminate research findings to the broader public. In this assignment, students will develop policy recommendations on a topic related to punishment and corrections in a visually appealing way. Students will:

- 1) Review the academic research related to the topic they choose.
- 2) Create an infographic summarizing the main findings on their topic and providing policy recommendations.

Students must rely on at least 5 academic sources in this assignment, which is due on Friday, April 26th at 11:59 p.m. We will cover more details on the assignment during the semester.

GRADING SCALE

Students will be graded on the following scale:

A: 93-100
A-: 90-92
B+: 87-89
B: 83-86
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79
C: 73-76
C-: 70-72
D: 60-69
F: <60

SEEKING SUPPORT

If the COVID-19 pandemic taught us anything at all, it is that expecting normalcy in the classroom during periods of crisis (whether personal, social, or political) is not reasonable. As we learn together, please feel free to approach me with suggestions about how to support you if you are struggling. Although I may be unable to offer direct assistance with some of the issues you may be facing, I am happy to support your learning in my class however I can, and to connect you with resources that may help with issues beyond the classroom.

SUCCEEDING IN AN ONLINE COURSE

- Please email me at jumamahe@gmu.edu with any questions/concerns and/or if you wish to meet with me online. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24-48 hours, except for weekends and holidays.
- Please note that the schedule is tentative and it is your responsibility to ensure that you are receiving and reading ALL emails from me. This is especially important in an online course.
- All assignments should be submitted on Blackboard.
- The rules that apply to a regular classroom apply to the online classroom as well. I encourage debate in my classroom (whether online or face-to-face), but I also work hard to create a space where students do not feel attacked or uncomfortable. Please give other students' opinions the respect you think your own opinion deserves.
- Your "weighted total" on Blackboard reflects your most up-to-date, accurate grade in the class.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

It is my intent that students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives will be well-served and well-respected in my classroom. I want students' diversity to be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit in this course. I encourage students to approach me with questions, comments, and suggestions related to respecting *every* form of diversity.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All submitted course work should be your own. When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations. When in doubt, cite! You are bound by the George Mason University Honor Code. Violations will be referred to the University Honor Committee.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-993-3686 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE*

*Schedule is tentative and subject to change as the semester progresses.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Media</u>
Week 1	Welcome	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce yourselves on Flip (Flip video 1) 	None
Week 2	Why punish?	Frase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 2 	Matthews TED talk
Week 3	Race and punishment	Alexander; Coates (Atlantic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 3 	Stevenson TED talk
Week 4	Men's prisons	Umamaheswar; Diorio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 4 	Wyatt TED talk
Week 5	Women's prisons	Ystanes and Ugelvik; Acoose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 5 Quiz 1 	Prison nursery video
Week 6	Scandinavian prisons	Pakes; Benko (NY Times)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 6 	Nordic prison documentary
Week 7	Wrongful imprisonment	Umamaheswar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 7 	Witness to Innocence video
Week 8	SPRING BREAK	None	None	None
Week 9	Juvenile punishment	Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 8 	Wallace TED talk
Week 10	Aging prisoners	Smoyer et al.; Niles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 9 Quiz 2 	Fault Lines documentary
Week 11	Prisons and religion	Ellis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 10 	Al-Jazeera video
Week 12	Death penalty	Hickey excerpt; Westervelt and Cook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 11 	Vice video
Week 13	Privatization of prisons	Schlosser (Atlantic); Prison Town comic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 12 	CNBC documentary
Week 14	Solitary confinement	Western et al; White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flip video set 13 Quiz 3 	Solitary Nation documentary

Week 15	Wrap-up and review	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip course reflection (video 14) • Infographic assignment 	None
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