

2010-2011 Honors Seminar Description

The Continuing Demands of Counter-Terrorism: The Views of Legal and Criminal Justice Professionals

Since September 11, 2001, our nation has actively considered the proper response to the threat of terrorism. What actions must be taken to keep Americans safe? To what extent, if at all, should American society limit civil liberties in pursuit of increased homeland security? Should suspected terrorists be treated as enemy combatants or should they be treated more like other suspects and allowed civilian trials? Following President Obama's decision to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the issue of how to properly detain and try terror suspects has become even more pressing. For example, many have asked whether it is safe or wise to bring suspected terrorists onto American soil for trials. Also, what are the practical issues with placing suspected terrorists in facilities with other types of inmates? It has recently been reported in the media that the White House is reviewing and formulating new policy in support of the President's decision to close Guantanamo. In addition, since the first detainees transferred from Guantanamo Bay will likely be moved to the U.S. for trial during the period of the seminar, the topics addressed above are extremely timely and relevant.

Students in the 2010-2011 Honors Seminar will conduct original research with the goal of addressing some of these questions. They will design and administer a mail or e-mail survey of criminal justice and legal professionals (police, prosecutors, defense attorneys or prison personnel). Before doing this, they will study what has already been written about these important issues. Then, students will conduct some interviews with professionals in the field to develop and refine the questions they will ask on the mail/e-mail survey. Students will learn how to construct and administer the survey, as well as how to analyze the data collected. In addition, students may learn how to conduct an assessment of the security procedures in place at a courthouse or detention facility. Students will work collaboratively in small teams, an excellent preparation for a professional career in law or criminal justice. The final product will require an analysis and report of the data that the class has collected. Students will present their work to criminal justice professionals and researchers and will be encouraged to publish their findings. **In short, this is a hands-on opportunity for students to conduct interesting, timely policy research and to interact with justice officials.**

The Honors Seminar meets as a 3-credit course in the fall and a 3-credit course in the spring. These credits can be used to fulfill any category of Criminology, Law and Society course requirements. **The Honors Seminar should be particularly appealing to students who want to pursue a career in law, criminal justice, or would like to strengthen their application to law or graduate school.** Students accepted into the honors seminar will help shape the direction of the course, and should expect to be actively involved in the learning process and all stages of the research. Students who successfully complete CRIM 491/492 with a grade point average of 3.5 or above will receive the honors designation on their university transcript when they graduate. The seminar will meet Thursdays from 1:30-4:10 pm on the Prince William Campus. Enrollment is controlled.

**FOR APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS VISIT THE
FOLLOWING WEBSITE**

<http://cls.gmu.edu/resources/honors.html>