**CRIM 595: Learning from Errors in the Justice System**

Instructor: Dr. Robert J. Norris Fall 2019

Email: rnorris4@gmu.edu Wed,7:20-10:00 pm

Office: Enterprise Hall 321\* Peterson Hall 1109

Office Hours: By appointment\*

Our criminal legal system is a complex apparatus that sometimes produces undesirable outcomes. This class explores ways to think about and evaluate these errors. We will discuss a variety of outcomes, including police-involved shootings and wrongful convictions. In addition to discussing the common public reactions and discourse surrounding these events, we will examine some of the many psychological, organizational, and social underpinnings of such outcomes. Students will engage in meaningful discussion about the sources and meanings of these errors, and the ways in which our system might be improved to prevent their occurrence in the future.

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

**Required Materials**

There is no required text for this course. All readings and materials will be posted on Blackboard and/or shared in class.

**Grade Requirements**

Your grade in this class will depend on four factors:

1. Participation: You are expected to come to class each week having read the assigned materials and prepared to participate in class discussion. This class is premised on people coming together to discuss challenging situations from a variety of perspectives and attempt to draw some conclusions and policy prescriptions based on that discussion. Thus, your participation is essential.

2. Mentorship: Each of you will serve as a point-person to one of the MS student groups. Your role will be to help them develop their ideas, divide the labor, construct reports, and provide feedback throughout the term.

3. Article Review: Early in the semester, you will read an article and write a short review, as if you were a peer reviewer for a scholarly journal. I will provide you with several options and an example of one or two reviews that I have written.

4. Final Paper: You will write a final research paper on a topic related to the course. The substantive area is open to your interests, and the paper may take different forms depending on what you choose to do. It may take the form of an in-depth literature review, a research proposal, etc. We can work together throughout the semester to help you develop a topic, idea, and structure.

**Class Policies**

**Contacting Me**: The easiest way to get in touch with me is via email. Please feel free to send me an email at any time during the semester if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. **Please use your GMU email account**, and be sure to include your name in all emails and indicate the course number in the subject line so they do not get confused for spam. Your emails should be written in a professional manner. I will not respond to any emails that do not follow these guidelines.

**Make-up** **Policy**: Unless you have a legitimate, excused reason for missing an assignment or exam, make-up opportunities will not be given.

**Extra** **Credit**: I generally do not give extra credit. You will have plenty of opportunities to be successful in this class, and I will do anything I can to help you do so. Furthermore, unless an error was made in grading your exam or assignment, it is inappropriate to ask me to increase your grade, and I will not do so.

**In-Class Discussion:** We will be discussing many issues in this class, some of which are controversial and emotional. I encourage students to discuss, disagree, and debate one another. 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.

**Laptop/Tablet Policy**: If you wish to use a laptop or tablet in class, you should only use it to take notes or look at class materials. Any indication that you are using your computer for anything other than class will result in my requiring you to put it away. If it continues to be a distraction, you may be asked to leave and forfeit your participation credit for that day.

**Cell Phone Policy**: Please put your phones on silent and do not have them out during class. If I see or hear your cell phone once, you will be asked to put it away. If I see or hear it again, you will be asked to leave and you will forfeit your participation credit for the day. If you are expecting an important notice or if an emergency crops up, quietly step outside of the classroom and handle it.

**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 (including homework assignments and exams) must be completed ***independently*** (do ***not*** work with or compare answers with anyone else). **The use of another student’s clicker during class is also prohibited.** 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.

**Students with Disabilities**: 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.

**Class Schedule**

Notes:

* Readings should be completed prior to that day’s class meeting
* “*Textbook*” denotes Lab et al., *Criminal Justice: The Essentials* (5th ed.)
* Class schedule is subject to change. I will notify you of any changes in class and/or via Blackboard

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| **Week** | **Class Dates** | **Topic(s)** | **Class Readings** | **Assignment Due** |
| 1 | Aug. 28 | * Introductions and class overview |  |  |
| 2 | Sep. 4 | * The “conventional” reactions to errors * Overview of NIJ’s Sentinel Events Initiative | * Doyle, “NIJ’s Sentinel Events Initiative” * Doyle, “Learning about Learning from Errors” * Doyle, “Learning from Errors” |  |
| 3 | Sep. 11 | * Approaches to the analysis of errors | * Dekker et al., “The complexity of failure” * Doyle, “A safety model perspective” * Quattrone Center, “Report of the Philadelphia Event Review Team” |  |
| 4 | Sep. 18 | **No Class Meeting** | | |
| 5 | Sep. 25 | * Cursory application of ideas | * Sherman, “Reducing Fatal Police Shootings as System Crashes” * Thacher, “The Learning Model of Use of Force Reviews” * TBA |  |
| 6 | Oct. 2 | * Individual biases in decision-making | * TBA |  |
| 7 | Oct. 9 | * Behavioral ethics and organizational decision-making | * Bazerman & Gino, “Behavioral Ethics” * TBA |  |
| 8 | Oct. 16 | * TBA\* * The nature of the jobs | * TBA |  |
| 9 | Oct. 23 | * TBA\* * Critical perspectives and the lessons of history | * TBA |  |
| 10 | Oct. 30 | * TBA\* * Consequences of errors | * TBA |  |
| 11 | Nov. 6 | * Group workshop week – Full group |  |  |
|  | Nov. 13 | * Group workshop week – MS only |  |  |
| 13 | Nov. 20 | * Group presentations |  |  |
| 14 | Nov. 27 | **No Class** | | |
| 15 | Dec. 4 | * Group presentations |  |  |