

## CRIM 100: INTRODUCTION TO CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Instructor: Dr. Robert J. Norris

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Student Hours: Virtual, by appointment

Fall 2021

Online (**Asynchronous**)

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 the extent to which it succeeds in accomplishing its objectives. By the end of this course, students will understand the role of law in the United States, the nature and prevalence of crime, the practice of policing, the structure and roles of criminal courts, and the goals and practice 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.

### **Mason Core: Social and Behavioral Sciences**

This is a General Education course in the Mason Core social and behavioral sciences category. As such, upon completing this course, students 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, students 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 that you must obtain. It is available from the GMU bookstore and/or Amazon. 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* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN: 9780190855871).

### **Grading Scale**

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	65-69
B-	80-82	F	64 or below

### **Grade Breakdown**

Discussion Boards	30%
Assignments	20%
Quizzes	50%

## **Grade Requirements**

### **Discussion Boards (30%):**

Most weeks, students will participate in a discussion board to talk about that lesson's topic and materials. Specific prompts and guidelines are provided each week. In general, students will have a series of items to which they should respond, and will also be asked to respond to their classmates. These boards provide an opportunity to engage with one another and share individual ideas and opinions.

### **Assignments (20%):**

Some weeks, students will have an assignment to complete. The specific guidelines for each assignment will be provided on Blackboard, but will generally ask students to go beyond the required readings and address an additional aspect of that week's topic.

### **Weekly Quizzes (50%):**

Each week, students will complete a quiz based on the required readings and lecture for that lesson. Students will have one attempt to complete each quiz. These quizzes have no time limit. They will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank styles of questions.

## Class and University Policies

**Contacting Me:** The easiest way to get in touch 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. Make sure you clearly ask whatever question you have. I will not respond to any emails that do not follow these guidelines. In addition to email, you should always feel free to email me at any time to set up a virtual meeting.

**Make-up Policy:** If you have a legitimate, excused reason for missing an assignment or exam, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make alternative arrangements.

**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.

**Discussion Etiquette:** We will be discussing many issues in this class that may be 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.

**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 all assignments) 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](mailto: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 I will provide feedback on your written work, consider the Writing Center if you need more intensive assistance before submitting assignments 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:** Purdue University's Online Writing Lab 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](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html).

## Class Schedule

### Notes:

- For the purposes of this class, weeks run from Monday through Sunday. **Each week will follow the same schedule**; your first discussion post will be due by the end of the day on Thursday, and everything else will be due by the end of the day on Sunday. On weeks when there is no discussion board, everything is due by the end of the day on Sunday.
- “*Textbook*” denotes Lab et al., *Criminal Justice: The Essentials* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) (see details on first page of syllabus)
- Class schedule is subject to change. I will notify you of any changes via Blackboard

<b>Week</b>	<b>Class Dates</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Required Readings</b>
1	Aug. 23-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and course overview</li> <li>• Introduction to the legal system</li> </ul>	
2	Aug. 30-Sept. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose, types, and sources of law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, chapters 1-2</li> </ul>
3	Sept. 6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature and causes of crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, chapters 1-2</li> <li>• Morgan &amp; Kena, “Criminal Victimization”</li> <li>• Chart, “Theories of Crime”</li> </ul>
4	Sept. 13-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policing: Goals, structure, and methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 3</li> <li>• NIJ, “Policing Strategies”</li> <li>• CEBCP, “Community policing and procedural justice”</li> </ul>
5	Sept. 20-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policing: Controversies and additional issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 3</li> <li>• James et al., “Racial and ethnic bias in decisions to shoot”</li> <li>• Scott et al., “Understanding racial disparities in police shooting”</li> </ul>
6	Sept. 27-Oct. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretrial Processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 4</li> </ul>
7	Oct. 4-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial Process and Jury Decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 4</li> <li>• Winter &amp; Greene, “Juror decision-making” (pp. 739-744)</li> </ul>
8	Oct. 11-17	<b>FALL BREAK: CATCH-UP AND RESET</b>	

9	Oct. 18-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 4</li> <li>• Ulmer et al., “Disproportional imprisonment”</li> </ul>
10	Oct. 25-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Textbook</i>, Chapter 4</li> </ul>
11	Nov. 1-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punishment: Goals, definitions, and theories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, chapters 5-6</li> <li>• Carlsmith et al., “Why do we punish?”</li> </ul>
12	Nov. 8-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community corrections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, chapter 6</li> </ul>
13	Nov. 15-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prisons, jails, and mass incarceration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, chapter 5</li> <li>• Gopnik, “The caging of America”</li> </ul>
14	Nov. 22-23 (Thanksgiving Break, 11/24-28)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The death penalty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norris, “The death penalty”</li> <li>• Death Penalty Information Center*</li> </ul>
15	Nov. 29-Dec. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrongful convictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norris et al., “Thirty years of innocence”</li> </ul>
<p>NOTE: There is <b><u>no final exam</u></b> for this class.</p>			