

# Honors Seminar I

CRIM 491-001, 3 Credits, Fall 2022

M 1:30PM-4:10PM, Room: Music Theater Building 1008

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Office Hours: By appointment

## Course Overview:

Incarceration rates in the United States (U.S.) far surpass those of other developed nations (World Prison Brief, 2018). Pretrial detention is a major contributor to high incarceration rates. As an illustration, over 10 million unique admissions into U.S. jails occur annually (Zeng, 2020). Individuals who are awaiting formal charges for a crime represent up two two-thirds of local jail populations (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). Pretrial detention has been shown to adversely impact criminal case outcomes for individuals. For example, relative to their counterparts who achieve pretrial release, individuals who are detained pretrial are more likely to plead guilty and are sentenced to prison more often and for longer durations (Heaton et al., 2017; Williams, 2003; Wooldredge et al., 2015). Racial and ethnic minorities disproportionately experience the harmful effects of pretrial detention (Sutton, 2013; Wooldredge, 2012; Wooldredge et al., 2017), often due to an inability to pay bail (Arnold et al., 2018; Demuth, 2003; Demuth & Steffensmeier, 2004; Sacks et al., 2015; Schaefer & Hughes, 2019). In response to these trends, state and local governments have implemented pretrial reform strategies (Casey & Elek, 2015; Pretrial Justice Institute, 2014). These strategies have included reducing the use of bail bonds, implementing pretrial risk assessments to inform release decisions, and expanding pretrial supervision as a condition of pretrial release. Despite the reach of these efforts, empirical evidence on their success is limited. Legal scholars also have raised concerns about specific reform efforts, arguing they may increase racial disparities and infringe on defendants' due process rights.

These issues will be explored in-depth throughout the semester. The course will provide students with a background on the legal and empirical issues in pretrial processing. The course will explore the effectiveness and limits of pretrial reform efforts. Students will gain an understanding of critical issues in pretrial case processing and contemporary trends and controversies. Students will apply knowledge gained from the course to empirical research projects focused on advancing knowledge on pretrial reform.

**Prerequisite:** CRIM 315

## Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the background and impetus for pretrial reform efforts.
2. Synthesize empirical research and evidence on the success of pretrial reform efforts.
3. Identify opportunities to advance pretrial justice.
4. Propose an original research project.
5. Use public speaking skills through in-class activities

## Required Text:

Select readings as assigned, available on Blackboard

## Course Management:

Blackboard will be used for assignment descriptions, readings, and some assignment submissions.

### Course Structure:

This is an in-person, seminar-style course. Class time will be spent primarily on discussion and activities, with a more limited emphasis on formal lecture.

### Grading:

A+	97-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D	60-69%
A	93-96%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	F	<60%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%		

Note: Grades will not be automatically rounded (e.g., a 92.99 will be graded as an A-, not an A).

### Course Requirements:

- In-Class Assignments and Participation (20% of final grade)
  - This class will rely heavily on active student participation in activities and discussions. You will have the opportunity to submit in-class work throughout the semester to show evidence of your participation. Engagement in class discussions will also inform your participation grade.
- Weekly Assignments (30% of final grade)
  - Each week, you will complete a short assignment (to be submitted on Blackboard prior to the start of class time) to show evidence that you are critically thinking about course readings, multimedia, and content. Completing these assignments in a timely manner (before class) will ensure you are well-prepared for in-class activities and discussion.
- Research Proposal (40% of final grade)
  - Your major assignment in this class will be a research proposal on a topic related to pretrial case processing and pretrial reform. In-class activities will be structured to help you navigate the proposal process. Additional guidelines and a rubric for the final research proposal will be made available on Blackboard at the beginning of the semester.
- Research Presentation (10% of final grade)
  - In lieu of a final exam, each student will present their research proposals to the class during the final exam period. These presentations will allow you to develop your public speaking skills and share your research project with the class. As a class, we will select the top 2-3 research projects to pursue in the Spring 2023 semester.

### My Expectations:

- Attend class
  - I expect that you will attend class regularly. Lecture material and in-class exercises are designed to help you learn and understand the material. *Attendance and high-quality participation in class may be considered in resolving borderline grades.*
- Be Timely
  - I expect that you will be on-time to each class period. If you are going to be late, I ask that you send me an email prior to class as a courtesy. In return, I will do my best to start class on time and end class on time.
- Complete Assigned Readings
  - I expect that you will complete all assigned readings. Adequate preparation for class is essential for active discussion and class participation.

**Contacting the Instructor:**

The best way to contact me is by email or via appointment. I am available to meet throughout the week; please email me if you would like to set up an appointment. I will check email regularly during the workweek. You can expect a response within 24-48 hours of sending me an email during the workweek; however, there is no guarantee of a response over weekends and holidays. Be proactive! Do not save your questions or concerns until the last minute.

**A Note About COVID-19 and Illness:**

I acknowledge that in-person classes come with unique challenges and uncertainties in a pandemic environment. If necessary, I will revise the course format and schedule to accommodate changing COVID-19 circumstances. You are encouraged to reach out and communicate with me regarding your changing individual circumstance. To the extent possible and working within the constraints of University policy, I will try to accommodate your needs to help you be successful in this course.

**Late Assignments and Makeup Exams:**

Late assignments will only be accepted in the case of a documented medical emergency or at my discretion. No assignment will be accepted beyond the last day of class.

**Academic Misconduct Policy:**

Academic misconduct is a serious offense, and I will take seriously any instances of plagiarism in this course. If you are found responsible for academic misconduct, the default sanction will be a failing grade (i.e., “0” on that assignment). Exceptions to the policy will be made on a case by case basis. Acting with academic integrity means that you (1) submit your work and your work alone; 2) submit new work for this class (i.e., do not “recycle” previous assignments or self-plagiarize); and 2) use a documented citation style (e.g., APA style) to properly attribute the works and ideas of others. If you are ever in doubt, err on the side of over-citing. You are welcome to seek clarification from me when you are unclear about the rules or guidelines for a given assignment. You are expected to abide by the Mason Honor Code. For more information on the Honor Code, please see: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>

**Other Information:**

Inclusive Classroom: I am committed to creating a respectful, just, and inclusive learning environment for students. I welcome and value students and their differences including as a function of race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and ability. You are encouraged to engage with material personally and to be open to exploring and learning from others who have experiences different from your own.

Disability Services: 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. If you have an approved accommodation, please see me to discuss your accommodation. If you are looking to make an accommodation, you can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during your 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](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence: 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 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434), Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380), Student Health Services, or Mason’s Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; [cde@gmu.edu](mailto:cde@gmu.edu)).

Privacy: Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

Course Attempts: There is a limit of three graded attempts for this course. A W does not count as a graded attempt. Please see AP.1.3.4 in the University Catalog and consult with your academic advisor if you have any questions.

Support Resources: Please note that Mason has many resources to support students experiencing academic or personal difficulties. A full list of resources can be found here: <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowing-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

Peer Support: Take a minute to introduce yourself to two or more classmates who can serve as a resource for missed notes, course deadlines, etc. Record their names and contact information here:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mason Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Course Schedule** (Subject to change with advance notice)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Major Assignments</b>
Week 1: 8/22/22 (M – Asynchronous)	Introduction and Syllabus	McCoy (2007)	Week 1 Assignment
<b>Part I: Pretrial Justice and Reform</b>			
Week 2: 8/29/22 (M)	The Carceral State	Slobogin (2021) Turney & Conner (2019)	Week 2 Assignment
No Class: 9/5/22 (M)	LABOR DAY		
Week 3: 9/12/22 (M)	Legal, Theoretical, and Practical Issues in Pretrial Processing	Van Nostrand (2007) Baughman (2017)	Week 3 Assignment
Week 4: 9/19/22 (M)	The Bail Bond System and Racial Disparities	Demuth (2006) Dobbie et al. (2018) Kurlychek & Johnson (2019)	Week 4 Assignment
Week 5: 9/26/22 (M)	Scope and Effectiveness of Pretrial Reform Efforts	NCSC (2020) NIC (2017) Lowder et al. (2021) Hatton & Smith (2021) Lattimore et al. (202) Zottola et al. (2021)	Week 5 Assignment
Week 6: 10/3/22 (M)	Current Controversies in Pretrial Reform	Desmarais et al. (2021) Minow et al. (2019) The Bail Project (2020)	Week 6 Assignment
Week 7: 10/11/22 (Tues)	Rethinking Pretrial Reform	APPR (2022) Lewis, Flagg, & Shen (2020) Thomas & Sharps (2021) Page & Scott-Hayward (2022)	Week 7 Assignment
Week 8: 10/17/22 (M)	Best Practices in Correctional Rehabilitation	Lipsey & Cullen (2007) Smith et al. (2009) Andrews & Dowden (2007)	Week 8 Assignment

<b>Part II: Research Methods and Analysis</b>			
Week 9: 10/24/22 (M)	Developing a Research Proposal	See sample proposals	Week 9 Assignment
Week 10: 10/31/22 (M)	Fundamentals of Research Methods Part 1	Bickman & Roj (2009) Henry (2009) Dale et al. (2008) Hammersley (2008)	Week 10 Assignment
Week 11: 11/7/22 (M)	Fundamentals of Research Methods Part 2	Maxwell (2009) Fowler Jr. & Cosenza (2009) Best & Harrison (2009)	Week 11 Assignment
Week 12: 11/14/22 (M)	Fundamentals of Data Analysis Part 1	See posted resources	Week 12 Assignment
Week 13: 11/21/22 (M)	Fundamentals of Data Analysis Part 2	See posted resources	<b>Research Proposal Draft Due</b>
Week 14: 11/28/22 (M)	Navigating the Research Process	Sieber (2009)	<b>Research Proposal Due</b>
Final Exam: 12/12/22 (M)	<b>Class Presentations</b>		<b>Class Presentation Due</b>