A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

**CJ 09510: Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice**

**Fall 2024**

*Class:* Monday, 6:30-9:15pm, Bunce Hall 201

*Instructor:* Dr. Kristina Block

[blockkn@rowan.edu](mailto:blockkn@rowan.edu)

565 Campbell Library

*Office Hours:* Monday 4:30-6:00pm & Tuesday 9:30-11:00am, or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This is an introductory graduate course on current issues impacting the American criminal justice system. Discussions will center on the practical, ethical, and controversial challenge that are currently being faced and debated within the modern criminal justice system. Students will learn about criminal justice agencies and their relationship with one another. Students will also learn how to critically assess the information that is used to make decisions about criminal justice policy, in an effort to expand knowledge about the ways in which criminal justice policy affects the other social justice systems.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Learn the foundations of the American criminal justice system, including the philosophical tenets inherent within the criminal justice system;
2. Recognize the historical significance of the foundations of the American criminal justice system and identify the way that this history has helped shape the current incarnation;
3. Understand the main components of the criminal justice system, both individually and within the context of the relationship between them;
4. Assess the state of the American criminal justice system and discuss critical, current issues regarding that system.

**Required Textbooks:**

None.

**Other Required Reading:**

Most of the readings for this course will be scholarly articles or government reports and these will be provided on Canvas.

**Course Grading:**

*Attendance and Participation (10% of final grade):*

Students are expected to regularly attend class and actively participate in class discussions. This includes but is not limited to arriving to class on time, engaging in discussions, participating in activities, asking thoughtful questions, and contributing to the overall learning environment. Students who miss two classes for unexcused reasons will automatically be deducted 50% of their attendance and participation grade (75% deduction for three unexcused absences and 100% deduction for four unexcused absences).

*Class Discussion Leader (15% of final grade):*

Each week (starting week 3), one to two students will take on the role of Class Discussion Leader. As a discussion leader, your task is to lead a thought-provoking and engaging discussion about the week's readings. You can choose to develop a PowerPoint presentation, design active learning activities, or facilitate a straightforward discussion. The goal is to encourage your peers to think critically about the material and explore the topics in greater depth. To facilitate this, you should come prepared with guiding questions, thought-provoking prompts, or other strategies that will help to stimulate conversation. You will also be expected to provide a brief introduction to set the stage for the discussion and wrap up the session by summarizing key points and encouraging further reflection. To assign the discussion leadership duties, students will indicate their preference for which week they would like to lead during week 1.

*Weekly Reading Notes and Questions (10% of final grade):*

For each assigned reading, students are expected to submit a concise summary of the main arguments, findings, methodology, and conclusions presented in the text. The summary should be one to two paragraphs in length and should identify the main points and supporting evidence provided by the author(s). In addition to the summary, students should develop one to two open-ended discussion questions that encourage critical thinking and analysis of the reading. These questions should ask for opinions, thoughts, or reactions to specific arguments made, the quality of the study or data presented, or the potential impact or policy implications of the reading. Students do not need to turn in weekly reading notes and questions when they are the class discussion leader. *Students must submit these reading notes and questions an hour before class begins.*

*Midterm and Final Exam (each exam is 20% of final grade):*

Both exams will be in-class, closed-note, paper-and-pencil exams that will cover the material we cover up to the midpoint of the semester (for the midterm) and the material we cover from the midpoint to the end of the semester (for the final). The exams will consist of essay questions that require students to demonstrate their understanding of key concepts discussed in class. Students will be expected to analyze and apply knowledge they have gained throughout the semester to answer the questions.

*Research Paper (20% of final grade):*

The research paper is a culminating assignment that requires students to conduct a comprehensive literature review on a current issue in criminal justice. Students will have the freedom to select their own topic, and topic selections must be made by week 4 of class. The paper should be 8-10 pages and provide a critical analysis of the existing research on the topic. The paper should include an introduction, literature review (with clear subsections), and conclusion, and should demonstrate a clear understanding of the current state of knowledge on the topic. Students are expected to synthesize and critically evaluate the research findings, identifying gaps in the literature and potential areas for future research. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, and have 1-inch margins. APA citation style is required.

*Research Paper Presentation (5% of final grade):*

Students will prepare an 8-10 minute PowerPoint presentation on their respective research paper topics in which they will teach the class about the topic they wrote about. Students will be assessed on the clarity and effectiveness of their presentation, as well as their ability to communicate complex information in a clear and concise manner. A rubric outlining the specific requirements and grading criteria for the presentation is available on Canvas.

**Grading Scale:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Percentage** |
| 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+ | 67 – 69 |
| D | 63 – 66 |
| D- | 60 – 62 |
| F | < 60 |

**Course Policies**

**Attendance and Excused Absences**

Students are expected to attend each class meeting. Excused absences include participation in official university activities, illness, death of a family member or loved one, inclement weather, and religious holidays. Students must inform their instructor with official written documentation **BEFORE** the fact in cases of religious holidays and official university activities, or within 24 hours of the missed class in cases of illness, death of a family member or loved one, and inclement weather. The official attendance policy can be found at <https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Attendance+Policy>

**Missed Assignments and Exams**

Late assignments and makeup exams will not be accepted unless they are the result of a documented, excused absence (discussed above). Makeup assignments and exams must be completed within three (3) school days of the original deadline.

**Canvas:**

The course Canvas page contains important documents including the syllabus, course readings, grades, course announcements, and other important course information. Students will also submit all assignments other than the midterm exam through Canvas. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that they are regularly checking the course Canvas page.

**Classroom Behavior:**

The classroom is a space for learning and academic discussion. Participation by students is encouraged but must be delivered in a manner that is professional and respectful to others as well as relevant to the class. The professor will address disruptive behavior according to the official university policy: <https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Classroom+Behavior>

**Grade Appeal and Grade Bumps**

Blanket requests for grade bumps or extra points at the end of the semester will not be granted. Grade disputes will be followed according to official university policy found at <https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Grade+Dispute+Policy>.

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

All students are expected to perform in a way that is consistent with the university’s academic integrity policy. All exams and assignments are required to be the original product of the submitting student. Material that violates this requirement in any way, or that constitutes any form of dishonesty, cheating, fabrication, the facilitation of academic dishonesty, and/or plagiarism, may result in the student receiving a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and/or in appropriate disciplinary action being initiated. The use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT or other unauthorized tools to complete assignments is considered an academic integrity violation. If the professor suspects a student cheated on an assignment, the professor has the right to schedule a meeting and discuss the assignment with the student. The official Rowan University Policy is accessible online at: <https://confluence.rowan.edu/display/POLICY/Academic+Integrity+Policy>

**Turnitin Policy:**

Rowan University has a licensing agreement with Turnitin, an online service to help prevent student plagiarism. As part of this course, I will be using Turnitin at my discretion to determine the originality of your work. If your work is submitted to Turnitin, it will be stored in the Turnitin database. You have the right to refuse either to submit your work to Turnitin or have the university do so; availing yourself of this right will not negatively impact your success in the course. If you do not wish to use Turnitin you must notify me by email within two weeks of the start of the course. If you object to the use of Turnitin, I will use other procedures to assess originality.

**Student Accommodations:**

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations. We look forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.

**Course Schedule:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Week 1: September 9** |
| * Topic: Syllabus/Introduction to the CJ System |
| **Week 2: September 16** |
| * Topic: History and Eras of United States Policing * Readings: Morey (2019); Hooper (2014); History of Policing Book Chapter |
| **Week 3: September 23** |
| * Topic: The Current Policing Crisis * Readings: Ba, Knox, Mummolo, Rivera (2021); DeAngelis (2024); Engel, Mcmanus, & Isaza (2020); Lum et al (2020); Lum, Koper, Wu (2022) |
| **Week 4: September 30** |
| * Topic: Mental Illness and the CJ System * Readings: Batastini, Lester, & Thompson (2018); Hall et al (2019); Rossler & Terrill (2016); Yi, Turney, & Wildeman (2017) * **Due: Research Paper Topic** |
| **Week 5: October 7** |
| * Topic: Incarceration Issues * Readings: Beckett & Goldberg (2022); Pitts, Griffin III, & Johnson (2014); Massoglia & Remster (2019) |
| **Week 6: October 14** |
| * No Class: Work on Research Papers and Presentations |
| **Week 7: October 21** |
| * Topic: Special Populations in Jails and Prisons * Readings: Snyder, van Wormer, Chadha, & Jaggers (2009); Schlanger (2017); Van Houta, Kewley, & Hillis (2020) |
| **Week 8: October 28** |
| * **Midterm Exam** |
| **Week 9: November 4** |
| * Topic: Capital Punishment in the 21st Century * Readings: Rosenbaum, Darby, & Weinstock (2015); Kaplan (2024); Steiker & Steiker (2020) |
| **Week 10: November 11** |
| * Topic: Re-entry and Reintegration * Readings: Anderson, Nava, & Cortez (2018); Berghuis (2018); Seiter & Kadela (2003) |
| **Week 11: November 18** |
| * Topic: Criminal Court Issues * Readings: Fischman & Schanzenbachy (2012); Gajwani & Lesser (2020); Lehmann (2023); Ouss & Stevenson (2022) |
| **Week 12: November 25** |
| * Topic: Alternatives to Incarceration * Readings: Alternatives in a Nutshell; Bagaric, Hunter, & Svilar (2021); Mendel (2023); Pattavina et al. (2024) |
| **Week 13: December 2** |
| * Topic: Juvenile Justice * Readings: Aazami et al. (2023); Elliott et al. (2020); NIJ (2024); Rover (2024); Springer et al. (2010) |
| **Week 14: December 9** |
| * Topic: **Research Paper Presentations** * Due: **Research Papers and Presentations (SUBMIT AT LEAST 1 HOUR BEFORE CLASS)** |
| **Week 15: December 16** |
| * **Final Exam (7:05-9:05 pm)** |