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**CJ 09600: Health Criminology**

**Spring 2025**

*Class:* Wednesday, 6:30 – 9:15pm, James Hall 3117

*Instructor:* Dr. Kristina Block

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

565 Campbell Library

*Office Hours:* Wednesday 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm, or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course examines the complex relationship between health and criminal behavior and the health outcomes of individuals involved in the criminal justice system. Key topics include the impact of mental health, substance abuse, and environmental factors on crime; the healthcare system within jails and prisons; the neurological and physiological factors influencing violence; and the role of prenatal and environmental stressors in shaping future criminal behavior. Students will explore these issues through theoretical frameworks and empirical research, developing a comprehensive understanding of health-related factors in criminology.

**Course Objectives:**

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

1. **Analyze** the relationship between health factors (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, environmental toxins) and criminal behavior.
2. **Evaluate** the healthcare systems in jails and prisons, focusing on the health challenges faced by justice-involved individuals.
3. **Engage** with theoretical and empirical research, critically examining the intersections of health and criminology.
4. **Compose** a comprehensive policy proposal that addresses an issue in health criminology in the form of a letter to a **state governor or legislature**.

**Required Textbooks:**

None.

**Other Required Reading:**

All readings for this course will be provided on Canvas.

**Course Grading:**

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

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in class. To earn full participation points, each student must contribute to class discussions verbally at least twice per class meeting. Students who miss two classes for unexcused reasons will automatically lose 50% of their attendance grade, 75% for three unexcused absences, and 100% for four unexcused absences.

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

Each week (starting on week 3), one student 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, and/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. You are expected to prepare material that can sustain the class for a minimum of 90 minutes. Students will indicate their preference for which week they would like to lead during week 1. Students must submit their class discussion materials at least one hour before class begins.

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

For each assigned reading, students are expected to 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 questions when they are the class discussion leader. *Students must submit reading questions an hour before class begins.*

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

The exams will be in-class, closed-note, paper-and-pencil and will cover the material up to the midpoint of the semester (for the midterm) and 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. Students will be expected to analyze and apply the knowledge they have gained throughout the semester to answer the questions.

*Policy Proposal Paper (20% of final grade):*

For the final paper, students will develop an **evidence-backed policy proposal** addressing an issue at the intersection of **health and crime or health and the criminal justice system more broadly,** written as a formal letter to a **state governor or legislature**.The proposal should begin with an introduction identifying the issue and proposed policy, followed by a **comprehensive literature review** summarizing research on the topic and identifying gaps in current policy. Based on the evidence, students will **develop a specific policy solution** and explain why it is **worth the costs**, including potential benefits for public health and crime reduction or benefits to people in the criminal justice system. Students must also **address possible backlash** by identifying challenges the policy may face and offer counterarguments grounded in theory and/or empirical research. The paper should conclude with a persuasive summary emphasizing the importance and feasibility of the proposal.In terms of formatting and submission requirements,papers must be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Papers should be between 10 and 12 pages in length, excluding the title page and references. APA citation style is required for all references and in-text citations.

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

On the final day of class (excluding final exam day), students will deliver an 8–10-minute PowerPoint presentation on their policy proposal, effectively communicating the key components of their work. The presentation should introduce the **health criminology issue** addressed in the proposal, summarize relevant research, and explain the importance of the topic. Then, students will clearly outline their **proposed policy solution**, including its implementation strategies, and identify potential **backlash or challenges**, explaining how they would respond to them. The goal is to **persuade the audience** that the policy is feasible, effective, and necessary. Students will be evaluated on the **clarity, organization, and structure** of their presentation, their ability to convey complex information concisely, and their effective use of visuals.

**Grading Scale:**

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| **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 from a verifiable source (e.g., a doctor’s note, obituary, or official university document**) 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>

*Late or Missed Assignments and Exams*

Late assignments and makeup exams will not be accepted unless they are the result of a documented, excused absence. Technical issues will not be accepted as an excuse for late submissions unless officially documented by the university’s IT department. Documentation must be emailed to Dr. Block within 24 hours of the missed quiz/exam/assignment. Requests for extensions without documentation will not be accepted. Makeups must be completed within three (3) school days of the original deadline or when the student is medically cleared to return to class. Any late assignments without documentation will receive a “0” without feedback unless prearranged with Dr. Block.

*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.

*File Submissions/Uploads*

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that files are uploaded in the correct place, in the correct format, and are accessible to Dr. Block. If Dr. Block cannot access a Google Doc, if a file is corrupted or otherwise inaccessible, or if the incorrect file was uploaded, the submission will receive a 0.

*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>

*Email Expectations*

To maintain professionalism and ensure compliance with FERPA regulations, all emails must be sent from the student’s official university email account; emails from personal accounts (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo) will not be read or responded to. Emails should include a proper greeting (e.g., Dear Dr. Block, Professor Block), a clear subject line, and a respectful, concise tone free of informal language. Students can expect a response within 24 hours on weekdays; emails sent after 5:00 pm, on weekends, or on holidays will be addressed on the next business day. Disrespectful or unprofessional emails will not yield a response.

*Grade Appeals and Grade Bumps*

Requests for grade bumps or extra points at the end of the semester will not be granted. Any emails on this topic that do not follow the university policy will be ignored. Grade disputes will be followed according to the 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, independent of any other person. 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:**

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| **Week 1: January 22** |
| * Topic: Syllabus/Introduction to Health Criminology |
| **Week 2: January 29** |
| * Topic: Criminal Justice System Involvement and Health * Readings: CDC Correctional Health; Fazel & Baillargeon (2010); Strong et al. (2020) |
| **Week 3: February 5** |
| * Topic: Healthcare in Jails and Prisons * Readings: McLeod et al. (2020); Smith (2013) |
| **Week 4: February 12** |
| * Topic: Mental Health of Justice-Involved Persons * Readings: Beaudry et al. (2021); Gómez-Figueroa & Camino-Proaño (2022) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: Pew Research Center (2024) * **Due: Policy Paper Topic** |
| **Week 5: February 19** |
| * No Class: Work on Research Papers and Presentations |
| **Week 6: February 26** |
| * Topic: Substances and Crime * Readings: Dragone et al. (2019); Drazdowski et al. (2015) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: Cumming et al. (2020) |
| **Week 7: March 5** |
| * Topic: Environmental Toxins * Readings: Block (2023); Burkhardt et al. (2019); Sampson & Winter (2018) |
| **Week 8: March 12** |
| * **Midterm Exam** |
| **Week 9: March 26** |
| * Topic: Prenatal Exposure to Stressors/Substances and Subsequent Criminal Behavior * Readings: Brennan et al. (2002); Neugebauer, Hoek, & Susser (1999); Turanovic, Pratt, & Piquero (2017) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: Barnes & Teneyck (2017) |
| **Week 10: April 2** |
| * Topic: Brain Structure and Function and Antisocial Behaviors * Readings: DeLisi (2013); DeLisi, Umphress, & Vaughn (2009); Yang & Raine (2009) |
| **Week 11: April 9** |
| * Topic: Head Injury/Brain Tumors and Crime * Readings: Block & Connolly (2024)\*\*\* Dr. Block will present this one!; Huw Williams et al. (2018); Schwartz (2019) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: Johnson (2018); Stinnett & Alquist (2022) |
| **Week 12: April 16** |
| * Topic: Sleep and Crime * Readings: Block & Connolly (2023); Connolly et al. (2021); Mears et al. (2022) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: Raine & Venables (2017) |
| **Week 13: April 23** |
| * Topic: Exercise and Sports and Criminal Behavior * Readings: Block & Connolly (2024)\*\*\* Dr. Block will present this one!; Jugl et al. (2023); Spruit et al. (2018) * Recommended Supplemental Reading: van der Sluys et al. (2022) |
| **Week 14: April 30** |
| * Topic: **Policy Paper Presentations** * Due: **Policy Papers and Presentations (SUBMIT AT LEAST 1 HOUR BEFORE CLASS)** |
| **Week 15: May 5 (7:05 pm - 9:05 pm)** |
| * Final Exam * NOTE: I will be coming from across campus from another exam that ends at 7 pm |