

**CRIJ 4300 – 007 Mass Incarceration**  
**CRN 15373**  
**Fall 2024**

**PROFESSOR:**

**Hernandez, Alma Angelica**

Department of Criminal Justice

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**CLASS DATES:**

October 20 - December 08, 2024

Final Paper Due on December 08, 2024

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Virtual Office Hours are by appointment. You may contact me via UTEP email and can meet with students via Zoom. Please allow 24 hours to respond on weekdays and 48 hours over the weekend.

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**CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This 7-week course examines the phenomenon of mass incarceration in the United States. It explores the historical, social, and economic contexts that have contributed to the rise of the prison population, the impact on communities, and the various debates surrounding reform and abolition. Through readings, discussions, and multimedia, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the U.S. penal system. As a class, we will critically discuss and analyze existing empirical research.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Define mass incarceration. Identify the historical evolution of mass incarceration in the U.S.
- Discuss the historical and political context in which penology was conceptualized and developed as a method of social control.
- Analyze the social and economic factors contributing to mass incarceration.
- Evaluate the impacts of incarceration on individuals and communities.
- Apply course concepts and empirical explanations to “real life” correctional situations/issues.
- Explore various reform movements and their critiques.
- Critically assess ways to make our correctional policies more effective.
- Develop objective, critical thinking skills and the ability to discuss pressing issues and nuances of mass incarceration.

**REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS:**

This CRIJ 4300 course does not require students to purchase textbooks, as we will use materials Available through the UTEP Library. Given our current economy, I worked hard to select materials at no additional cost to you while maintaining high academic standards. The reading material comes from books you are likely to find on the shelf of a respectable criminologist. Thus, you will access all materials through Blackboard. Each weekly class module will include the reading material for the week.

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**GRADING:**

**Your grading will be based on the following point criteria:**

|                    |               |            |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| Syllabus Quiz*     | (10 pts)      | 10 Points  |
| Weekly Discussions | (50 pts X 7)  | 350 Points |
| Quizzes            | (150 pts X 2) | 300 Points |
| Final Draft        | (50 pts)      | 50 Points  |
| Final Paper        | (300 pts)     | 300 Points |

**GRADING SCALE: 1000 points**

**A** = 900-1000  
**B** = 800-899  
**C** = 700-799  
**D** = 600-699  
**F** = 599-below

**NOTE: Grades are assigned according to the total points earned.**

**\* Extra credit points**

**Refer to Blackboard for more information regarding the grading criteria for each assignment.**

The letter grade for the class is determined by the number of points you accumulate during the semester. Every point counts. Your points will be recorded in the “Gradebook” section of Blackboard. Grades for assignments are reflected in point values—not percentages.

**DETAILS OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**I. Final Paper:**

Objective: The final paper assignment is designed to inspire you to integrate the knowledge you've gained over the past seven weeks to critically analyze the issue of mass incarceration in the United States and propose a meaningful reform. The final paper is an opportunity to apply the knowledge and concepts learned throughout the course, encouraging you to think deeply about the implications of mass incarceration and propose the changes you want to see.

Specifically, you will identify one major issue related to mass incarceration (e.g., racial disparities, the prison-industrial complex, sentencing laws, rehabilitation, etc.) and propose a policy reform to address it. The Final Paper is due on Sunday, **12/08/24**. **Refer to Blackboard to review the instructions and grading rubric.**

**II. Final Draft**

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You will need to work on completing the Final paper throughout the class. An initial rough draft is **due on Sunday, 11/17/24**. This assignment is designed to get you started so you do not leave all the work for the last week of class. Identify the one major issue related to mass incarceration (e.g., racial disparities, the prison-industrial complex, sentencing laws, rehabilitation, etc.) that will be the focus of your final paper. **Refer to Blackboard for more information regarding these assessments.**

### **III. Discussion Participation**

A significant amount of your grade will come from weekly discussions in which you will want to carefully address all parts of the question and connect it to the class material. The class schedule lists ten discussions that serve as the online classroom's participation and active engagement components. Your participation in our discussion forum should be scholarly and thorough.

Regarding expectations, you must ***address all parts of the main discussion topic and reply to two students'/peers' discussion posts*** in a manner that provokes thought. You must respond with more than "Good job" or "I agree." Your response to your peers during discussion posts should show that you read and reflected on the class material. In addition, discussions for this class should not focus solely on opinions. They are about arguments that are informed by the reading materials that have been assigned. Thus, I encourage you to guide your discussion based on Bloom's Taxonomy of higher-order thinking. Remember that the point of discussions is not to reach definitive answers but to keep the conversation going (please see the guide and figure below and the section on strategies for critical thinking at the end of the syllabus).

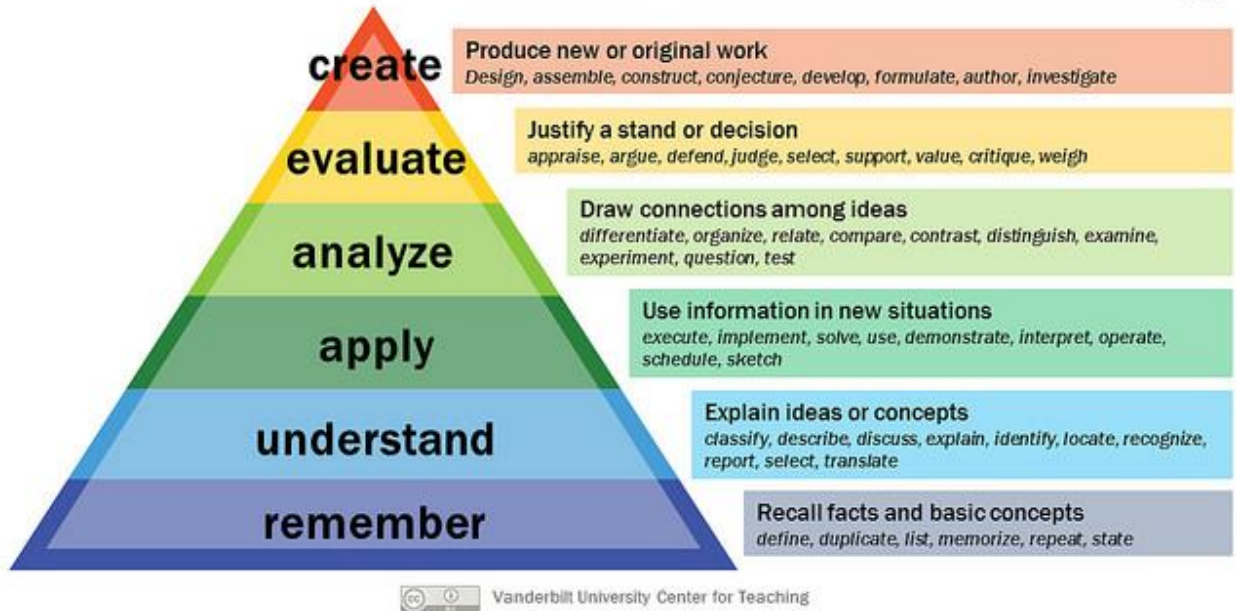
#### ***Special Note:***

It is likely that some of the students in this course are victims, perpetrators, or witnesses of violence. Therefore, some particular guidelines are being established:

- (Withholding): Do not feel obligated to reveal your experiences. Reveal only what is comfortable for you.
- (Confidentiality): Any revelations made in this course must not be reported in an identifiable way to others. However, please know that I must follow university guidelines if you disclose something concerning.
- (Respect): We should respect victims and their decisions even if we disagree. We should also respect perpetrators and recognize their own victimization while holding them responsible for their actions.
- Disagreements should be handled through constructive dialogue. It is easy to get angry with those who disagree with us on these topics and with entire categories of people.
- (Hope and activism): It is easy to get depressed and to despair about this subject. Remember that the situation is better today than ten years ago because activists in the area have worked for change. Things will be better ten years from now **IF we** keep insisting on it.

**Netiquette:** You must maintain an academic attitude and uphold UTEP policies. Being disrespectful, using profanity, or unprofessional behavior will not be tolerated. All your online communications must be fair, honest, and tactful.

# Bloom's Taxonomy



## LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Due dates are specified in this syllabus. Plan accordingly. You can submit weekly assignments early. Weekly Modules will be available every Sunday, and you can access them anytime. Late assignments will be deducted 10% each day the homework is late. Assignments submitted more than two days late will not be accepted.

IV. **QUIZZES:** There will be two quizzes worth 150 points each (**See our class schedule for quiz dates**)

- **Quizzes** will consist of a combination of Multiple-choice, True/False, and Essay questions.
- **Quizzes must be submitted in Blackboard by the due date listed on our class schedule.**

## MAKE-UP QUIZ POLICY:

- Each student is expected to take the quizzes as scheduled.
- **To make up a quiz, students MUST email me (aahernandez4@utep.edu) before taking it late to confirm the new submission deadline and ensure it is graded after the due date. Students must have a verifiable excuse, and it is the instructor's discretion to determine what a valid reason is.**
- Students are allowed one make-up quiz for the entire semester.

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**EMAIL PROTOCOL**

Please include the course and section number in the subject line when emailing me. In the body of your email, clearly state your question. At the end of your email, include your first and last name. This will help me locate you and get you an answer promptly.

**V. Important University Policies**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on an exam, turning in someone else's assignment from a previous class, or plagiarism: "(1) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with citations or biographical reference; (2) unacknowledged use of work/materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; (3) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators."

I take cases of alleged academic dishonesty seriously. The case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for students who are found to have allegedly engaged in any form of academic dishonesty. While the case is being investigated by OSCCR, an "I" (Incomplete) will be assigned until the case is resolved. Suppose OSCCR finds the student to have engaged in misconduct. In that case, sanctions may include a failing grade on the assignment or exam in question, a failing grade in the course, suspension, or dismissal from the University. See <http://www.utep.edu/dos>

**UTEP DROP POLICY:**

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, "When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of "W" before the course drop deadline and with a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline." See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excused absences. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24-hour advance notice via email.

OR

I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar's Office to initiate the drop process. You risk receiving an "F" for the course if you do not.

**TECHNOLOGY POLICIES & TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS**

For all technological, hardware, software problems, lost files, and questions with Blackboard, as well as difficulties you are having during an exam, contact Technology Support Help Desk

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Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Tech support is set up to address technical questions and problems specifically related to Blackboard. Professors are not technical support staff.

**Phone:** 915.747.4357 or toll-free: 1-877-382-0491

**E-mail:** helpdesk@utep.edu

**Website:** <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=74092>

In Person: UTEP Library, Room 300

### **CHECK YOUR TECHNOLOGY**

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account works and you can access the web and use a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need access to a computer or laptop. You must download or update the software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

If you do not have word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about Microsoft Office 365 and follow the instructions.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please get in touch with the UTEP Help Desk. They are explicitly trained to assist with students' technological needs. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

**Phone:** 915.747.4357 or toll-free: 1-877-382-0491

**E-mail:** helpdesk@utep.edu

**Website:** <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=74092>

In Person: UTEP Library, Room 300

### **VI. Class Schedule**

Every Monday, a new module will open on Blackboard, with the week's learning objectives, assigned readings, and a PowerPoint to download and review. The PowerPoint is a resource that guides you through the content. Our class weeks start on Monday and end on Sunday night.

| <b>MODULE</b> | <b>REQUIRED READINGS</b> | <b>GRADED ASSIGNMENTS</b> | <b>DISCUSSION DEADLINES</b> | <b>NOTES</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|

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|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Week 1</b></p> <p><i><b>Introduction to Mass Incarceration</b></i><br/>10/21/24 to 10/27/24</p>                 | <p>The Introduction and Chapters 1-2 (pp. 1-38) in Kilgore, J. W. (2015). <i>Understanding mass Incarceration: a people's guide to the key civil rights struggle of our time</i>. The New Press.</p>   | <p>Complete Syllabus Quiz by Sunday 10/27/24 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Discussion #1: Introduce yourself to the class and answer the discussion question.</p> | <p>DQ #1 Initial response to instructor's post due by Thursday 10/24/24 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Respond to another student's response by Sunday 10/27/24 (11:59 pm)</p> | <p>Refer to Blackboard for course readings, discussion guidelines, Final paper instructions, and class modules</p> |
| <p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p><i><b>Historical Context and the War on Drugs</b></i><br/>10/28/24 to 11/03/24</p>            | <p>Chapters 1-2 (pp.25-120) in Alexander, M. (2020). <i>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</i>.</p>   | <p>Discussion #2</p>  | <p>DQ #2 Initial response due by Thursday 10/31/24 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 11/03/24 (11:59 pm)</p>                             | <p>Refer to Blackboard to view class modules &amp; readings</p>  |
| <p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p><i><b>The Intersection of Race, Class, and Incarceration</b></i><br/>11/04/24 to 11/10/24</p> | <p>Chapter 3 in Western, B. (2006). Punishment and Inequality in America. <i>Russell Sage Found.</i></p> <p>Pettit, B., &amp; Western, B. (2004). Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in US incarceration. <i>American sociological review</i>, 69(2), 151-169.</p> | <p>Discussion #3:<br/><b><u>Quiz 1 - due by Sunday 11/10/24 (11:59 pm)</u></b></p>  | <p>DQ #3 Initial response due by Thursday 11/07/24 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 11/10/24 (11:59 pm)</p>                             | <p>Refer to Blackboard to view the class module, readings, and Quiz 1 instructions</p>                             |
| <p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p><i><b>Gender and the Prison System</b></i><br/>11/11/24 to 11/17/24</p>                       | <p>Chapter 10 in Kilgore, J. W. (2015). <i>Understanding mass Incarceration: a people's guide to the key civil rights struggle of our time</i>. The New Press.</p>   | <p>Discussion #4:<br/><b><u>Initial Draft due by Sunday 11/17/24 (11:59 pm)</u></b></p>   | <p>DQ #4 Initial response due by Thursday 11/14/24 (11:59 pm)</p> <p>Student-2-Student response</p>   | <p>Refer to Blackboard to view class modules, readings, and draft instructions</p>                                 |

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|  | &<br>Chapter 4 in Davis, A. Y. (2011). <i>Are prisons obsolete?</i> . Seven stories press. (You will need to use UTEP library resources, available in ebook).    |  | due by Sunday 11/17/24 (11:59 pm)  |   |
| <b>Week 5</b><br><br><i>Impact on Families and Communities</i><br><br>11/18/24 to 11/24/24                         | Chapter 1-2 in Wakefield, S., & Wildeman, C. (2013). <i>Children of the Prison Boom: Mass Incarceration and the Future of American Inequality</i> .              | Discussion #5<br><br><b><u>Quiz 2 - due by Sunday 11/24/24 (11:59 pm)</u></b>    | DQ #5 Initial response due by Thursday 11/21/24 (11:59 pm)<br><br>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 11/24/24 (11:59 pm) | Refer to Blackboard to view the class module, readings, and Quiz 2 instructions<br>Refer to Blackboard to view class modules & readings |
| <b>Week 6</b><br><br><i>Prison Reform Movements</i><br><br>11/25/24 to 12/01/24                                    | Chapters 5-6 in Davis, A. Y. (2011). <i>Are prisons obsolete?</i> . Seven stories press. (You will need to use UTEP library resources, available in ebook).      | Discussion #6  | DQ #5 Initial response due by Thursday 11/28/24 (11:59 pm)<br><br>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 12/01/24 (11:59 pm) | Refer to Blackboard to view class modules & readings  |
| <b>Week 7</b><br><br><i>Policies, and Solutions</i><br><br><i>POT-Term Finals Week</i><br><br>12/02/24 to 12/08/24 | Chapters 13-14 in Kilgore, J. W. (2015). <i>Understanding mass Incarceration: a people's guide to the key civil rights struggle of our time</i> . The New Press. | Discussion #7<br><br><b><u>Final paper due by Sunday 12/08/24 (11:59 pm)</u></b> | DQ #7 Initial response due by Thursday 12/05/24 (11:59 pm)<br><br>Student-2-Student response due by Sunday 12/08/24 (11:59 pm) | Refer to Blackboard to view the class module, readings, Quiz 3 instructions, and view the Final Paper Submission Instructions           |



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**\*I reserve the right to add assignments and amend the schedule to suit the class's needs.**

**VII. Resources, References, Etc.**

[Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics](#)

[Bureau of Justice Statistics](#)

**STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING CRITICAL THINKING**

- **Cultivate a Healthy Skepticism.**
  - Critical thinkers do not take information at face value or trust their gut reaction. They ask questions and investigate claims to determine if there is sufficient evidence.
- **Be Open-Minded and Humble.**
  - If you find information that undermines your values, you may be reluctant to give it credence. However, critical thinkers understand that they do not have all the answers. They seek other perspectives and do not immediately discount information that contradicts their assumptions.
- **Keep a Reflective Journal.**
  - Critical thinkers are honest with themselves. They are quick to point out their biases and understand how their past experiences or feelings may influence them. To facilitate this honest reflection, keep a journal where you record your thoughts, values, and beliefs and how they change as you encounter different people and situations.
- **Follow the Critical Thinking Process.**
  - When faced with a problem or question, work through the steps of the critical thinking process (described below). Once you have done so repeatedly, it will become second nature. For the first few times, you may want to write out the steps and your responses to the reflective questions for each step.

**The Critical Thinking Process\***

1) **Select the problem or question you want to answer.**

2) **Identify assumptions.** An assumption—something you automatically accept as accurate, based on your upbringing, values, or beliefs—can be immediately apparent to you or hidden. To determine these assumptions, talk to others, view video programs, read texts, and write in a journal on the problem or question. How you respond reveals your assumptions.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What do I assume to be true about the problem?
  - What do I assume to be true about the people affected by the problem?
  - What do I assume to be the correct solution?
  - Why?

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3) **Check accuracy and validity.** At this stage in the process, conduct research to see if your assumptions are correct. The research type depends on the problem you want to solve.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What research can I do to test my assumptions?
  - Is this research credible?
  - How does the research support or refute my assumptions?

4) **Find alternative perspectives.** This step is an extension of Step 3. Part of critical thinking is discovering views that contradict or clash with your own. These perspectives can show how your original thinking was flawed or incomplete. To find a proper solution, it is crucial to investigate many different viewpoints during the research phase.

- **Reflective question for this step:**
  - In what way(s) do I need to adjust my thinking?

5) **Take informed action.** The next step in the process is to decide or pursue a solution based on the thorough research you conducted.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What is the best course of action for this problem?
  - Why?

6) **Analyze the action.** After any decision or solution has been applied, analyzing that action to determine if it had the desired effect is a good idea.

- **Reflective questions for this step:**
  - What were the results of the action?
  - Were those results intended? If not, what flaws in my reasoning may have led to an inappropriate action?
  - What about my thinking process? Do I need to change it for next time?

\*Adapted from Brookfield, S. (2007). Developing critical thinkers. Retrieved from <https://www.mnsu.edu/grants/ipesl/Stephen%20Brookfield%20Mankato%20Pkt.pdf>