

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT  
EL PASO  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**Course Title and #: CRIJ 4303. Crime, Criminal Justice & Film. (CD)**

Using film as a medium for culture, students will develop a comprehensive understanding of how cultural norms, values, goals and beliefs pertaining to crime and the criminal justice system are important to the scholarly study of law-making, law-breaking and law-enforcement (i.e., criminology). Films, including documentaries, represent an ideal medium to consider popular as well as scholarly understandings of the causes of crime, and the operation of the criminal justice system, as well as how these understandings have changed over time and vary across cultures.

**Course Information/Description:** This course focuses on utilizing film (and occasionally, pertinent police and court room drama television series) to communicate ideas about crime, victimization, and the criminal justice system; examining how perpetrators and victims are depicted in movies; examining portrayals of crime and criminal law; and, examining how realistically the criminal justice system and its principal agents (police, attorneys, judges, and correctional officers) are portrayed in films.

This course examines theories and themes of criminology through the lens of this popular culture. The course examines how current themes in crime films both reflect and shape our views of crime in society and how theories and current trends in criminology and criminal justice studies manifest themselves on film. The goals of this course are to provide students with an understanding how crime films contribute to and reflect our ideas of crime and justice, good and evil, and identifying the nature of the attraction of crime films. This course aims to have students use their understanding and knowledge of crime and the criminal justice system to critically think, analyze, and apply the ideas and concepts about crime presented in films.

**Class Caveat:** Students are warned that the films in and outside the classroom contain graphic depictions of violence, profanity, nudity, and sexual behavior. Any given movie may have realistic and disturbing portrayals of murder, mayhem, torture, rape, and other acts of extreme or brutal violence. Documentaries may contain images of actual dead and tortured bodies as well as accounts of severe and excessive violence. Students who do not wish to be exposed to such scenes should reconsider taking this class.

**Course CRN:** 26317

**Term:** SPRING 2020

**Course Meeting Time:** Tuesday 3:00 pm – 5:50 pm

**Location:** EDUC 114

**Instructor:** Luis A. Arias, BA, JD

**Office Location:** EDUC 111

**Contact Info:** Phone # 915.747.7943  
Larias2@utep.edu  
Fax # 915.747.5751  
Emergency Contact 915.218.8103

**Office Hours:** 9:00 am – 10:00 am Tuesday and Thursday, by appointment

**Textbook(s), Materials:** Required: Rafter, Nicole. 2006. *Shots in the Mirror: Crime Films and Society* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 10:0195175069; ISBN-13:978-0195175066. Outside readings as assigned by the instructor, see infra.

Additional required purchases: Because certain films are not available through UTEP, students will be required to obtain access to them on their own. These films may be available for free at a local library, purchased or rented from a vendor (such as Amazon.com) as a DVD or streamed, or located through whatever appropriate and legal means can be found. These films will be specified in the Course Calendar.

**Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:** This class will critically analyze the depictions of crime and the criminal justice system in films. Crime films reflect society's impressions about social, economic, political, and philosophical issues and, in turn, shape the way we think about these issues. The point of this course is to examine how film represents, distorts, and/or filters crime and justice issues.

This class will have the critically-thinking student look at films in a different manner. Students will be provided with a structure for viewing the film. That is, students will be asked to reflect, analyze, discuss, and answer questions.

After the course the student will be able to:

1. Have the skills to analytically view crime films and recognize the construction of crime and justice (e.g., police, attorneys, judges, courts, corrections, and prisons) within such films.
2. Identify and analyze film issues as they relate to crime, criminal behavior, the law and sentencing, the criminal justice system, law enforcement, courts, and corrections.
3. Analyze films depicting aspects of the criminal justice system and separate entertainment value from realistic portrayals of the principal aspects and agents of the criminal justice system. The class will have an opportunity to examine and discuss factual case studies and provide analyses).

4. Understand the basic theoretical perspectives on crime and relate these perspectives to film portrayals of the causes of crime.
5. Understand the contemporary and historical issues regarding the criminal justice system.
6. Demonstrate an understanding concerning the impact that film has on society's perceptions of the criminal justice system and how these perceptions can impact criminal justice policy and law.
7. Analyze and evaluate the media portrayal of the criminal justice system.

**Course Activities/Assignments:** Course activities and assignments will derive from textbook chapter and outside readings, group discussions, oral presentations with PowerPoint, and analytical papers as required by the Professor. Reading assignments are to be completed prior to class meetings (see course calendar). Students are expected to be familiar with the readings to apply the material to class discussions as well as to respond to written and oral questions based on the readings.

**Assessment of Course Objectives:** Students will be required to read course materials assigned by the Professor and complete all individual and group activities as assigned. The course will be presented per the chapters as delineated in the required textbook and outside readings, *supra*. Upon completion of the chapters and outside readings, lectures, and discussions thereof, the student will be able to complete the objectives with a thorough comprehension, explanation, discussion and application thereof. The students will be administered objective and/or subjective examinations during the class to assess the students' understanding of the subject matter/course material.

1. Students will be administered five written tests to measure their understanding of the course content. The examinations will be administered and proportionally spaced out throughout the semester. Examinations will be graded based on class lectures, group discussions, assigned readings from the textbook(s), and/or outside readings. Written objective and/or subjective (essay) tests are valued at 100 points each. Blue Books are required for essay tests, and a Scranton is required for each objective test. It is the students' responsibility to purchase both items.
2. Students will be administered quizzes on a weekly class-time basis on homework movies assigned to the class.
3. Students will be assigned and work in groups of four and present, in a professionally dressed manner, a 15 - 20 minutes Power Point presentation which will be graded. Each member of the team will be graded solely based on a group grade. Each student from the group is expected to contribute his/her portion of the presentation. See infra and Blackboard for more information on the format and

evaluation criteria of the presentation.

4. Finally, each group will work on and submit a two-page reaction and analysis essay, due at a time designated by the professor. The instructor will provide report requirements during the class. Deductions will be made for each error: not following directions, proofreading, formatting, typographical problems including incorrect text, etc., see infra. The essay should read as if written and authored by one writer with all members of the group contributing to the report. This reaction and analysis essay will also be graded. A numeric grade will be earned by each member of the group. More details are provided below.
5. Any student who has an “A” average going into the final examination will not be required to sit for the final examination and will receive an “A” for the course.
6. Any extra credit assignments are at the instructor’s discretion.

**Criteria for PowerPoint Presentation:** The group Power Point presentation is an activity that is both a learning and teaching methodology which exemplifies and achieves the highest level of student learning: teaching others. The Power Point presentations will be in the following format and respond to the identified criteria heretofore.

- ✓ Title Page:
  - Film Title
  - Film Release Date
  - Director
  - “Catchy” Title Page; Image
- ✓ One slide for a minimum of five of eight criteria, infra
- ✓ Criminal Justice concepts manifested in the crime film
- ✓ Embedded video accentuating/representing key points of film/book (chapter readings)
- ✓ Question page
- ✓ Every group member presents @ least one slide
- ✓ Evaluation by students using evaluation form
- ✓ Evaluated and graded as group presentation grade

**Criteria to be utilized for the Power Point Presentation:**

- ✓ What are the strengths and weaknesses of the film as they relate to the field of criminal justice?
- ✓ How does the film reflect or possibly influence society and/or does society influence the film?

- ✓ What specific crimes are presented or implied in the film?
- ✓ What characters do you or do you not identify with and why?
- ✓ What types of social control system are presented or implied?
- ✓ What does the film say about gender, race/ethnicity, and social inequalities?
- ✓ Are any criminal justice myths validated or challenged?
- ✓ What does the film teach us about the Criminal Justice system?

#### Grading Criteria for PowerPoint Presentation:

- ✓ *Relaxation:* Presenters appeared relaxed and in control. Body language and voice communicated a sense of confidence.
- ✓ *Delivery:* The delivery approach was organized and easy to follow. The presentation was clear and targeted. The presenters' voice was clear and sufficiently loud.
- ✓ *Eye Contact:* The presenters maintained eye contact with all members of the audience. I felt that the presenter was frequently speaking directly to me.
- ✓ *Visuals:* The presenters included sufficient and appropriate visual materials to help me understand the content. Visuals were to the point, easy to see, and helped clarify the material presented.
- ✓ *Overall Presentation:* The presenters provided a clear and crisp presentation covering the required format/criterion as delineated in the class syllabus.

**Reaction and Analysis Essay:** Each group will be responsible for completing a reaction and analysis essay. Each essay will be graded and given a numeric grade by the Professor worth 100 points. These writing assignments are intended to require you to engage in critical thinking and logical reasoning as well as to further assist you in developing your written communication skills.

During the course, we will watch approximately thirteen movies – the dates for viewing these films are in the course calendar syllabus, see infra. These films were chosen to show how particular aspects of the criminal justice system are portrayed in film, including prisons, police, crime causation, and aspects of the court system.

**Each critical analysis essay should include two parts – Reaction and Analysis**

#### Reaction:

A reaction essay is as its name proposes—a paper explaining *your group member's* (hereafter “you” or “your”) reaction to a film. This type of paper requires the student to think carefully about what he/she feels or thinks about a film. The student needs to question his/her knowledge and beliefs. While you are watching the film, think about the following questions:

- How do you feel or think about what you are watching?
- What do you agree or disagree with?
- Can you identify with the movie or characters in the movie?
- What is your assessment of the situation in general?
- What did you find significant, educational or uncharacteristic about the film?

### Analysis:

The second part of your essay should include a critical analysis of the film, in terms of how well the film portrayed the criminal justice system, criminals, victims, or criminology. While you are watching the films, think about the following questions:

- In what ways does the film accurately portray the aspect of criminal justice it depicts?
- In what ways does the film fall short of recreating the aspect of criminal justice it depicts?
- If you did not know anything about the criminal justice system, how would this film (good or bad) affect your perceptions about the criminal justice system, criminal justice practitioners, crime victims, or criminology?

### Reaction and Analysis papers must meet the following criteria:

- Two (2) pages in length; utilize the BLOT, BLUF style writing
- Active voice and past tense
- Double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman
- Must be produced in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx format)
- No cover page – header should include the following: the group members' names, course title and number, and film's title, director, and date of release. Throughout the paper, the film's title should be italicized or underlined (be consistent)
- Proofread carefully the following: grammar, spelling, mechanics, citations, etc. This will be part of your grade
- Since a reaction/analysis paper describes your reaction to a film, it is appropriate to use third person (we) occasionally. But remember that the paper is primarily about the film, not about the writer(s).
- Avoid summarizing the plot. Any movie watcher can get the plot from viewing the movie. There is no "value added" in the paper when the essay merely summarizes the plot, and the paper will offer little to a reader if it mainly retells the story. Therefore, DO NOT retell the story.

Suggested techniques that can help you avoid retelling the story.

- Choose a narrow thesis, focusing on a single scene, for example, or perhaps on a secondary character(s). If you focus on a central theme or major characters, you're more likely to follow them through the whole film and tell the whole story again.

- Be cognizant of and utilize thoughtful topic sentences in your paragraphs—make sure that each paragraph has a point to make, supported by relevant details or evidence supporting your point and that it is not just advancing the plot.
- A more mechanical approach is to arbitrarily limit your plot summary to a single short paragraph.
- Assume that your reader has already seen the film, which in the case of this class, the reader/audience will have seen the film; therefore, you do not want to waste the reader's time with what he/she already knows.
- Tell your reader something he/she does not already know.

### Grading Criteria for Reaction and Analysis Essays:

- ✓ Is there an explicit thesis statement that controls the direction of the paper and narrows the scope of the ideas presented in it?
- ✓ Does the paper have a strong introduction that invites the reader to further reading?
- ✓ Are the ideas explored adequately within the limits established by the thesis statement?
- ✓ Are the ideas presented in a logical and intelligible sequence that makes sense?
- ✓ Is there a definite conclusion drawing the ideas together leaving the reader satisfied?
- ✓ Does the paper avoid a disproportionate plot summary?
- ✓ Does the paper offer appropriate details or enough examples drawn from the film to clarify major points and make them compelling?
- ✓ Is the paper's language accurate and effective making ideas clear?
- ✓ Are the sentences clear and direct? Recommend use active voice, past tense.
- ✓ Is the paper void of major grammatical errors (such as sentence fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences, subject-verb agreement errors, verb form errors, and syntax?)
- ✓ Does the format of the paper match the instructions for the assignment (proper heading; double spacing; italicize film titles; inclusion of movie's release date and director; reaction and critique?)

**Writing Center:** The University Writing Center (UWC) is in the Library, Room 227. It is a suitable place to receive help with editing your written papers and with APA style assistance. The UWC is open Monday – Thursday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, Friday 9:00 am

2:00 pm, and Sundays 12:00 – 5:00 pm. Appointments are recommended before the deadline, but the UWC will take walk-ins. The UWC telephone number and email address are 747-5112 and [uwc@utep.edu](mailto:uwc@utep.edu).

**Grading Policy:** All grading is at the professor’s discretion and based on traditional academic guidelines:

90- Above - A  
80- 89 - B  
70-79 - C  
60 - 69 - D  
59 – Below- F

- All class assignments are due when scheduled
- Late submissions will result in grade reduction.
  - All written assignments must be submitted in APA format and/or as directed by the Professor without exception.
- Any approved rewrites must be accompanied with the original document.
- There will be four to five class examinations, see supra, and weekly quizzes.
- Students will be tested over all assigned textbook (s) reading assignments, outside reading assignments, class lectures, films, and/or group assignments.
- All examinations must be taken on the date and time scheduled. There are no make-up examinations, and the student will receive a score of “0” for any missed examinations.

**Attendance and Participation Policy:** Class and examination attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to be in class and be on time. Students who miss class are responsible for contacting fellow classmates to obtain notes. I will not allow students to borrow my notes, and I do not give an encore performance of my lectures. This also goes for students arriving late to class or leaving early. Note: I do not post my PowerPoint’s on Blackboard.

**Drop Policy:** The course drop policy for this course is the same as the official policy for the University of Texas at El Paso. The policy is set out in the University catalog. The instructor also has discretion in this matter and has the right to drop a student from the course if the student has excessive unexcused absences or is continuously late to class. A student will not be allowed more than three (3) unexcused absences during the semester. If a student accumulates more than three (3) unexcused absences, the instructor has the right to drop the student from the course. Please refer to UTEP Drop Policy: [http://engineering.utep.edu/plaza/AcademicForms/Course\\_Drop\\_Form\\_aftercensusday.pdf](http://engineering.utep.edu/plaza/AcademicForms/Course_Drop_Form_aftercensusday.pdf); and [http://utepconnect.utep.edu/images/docs/accepted\\_students/learning\\_online/Know\\_University\\_Policy.pdf](http://utepconnect.utep.edu/images/docs/accepted_students/learning_online/Know_University_Policy.pdf).



If unforeseen circumstances happen where a drop is necessary, *students* are responsible for initiating any course drop. It is the student's responsibility to determine how dropping courses may affect financial aid. **Students are limited to dropping no more than 6 courses over their entire academic career of all courses taken at any public college or University in Texas.**

- a) Students who drop a course within the first 2 weeks *before the "official census date,"* the course will not appear on the transcript, and doesn't count toward the 6-course drop limit. **Note:** The Census date is February 5, 2020.
- b) Dropping a course *after the official census date, but before the "course drop date"* will generate a "W" in the course—although the drop shows on your transcript, a "W" does not lower your GPA. However, this type of drop counts against your 6-drop limit. **Note:** The course stop deadline is April 3, 2020.
- c) If the course is dropped *after the "course drop date"* or if the student just stops coming/taking tests, etc., UTEP requires the instructor to issue an "F" in the course that permanently remains on the transcript. This type of drop counts against the 6-drop limit.
- d) UTEP also allows instructors to administratively drop any student because of excessive absences, lack of effort, or disciplinary reasons. In this case, the student will be notified of the course drop through their UTEP email account. A "W" will be issued if the drop occurs before the course drop date, and an "F" will be issued if a student is administratively dropped for disciplinary reasons or after the course drop date. This type of drop counts against the 6-drop limit.
- e) If circumstances occur where a student must miss an excessive number of classes and/or is unable to submit multiple assignments (e.g., student medical reasons, medical conditions of a family member, death of a family member, active military service), they should first discuss the possibility of withdrawal from all classes with their academic advisor. If a student withdraws completely from all classes, kindly notify Professor Arias at: [larias2@utep.edu](mailto:larias2@utep.edu). Complete withdrawals from all classes in the same semester do not count against the 6-drop limit.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Reference UTEP's policy cited in <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=23785>

**Civility Statement:** The Professor will endeavor to provide a classroom environment appropriate for academic knowledge, discourse, and debate. For this to occur, each student must be prepared with all the reading assignments and participate actively in class. We will respect what others say and avoid insults, interruptions and disrespect. We will avoid becoming politically charged when discussing sensitive topics.

Cell Phones will be turned off or set to vibrate during class. As a matter of courtesy and classroom policy, students must leave the classroom when accepting incoming calls.

Laptop and recording devices are permitted in classroom to facilitate note taking. No other computer use is approved during class time, to include, emailing and game playing. Using a laptop in the classroom is a privilege, which can be revoked by the instructor. The use of cell and smart phones, smart watches, and laptops is NOT permitted during examinations. Students will not be allowed to leave the classroom during examinations.

**Diversity Statement:** We all come to the table with differing experiences and viewpoints, which means that we have so much to learn from each other! To get the most out of this opportunity, it is important that we don't shy away from differences. Rather, we should show respect for differences by seeking to understand, asking questions, clarifying our understanding, and/or respectfully explaining our own perspective. This way, everybody comes away with new perspectives on the issue and respecting others with different values or beliefs. If someone says something that bothers you for any reason, assume that your peer did not mean to be offensive and ask your peer to clarify what he or she meant. Then explain the impact it had on you. If your classmates tell you that something you said or wrote bothered them, assume that they are not attacking you, but rather that they are sharing something that might be important for you to know.

**Disability Statement:** If a student has or suspects he/she has a disability and needs an accommodation, he/she should contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148 or at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu) or go to Room 106 Union East Building. The student is responsible for presenting to the instructor any DSS accommodation letters and instructions.

**Military Statement:** If you are a military student possibly being called to military service and/or training during the semester, contact Professor Arias immediately.

**Blackboard Requirement:** We will be using Blackboard during the semester. Make certain you become familiar with the program. Outside textbook reading assignments will be placed on Blackboard. You can access Blackboard from any campus computer or from your home. Please consult the UTEP system or see me if you need instructions on how to use Blackboard. Each student is required to have a working email address.

**Course Calendar/Assignments/Spring 2020. Note:** The Professor has the right to make changes to the course/syllabus. Students should attend class to stay informed of any changes and review the class calendar regarding chapter tests, readings and films.

<b>Week 1 – 01/21</b>	<b>Introduction; discussion on the film <i>The Godfather</i>; Course syllabus review and course requirements; Crime Films and Society</b>	<b>Introduction (Rafter); Films: <i>The Godfather</i> (1972)</b>
<b>Week 2 – 01/28</b>	The History of Crime Films	Chapter 1 (Rafter); Group 1 Presentation; Films: <i>Rear Window</i> (1954)
<b>Week 3 – 02/04</b>	Why They Went Bad: Criminology in Crime Films:	Chapter 2 (Rafter); Group 2 Presentation; Films: <i>Goodfellas</i> (1990); <b>Test I (Intro/Ch. 1).</b>

<b>Week 4 – 02/11</b>	Slasher, Serial Killer, and Psycho Movies	Chapter 3 (Rafter); Group 3 Presentation; Film <b>Texas Chainsaw Massacre</b> (1974), (2013); or <b>Psycho</b> (1960)
<b>Week 5 – 02/18</b>	Serial Killer Films	Chapter 3 (Rafter); Group 4 Presentation; Films: <b>Seven</b> (1995); <i>US Customs and Border Protection Presentation</i>
<b>Week 6 – 02/25</b>	Psycho Films	Chapter 3 Films (Rafter); Group 5; Films: <b>Silence of the Lambs</b> (1991);
<b>Week 7 – 03/03</b>	Cop and Detective Films	Chapter 4 (Rafter); Group 6 Presentation; <b>Training Day</b> (2001); <b>Test II (Chs. 2 - 3)</b> .
<b>Week 8 – 03/10</b>	Criminal Law Films	Chapter 5 (Rafter); Group 7 Presentation; Films: <b>The Judge</b> (2014); <i>alt. And Justice for All</i> (1979); <b>To Kill a Mockingbird</b> (1962); <b>Witness for the Prosecution</b> (1957); * <i>Special Assignment: The Brothers Karamazov</i>
<b>Week 9 – 03/24</b>	Prison and Execution Films	<b>SPRING BREAK 03/16 – 20/2020</b> Chapter 6 (Rafter); Group 8 Presentation; Films: <b>Shawshank Redemption</b> (1994); <i>alt. Cool Hand Luke</i> (1967); <b>Blood In, Blood Out</b> (1993); <b>III (Chs. 4 – 5)</b> .
<b>Week 10 – 03/31</b>	The Heroes of Crime Films	Chapter 7 (Rafter); Group 9 Presentation; Films: <b>American Gangster</b> (2007); <i>alt. Dog Day Afternoon</i> (1975)
<b>Week 11 – 04/07</b>	The Alternative Tradition and Films of Moral Ambiguity	Chapter 8 (Rafter); Group 10 Presentation; <b>Mystic River</b> (2003); <i>alt. No Country for Old Men</i> (2007)
<b>Week 12 – 04/14</b>	The War on Drugs: Drug Trafficking/Drug Abuse Films	Group 11 Presentation; Reading: Kappeler et al., “Drug War Cowboys”; Films: <b>Traffic</b> (2001); <i>alt. Sicario</i> (2015); <b>Sicario: Day of the Soldado</b> (2018); <b>Test IV (6 – 8)</b> .
<b>Week 13 – 04/21</b>	Vigilante Films; Victimology, Revictimization	Leitch Chapter 4 Fury and the Victim Film: Group 12 Presentation; <i>Death Wish</i> (1974 or 2018) <b>The Brave One</b> (2007); <b>Fury</b> (1936);
<b>Week 14 – 04/28</b>	The Criminal in Foreign Films; Perspectives on Crime and Punishment or Gang Films	<i>Reading TBD possibly Leitch 13, Amores Perros</i> (2000); <i>alt. Maria Full of Grace</i> (2004); <b>Malavita or The Family</b> (2013)
<b>Week 15 – 12/05</b>	Review Week	Review for Final Examination;
<b>Week 16 – 12/12</b>	Final Examination Week	<b>Final Examination</b>

**Note:** Outside Readings include the following:

- Leitch, Thomas. 2002. *Crime Films* (1st ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-64106-3; ISBN 0-521-64671-5.
- Kappeler, V., M. Blumberg, and G.W. Potter 2000. *The Mythology of Crime and Criminal Justice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. ISBN 1-57766-078-1.