

CRIJ 5315: Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy (HYBRID)

CRN: 18649

Fall 2020

Professor. Dr. Melinda Tasca

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Office Hours: Virtually (by appointment).

Course Information: What this class is about and what we will do

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy will be oriented toward understanding the development and application of CJ policy occurring in organizational environments that are influenced by historical, social, political, legal, and economic factors. Students will learn why criminal justice organizations pursue certain policies or practices and examine evidence of their achievement of objectives. Using a multidisciplinary approach, the readings will consist of works focused on criminal justice policies and practices across criminal justice systems and system-involved populations in the United States.

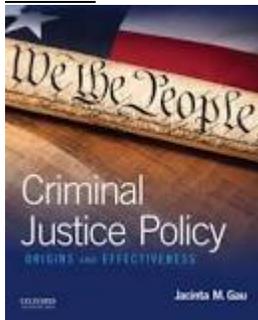
COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the influential factors that have shaped criminal justice policy in the United States
- Identify the major tenets, strengths, and limitations of criminal justice policies
- Understand the state of research on crime and justice policies
- Develop sound recommendations for improving crime and justice

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Books:



Gau, J.M. (2018). *Criminal justice policy: Origins and effectiveness*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190210939.

Articles (*available in the BlackBoard course shell)

Cullen, F. T., Jonson, C. L., & Mears, D. P. (2017). Reinventing community corrections. *Crime and Justice*, 46, 27-93.

Dieter, R. C. (2015). The future of the death penalty in the United States. *U. Rich. L. Rev.*, 49, 921.

Farrell, A., & Pfeffer, R. (2014). Policing human trafficking: Cultural blinders and organizational barriers. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653, 46-64.

Phillips, S. W., Wheeler, A., & Kim, D. Y. (2016). The effect of police paramilitary unit raids on crime at micro-places in Buffalo, New York. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 18, 206-219.

Lassiter, M. D. (2015). Impossible criminals: the suburban imperatives of America's war on drugs. *Journal of American History*, 102, 126-140.

Leiber, M., & Rodriguez, N. (2011). The implementation of the disproportionate minority confinement/contact (DMC) mandate: A failure or success? *Race and Justice*, 1, 103-124.

Rodriguez, N. (2016). Strengthening justice in the US: The impact of scientific research. *Ohio St. J. Crim. L.*, 14, 289.

Rodriguez, N. (2018). Expanding the evidence base in criminology and criminal justice: Barriers and opportunities to bridging research and practice. *Justice Evaluation Journal*, 1, 1-14.

Spohn, C. (2018). Reflections on the exercise of prosecutorial discretion 50 years after publication of *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society*. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17, 321-340.

Sundt, J., Salisbury, E. J., & Harmon, M. G. (2016). Is downsizing prisons dangerous? The effect of California's Realignment Act on public safety. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 15, 315-341.

Toch, H. (2007). Sequestering gang members, burning witches, and subverting due process. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 34, 274-288.

Tonry, M. (2008). Learning from the limitations of deterrence research. *Crime and Justice*, 37, 279-311.

Wolfe, S., Rojek, J., McLean, K., & Alpert, G. (2020). Social interaction training to reduce police use of force. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 687, 124-145.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

All assignments/exams will be submitted electronically through BlackBoard. Your grade in this course will be determined by a variety of assignments, which include:

- 150 points: Short papers on readings and discussion questions (30 points x 5)
- 20 points: Policy brief draft
- 80 points: Policy brief final draft
- 20 points: Policy brief presentation (using BlackBoard Collaborate)
- 100 Points: Final exam

Grade Distribution:

370-333 = A;

332-296 = B;

295-259 = C;

258-222 = D;

221 and Below = F

Reading: Assigned course readings are outlined in the course schedule. As graduate students, I expect you to carefully read all assigned materials. I strongly recommend that you take detailed reading notes and rely on them during class discussions. These notes will be an essential tool when you take your final exam.

Participation: For each class meeting, you should come ready to discuss questions about key points from the readings, strengths and limitations of policies covered, and put forth ideas on ways to build upon and improve criminal justice policy and practice.

Note: Class discussions are important in graduate school. Due to the unprecedented times we are in, however, I recognize that circumstances may arise that can affect class attendance. You will notice that you are not given a grade for attendance. If you are unable to attend class, please contact me by email ahead of time. More on these matters in the sections that follow.

Short papers on readings and discussion questions (140 points; 35 points x 4): These assignments have two key requirements. First, you are to identify two policy areas from the assigned readings for the week. You should discuss strengths and limitations of these two policy areas. This part of your paper should comprise *one double-spaced page*. Anything over this limit will not be read/graded. Papers that are less than one page will lack necessary depth. As such, I have assigned this page limit because it is important to organize and write ideas concisely, clearly, and completely. Second, you are to develop two questions for class discussion. *Your discussion questions should be labeled and listed on page two of the same document*. This assignment should conclude with a reference page of the readings cited in APA format (fyi - citations are provided in this syllabus). Additional guidance on this assignment will be provided.

Note: The five due dates for these papers fall on Wednesdays (the day before class meetings) with specific dates organized by group (see course schedule). Group assignments are as follows: *Students with last names beginning with A through M fall into Group A. Students with last names beginning with N through Z fall into Group B.*

Policy Brief (draft: 20 points; final draft: 80 points):

You will develop a policy brief that hones in on a particular policy relevant to this course and tailor recommendations to a specific audience (e.g., administrators of a particular agency, legislators, or other identified stakeholders). You will provide a background of the policy, identify strengths and limitations, explain the state of research in the area, and develop clearly defined policy alternatives that could be of use to your audience. Further instructions for this assignment will be provided. Draft due: 10/15 by 11:59pm (feedback will be given on or before 10/22); Final draft due: 11/5 by 11:59pm.

Policy Brief Presentation (20 points):

You will give a virtual presentation to the class on your policy brief. You should design this presentation as if you were delivering it to the intended audience (e.g., agency administrators,

legislators). Presentations should be created using PowerPoint and last between 10 – 12 minutes. Presentations will conclude with a Q & A session. You will be graded on the content and quality of your slides as well as the organization and clarity of your oral presentation. More details on expectations and scheduling for these presentations will be provided as the semester progresses. Presentations will span multiple class periods as shown in the course schedule.

Take-Home Final Exam (100 points):

You will complete a take-home essay exam that requires responses to two questions. Each response should be roughly 4 to 6 double-spaced pages drawing on course material. You are encouraged to cite additional peer-reviewed/empirical sources but outside material may not be substituted for material covered in this course. Submissions must include a title page and reference page (APA format). Further information about exam content and guidelines will be provided. You will receive the exam on 12/3 and it is due by 11:59pm on 12/9.

COVID-19 ACCOMODATIONS POLICY

Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

(classes with on-campus meetings) Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at [screening.utep.edu](#). If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the **UTEP screening website** ([screening.utep.edu](#)) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection. Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5

Disruptions in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

(classes with on-campus meetings): Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

While on campus:

- **wear face coverings** when in common areas or when others are present;

- maintain a minimum **separation of six (6)** feet between yourself and others when possible, and arrange spaces to make this possible in almost all circumstances;
- **adhere to room/space limitations** on number of occupants; and
- **wash and/or sanitize hands** frequently.

To reiterate, student responsibilities are as follows:

- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Complete COVID-19 student training (link: <https://covidstraining.questionpro.com>)
- Contact instructor if temporary accommodations due to COVID-19 are needed (i.e., due to positive COVID-19 test, symptoms, or exposure).
- If unable to wear a face covering (e.g., medical reasons), the best course of action is to enroll in courses that are entirely online or to work with academic advisors, if necessary, to identify alternative courses. If this is not possible, request an accommodation from Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) prior to coming to campus for in-person activities. Students who receive an accommodation to not wear a face covering must share this with the professor and work to minimize contact with others in the class.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and 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 to have access to a computer/laptop, scanner, a webcam, and a microphone. We will use BlackBoard Collaborate for virtual class meetings. This software can be accessed through our course shell. 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 a 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.

All assignments/exams will be submitted through designated links in BlackBoard and must be submitted in either Word or PDF format.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

Course Communication: How we will stay in contact with each other

Because this is a hybrid class, we won’t see each other in the ways you may be accustomed to: during class time, small group meetings, and office hours. However, there are a number of ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- **Office Hours:** I am available to meet virtually by appointment. Reach me by email to request an appointment.
- **Email:** I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24-48 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and please put the course number in the subject line.
- **Announcements:** Check your UTEP email and Blackboard for announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

NETIQUETTE AND SEMINAR DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. The same is true when discussing hotly debated topics in criminal justice whether in-person or online. It's possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates mean. Therefore, please keep these ground rules in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- Always consider audience. This is a graduate-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate comments will be tolerated.
- When reacting to someone else, address the ideas, not the person.
- Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all discussions and postings to it should be considered private and confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for classmates and professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

Course Policies: What do you need to do to be successful in the course

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

While partaking in seminar discussion is essential in graduate school, you will not be given a grade for attendance/participation this semester. I expect that you will notify me if you are going to be absent, however. Please remember that assignments are still due through BlackBoard even if you miss class. If you need an extension for a documented emergency, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss arrangements.

COURSE DROP POLICY

I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please first let me know and then contact the [Registrar's Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an "F" for the course.

BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE SESSIONS

This class requires that you participate in scheduled Blackboard Collaborate sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to engage in in-depth discussion on crime and justice policy topics from the readings during the weeks we do not meet in-person. The dates of these sessions are listed in the course schedule at the end of this syllabus. Note: We are currently scheduled to meet virtually one week and in-person the following week and continue this rotation until November in which we will then only meet remotely. If circumstances change, we may need to cancel some or all of the scheduled in-person meetings. Please be prepared to be flexible. I will communicate any changes immediately.

Students are expected to participate in virtual sessions with a webcam and microphone. Students should not record the sessions and post them to any sites outside of Blackboard.

If you are unable to attend a Collaborate session, please let me know as soon as possible.

EXTENSIONS AND MAKE-UP WORK

Extensions will be granted only in the case of a *documented* emergency. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to me—in advance if at all possible—if you require an extension. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF SUBMITTING WORK IN CASE OF TECHNICAL ISSUES

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work in a separate file as a back-up. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk.

INCOMPLETE GRADE POLICY

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be

reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

PLAGIARISM DETECTING SOFTWARE

Your course work will be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. Links to Scholastic Integrity policies are provided above.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

Course Resources: Where you can go for assistance

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

Weekly Calendar (Subject to Change)

*Group A: Students with last names A through M

*Group B: Students with last names N through Z

	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due	Note
Week 1 8/27	Class introductions, syllabus review, expectations, Q & A Please read before first class: Rodriguez (2016); Rodriguez (2018)			Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 2 9/3	Applying an analytical lens; Theoretical foundations	Ch. 1 Ch. 2 Tonry (2008)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #1 (GROUP A) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 9/2 via BB	In-Person Mtg (UGL 106)
Week 3 9/10	Drug Policy	Ch. 3 Lassiter (2015)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #1 (GROUP B) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 9/9 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 4 9/17	Mass Incarceration	Ch. 8 Sundt et al. (2016) Spohn (2018)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #2 (GROUP A) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 9/16 via BB	In-Person Mtg (UGL 106)
Week 5 9/24	Policing	Ch. 13 Wolfe et al. (2020) Kim et al. (2016)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #2 (GROUP B) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 9/23 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 6 10/1	Probation and Intermediate Sanctions; Correctional Treatment	Ch. 10 Ch. 14 Cullen et al. (2017)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #3 (GROUP A) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 9/30 via BB	In-Person Mtg (UGL 106)
Week 7 10/8	Death Penalty	Ch. 9 Dieter (2015)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #3 (GROUP B) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 10/7 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)

Week 8 10/15	Gun Policy; Gangs	Ch. 5 Ch. 7 Toch (2007)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #4 (GROUP A) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 10/14 via BB Policy brief drafts due by 11:59pm on Thursday 10/15 via BB	In-Person Mtg (UGL 106)
Week 9 10/22	Juvenile Justice	Ch. 6 Lieber & Rodriguez (2011)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #4 (GROUP B) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 10/21 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 10 10/29	Sex Offenders; White Collar	Ch. 4 Ch. 11	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #5 (GROUP A) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 10/28 via BB	In-Person Mtg (UGL 106)
Week 11 11/5	Human Trafficking; Promising policy approaches	Ch. 12 Ch. 15 Farrell & Pfeffer (2014)	Short Paper/Discussion Questions #5 (GROUP B) due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 11/4 via BB Final policy drafts due by 11:59pm on Thursday 11/5 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 12 11/12	Policy presentations			Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 13 11/19	Policy Presentations			Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
Week 14 11/26	<i>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</i>			

Week 15 12/3	Receive final take-home exam and Q & A Policy Presentations	Final take-home exams due by 11:59pm on Wednesday 12/9 via BB	Virtual Mtg (in BB Collaborate)
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