

**CRIJ 5315: Seminar in Criminal Justice Policy**  
CRN: 13518  
Fall 2024

Professor: Dr. Melinda Tasca  
mtasca@utep.edu  
Office Hours: Virtually and in office (EDUC 111-Q) – 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 (in alphabetical order; available in the BlackBoard course shell)

Bennett, M. W. (2018). Addicted to incarceration: Federal judge reveals shocking truths about federal sentencing and fleeting hopes for reform. *UMKC Law Review*, 87(1), 3-24.

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

- Dempsey, M.P., Davis, W.M., Forbes, P., Barclay Penkoff, C., Gonsoulin, S. & Harris, P.W. (2021). Juvenile justice administrator perspectives: Reframing reentry around positive youth outcomes. *Behavioral Disorders*, 46, 187-196.
- 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.
- Huebner, B.M., Kras, K.K., Rydberg, J., Bynum, T.S., Grommon, E. & Pleggenkuhle, B. (2014). The effect and implications of sex offender residence restrictions: Evidence from a Two-State Evaluation. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 13, 139-168.
- Lassiter, M. D. (2015). Impossible criminals: The suburban imperatives of America's war on drugs. *Journal of American History*, 102, 126-140.
- Lum, C., Koper, C.S., Wilson, D.B., Stolz, M., Goodier, M., Eggins, E., Higginson, A., Mazerolle, L. (2020). Body-worn cameras' effects on police officers and citizen behavior: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 16, 1-40.
- 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.
- Ulmer, J.T., Kramer, J.H. & Zajac, G. (2020) The Race of Defendants and Victims in Pennsylvania Death Penalty Decisions: 2000–2010, *Justice Quarterly*, 37, 955-983.
- 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 are due electronically through BlackBoard. Your grade in this course will be determined by a variety of assignments, which include:

- Participation: 10 points x 11 classes (after dropping lowest score) = 110 points
- Class discussant (110 points):
  - Short papers on readings (35 points x 2) = 70 points
  - Discussion questions (20 points x 2) = 40 points
- Policy brief = 100 points
- Policy brief presentation = 30 points
- Final exam = 100 points

TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE = 450

### Grade Distribution:

450-405 = A;

404-360 = B;

359-315 = C;

314-270 = D;

269 and Below = F

Reading: As graduate students, I expect you to carefully read all assigned materials (see course schedule; BlackBoard). I strongly recommend that you take detailed reading notes and rely on them during class discussions. These notes will prove helpful toward earning your full participation points as well as preparing you for assignments and the final exam.

Participation (110 points; 10 points x 11 classes): Class participation is essential to being successful in this course. Participation in each class meeting is worth 10 points. Note: Your lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Merely attending class will not earn you full points. You must engage in class discussion in meaningful ways. To earn full points, you will contribute to discussion on multiple occasions per class session and demonstrate that you have completed class readings (e.g., not simply share your own opinion). During weeks where policy brief meetings and presentations take place, your points will be based on your level of engagement and preparedness.

Class Discussant (110 points; 55 points x 2): Each student will take on the role of class discussant twice this semester. This assignment has multiple parts:

First, you will submit 1) a short paper that synthesizes the main points from the readings as well as identify strengths and weaknesses of two specific policies covered (35 points). This paper should be four to five double spaced pages (12 pt font; 1-inch margins). Include a separate title and reference page. References should be cited in APA format.

Next, you will 2) develop four discussion questions to raise in class. All assigned readings must be covered in these questions (20 points). Discussion questions should focus on specific ideas about how to evaluate the effectiveness of a policy, potential policy improvements, potential challenges in implementation, and so forth. Discussants should take turns during class, prioritizing raising certain questions because there may not be time to cover all questions.

These questions and short papers must demonstrate critical thinking and a depth of understanding of the readings. Avoid discussion questions that simply ask whether fellow

classmates “agree with” or “like” a policy. The short paper and discussion questions are due as a single Word or PDF file. Further guidance will be provided during class. *This assignment is due by Sunday at 11:59pm (the night before your assigned class).*

#### Policy Brief (100 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. *Policy Briefs are due by Friday, 11/15 at 11:59pm.*

#### Policy Brief Presentation (30 points):

You will give a 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 12-15 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.

#### 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 four to six 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 Monday, 12/2 and it is due by 11:59pm on Monday, 12/9.*

### **EXTRA CREDIT**

Course Evaluation Response Rate of at Least 70% (10 points): If at least 70% of the students in the class complete the Course Evaluation, which becomes available near the end of the semester, then all students will receive 10 extra credit points. To let you know how this works, you will receive email reminders about evaluating the course at least twice. After the course evaluation period is over, I will receive an email from UTEP stating what percentage of students in the class completed the course evaluation. If this figure is at or above 70% then all students in the class will receive the points. So, please complete the course evaluation when it becomes available and urge your classmates to do the same.

### **UTEP EDGE**

This course is designed with the UTEP Edge in mind. In our class, you will engage in activities during each class that involve critical thinking, applying knowledge to new situations, and solving complex problems. You will leave this course confident in your knowledge of criminal justice policies, with enhanced communication skills, leadership and teamwork experience, and a greater global awareness of crime and justice and how it is responded to by individuals, groups, and the larger society.

## 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 Zoom for several virtual class meetings. This software can be accessed through our course shell and/or through an emailed link. 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**

- **Office Hours:** I am available to meet virtually and in my office 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 reference the course.
- **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 when discussing hotly debated topics, whether in-person or online, it is 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 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 the 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**

If you have a documented emergency and will miss class, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss arrangements/alternative assignments. As discussed above, participation points are assigned for each class meeting. You are able to drop your lowest score at the end of the semester. Extra credit is also available. Combined, these opportunities can help make up missed points, including absences.

#### **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.

#### **EXTENSIONS AND MAKE-UP WORK**

Requests for extensions and make-up work will be granted only in the case of a *documented* event/circumstance. If you miss an assignment/class 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/make-up assignment. 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 site in Blackboard, 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](mailto: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 one's 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](#).

## **GUIDANCE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

### AI prohibited

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), is *not allowed* for assignments in this class. Each student is expected to use critical and creative thinking skills to complete tasks and not rely on computer-generated ideas. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

### Using AI for brainstorming

Some AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as [ChatGPT](#) or [DALL-E](#), can be beneficial during the early brainstorming stages of an activity, and you are welcome to explore them for that purpose. However, keep in mind that AI-generated ideas are not your own and may hinder your ability to think critically and creatively about a problem. It is also important to remember that these technologies often “hallucinate” or produce materials and information that are inaccurate or incomplete—even providing false citations for use.

That said, you are not allowed to submit any AI-generated work in this course as your own. Consider how this will affect your credibility as a writer and scholar before doing so. Any direct use of AI-generated materials submitted as your own work will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

## **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)

All class meetings are scheduled to be held in EDUC 112 unless otherwise noted. \* indicates the class meeting will be held virtually via Zoom (meeting links will be sent via email).

	Topic	Readings Due	Assignments Due
Week 1 8/26	Class introductions, syllabus review, expectations, Q & A; discussant sign-ups Please read before first class: Rodriguez (2016); Rodriguez (2018)		
Week 2 9/2	No class – Labor day		
Week 3 9/9	Applying an analytical lens; Theoretical foundations	Ch. 1 Ch. 2 Tonry (2008)	
Week 4 9/16	Drug Policy	Ch. 3 Lassiter (2015) Bennett (2018)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 9/15 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>
Week 5 9/23	Mass Incarceration	Ch. 8 Sundt et al. (2016) Spohn (2018)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 9/22 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>
Week 6 9/30	Policing	Ch. 13 Wolfe et al. (2020) Lum et al. (2020)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 9/29 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>
Week 7* 10/7	Probation and Intermediate Sanctions; Correctional Treatment	Ch. 10 Ch. 14 Cullen et al. (2017)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 10/6 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>

Week 8 10/14	No class meeting – Work on policy briefs		
Week 9* 10/21	Gun Policy; Gangs	Ch. 5 Ch. 7 Toch (2007)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 10/20 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>
Week 10 10/28	Juvenile Justice; Death Penalty	Ch. 6 Ch. 9 Dempsey et al. (2021) Dieter (2015) Ulmer et al. (2020)	
Week 11* 11/4	Individual meetings: Policy briefs		
Week 12* 11/11	Sex Offenders; White Collar	Ch. 4 Ch. 11 Huebner et al. (2014)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 11/10 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>  <b>Policy briefs due Friday, 11/15</b>
Week 13 11/18	Human Trafficking; Promising policy approaches	Ch. 12 Ch. 15 Farrell & Pfeffer (2014)	<b>Class discussant summaries and questions due by Sunday, 11/17 at 11:59pm (for those assigned)</b>
Week 14 11/25	No class meeting – Thanksgiving holiday (Prepare policy presentations)		
Week 15 12/2	Receive final take-home exam and Q & A  Policy Presentations		<b>Final take-home exams due by 11:59pm on Monday, 12/9</b>  <b>Policy brief slides (Powerpoint) due by Sunday, 12/1 at 11:59pm</b>