

Introduction to Criminal Justice

“ When every man lives without law, every man lives without freedom”

Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)

Course Description

The criminal justice system in America is designed to enforce laws, ensure public safety, and deliver justice to those who have committed crimes. In this course, students study the foundations and components of the criminal justice system, including criminal law, the police, the courts, and corrections. They learn the criminal justice process and analyze the interactions among the various institutions of the criminal justice system. Students also examine current issues involving criminal justice, including the balance between crime control and due process, and contemporary conflicts that arise between the criminal justice system and the community. Students are encouraged to consider multiple perspectives and incorporate information from varied sources, including social science, when conducting analyses and making evaluations about crime and the criminal justice process.

This course is directly aligned with the traits defined in the *Portrait of the Crusader*. Through the study of criminal justice, students observe the impacts of injustice and oppression versus justice and freedom, and they are encouraged to value and respect the rights and dignity of all people. This class encourages students to be inspired learners, faithful citizens, and honorable souls who respect diversity.

Assessment Practices

Students' knowledge and skills are measured in varied ways throughout the course and may include:

- Written assessments that include terminology, short answers, and constructed responses to assess content knowledge and make connections.
- Essays that ask students to research, analyze and respond with sound reasoning and insight.
- A project that may include a presentation or performative component.
- A creative connection assessment which asks students to put themselves into an historic situation and create a memoir, journal, or letters.
- A Socratic Seminar or other form of discussion/debate.

Essential Questions for the Course

- Why do we have laws?
- In America, what is the purpose of the criminal justice system?
- How do we promote a just, impartial, and fair criminal justice system?
- Does our current criminal justice system uphold the intent of due process?
- How do we balance individual liberty with the common good?

Curriculum Framework

Unit 1: Crime in America and the Criminal Justice System (Chapters 1 - 4)

Pacing: 10 - 12 classes

Focus Questions:

- Why are laws and public order important? What is the *rule of law*?
- In America, what is the purpose of the criminal justice system?
- What role does social justice play in the criminal justice system?
- What are the foundations and components of the criminal justice system?
- How do these components interact?
- How has crime in America changed over time? How has it remained the same?
- What is the difference between a felony and a misdemeanor?
- How do we track crime data and utilize it as a tool?
- Why do criminal justice researchers use statistics?

Concepts/Skills:

- Define social justice and criminal justice.
- Examine the purpose of the criminal justice system in America; summarize its purpose and foundation; provide an overview of how the three major components interact.
- Research, summarize, and discuss the history and trends of crime in America.
- Examine the eight general features of crime.
- Define misdemeanor and felony and explain the classes of each.
- Describe the National Crime Victimization Survey program, including its purpose; determine what this survey tells us about crime in America.
- Explain the role of research in the Criminal Justice system.
- Discuss the relationship between criminal justice and social justice (the concepts of equity, equality, and fairness).

Summative Assessments for this unit will include:

- Tests for Chapters 1 -4.

Unit 2: Policing (Chapters 5 - 8)

Pacing: 15 - 20 classes

Focus Questions:

- What is the police mission in democratic societies?
- How have police departments evolved in the United states?
- What is evidence-based policing and its impact in today's society?
- What are the three most common policing styles?
- How does the Bill of Rights protect citizens from police abuse?
- What is the process for search and seizure?
- What is meant by police personality and culture?
- What are the dangers and challenges associated with police work?
- What role does ethics play in police discretion?

Concepts/Skills:

- Summarize the police mission and the historical development of policing in America.
- Identify and compare the two major state law enforcement models.
- Compare and contrast the three most common policing styles.
- Describe the operational strategies of police departments.
- Research and analyze how policing has changed post 9-11.
- Explain *U.S vs Miranda*. Explain the concept of due process and articulate how due process impacts police behavior with respect to search and arrest.
- Analyze how police personality and subculture impacts public perception
- Analyze the connection between stress and fatigue with police culture.
- Analyze the information learned in this unit and determine which changes you would recommend with respect to current policing strategies.

Summative Assessments for this unit will include:

- Tests for Chapters 5 -8.

Unit 3: The Courts (Chapters 9 - 11)

Pacing: 15 - 20 classes

Focus Question:

- What is meant by *equal justice under the law*?
- What is the dual court system? What is the structure of state and federal courts?
- What are the roles of “outsiders” with respect to the court process?
- What are the elements of the pretrial process?
- What is the purpose of a criminal trial? What is an appeal?
- What are the goals of criminal sentencing?
- What is the difference between traditional and alternative sentencing?

Concepts and Skills:

- Define and discuss *equal justice under the law*.
- Compare the federal and state court systems in terms of history, jurisdiction, and structure.
- Analyze the role of outsiders in the judicial process.
- Summarize the pretrial process and the role it plays in the judicial process.
- Explain the process of a criminal trial and explore the role of a highly trained defense lawyer.
- Evaluate the criminal trial process for potential improvement.
- Analyze the goals and philosophies of modern sentencing. Compare and contrast traditional vs alternative sentencing.
- Define the appeals process and describe the common reasons for appeal.
- Research capital punishment in America and analyze its challenges and benefits as a sentence.
- Analyze the information learned in this unit and determine which changes you would recommend with respect to current capital punishment sentencing and practices.

Summative Assessments for this unit will include:

- Tests for Chapters 9 -11.

Unit 4: Corrections and Community Supervision (Chapters 12 - 14)

Pacing: 15 - 20 classes

Focus Question:

- What is probation and parole? What are the jobs of Probation and Parole Officers?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of probation and parole ?
- How has punishment evolved historically in the United States? How did prisons emerge?
- What are the differences between prisons and jails?
- What is the difference between punitive time vs rehabilitative time in prisons?
- What constitutional rights are suspended in prison? Why?

Concepts and Skills:

- Summarize the responsibilities of probation and parole officers.
- Explain the pros and cons of probation and parole and how these practices are changing.
- Describe intermediate sanctions and how they differ from more traditional forms of sentencing. Analyze the advantages that they offer.
- Trace the historical development of prisons in the United States, beginning with the Pennsylvania system. Identify the most significant changes over time.
- Compare jails and prisons. Examine some of the issues that jail administrators currently face.
- Compare punitive and rehabilitative time. Research the reality of rehabilitative time in current prisons.
- Examine public perception of prisons and jails. Evaluate modern correctional practices and the philosophies guiding both institutional and community corrections.

Summative Assessments for this unit will include:

- Tests for Chapters 12 - 14.

Unit 5: Special Issues (Chapter 15)

Pacing: 5 - 7 classes

Focus Question:

- How did the Juvenile Justice system in America develop? How does the current system work?
- What Supreme Court cases impacted the Juvenile Justice System?
- What is the difference between the Adult and Juvenile Justice Systems?

Concepts and Skills:

- Trace the development of the modern juvenile justice system.
- Describe the process of the juvenile justice from arrest to case disposition.
- Analyze the influence and impact of the Supreme Court on the Juvenile Justice System.
- Research the effectiveness of the current Juvenile Justice System in today's society.
- Compare and contrast the various components of the adult and juvenile systems.
- Determine changes you would recommend with respect to the current Juvenile Justice System.

Summative Assessments for this unit will include:

- Test for Chapter 15

Resources

- Textbook – Criminal Justice Today 15th edition/ Frank Schmalleger, Ph.D
- State of Connecticut Judicial Department / [Connecticut Judicial Branch](#)
- U.S. Justice Department / [Office of the Attorney General | Department of Justice](#)
- U. S Supreme Court / [Supreme Court](#)
- Federal Bureau of Investigation/ <https://www.fbi.gov/>
- Waterbury Police / [Waterbury Police Department](#)
- Connecticut State Police / [Connecticut State Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection](#)
- NYPD / [New York Police Department](#)

Grading

- 60% - Mastery - Summative assessments
- 20% - Formative assessments
- 10% - Student Preparation - homework
- 10% - Participation in class and group projects

See the Absence Makeup Policy in the Student Handbook.