Our Topic and Objectives

Catalog Description: Examines the interaction of the Criminal Justice System with the mentally ill as a marginalized group in the United States, including the evolution and operation of civil and criminal law addressing competency and mental illness.

Beginning in the 1950s the federal government closed many of the nation’s mental health institutions and an entire generation of the mentally ill was forced onto the streets with no meaningful place to go for care and no resources for medication or treatment. Not surprisingly, the nation’s police became the frequent and first point of contact because the mentally ill were committing crimes or simply living on the streets. It didn’t take long for our nation’s jails and prisons to become the de facto mental health facilities that they are today - ill-equipped and unprepared to handle overwhelming and ever-increasing numbers of the mentally ill. Today the only thing worse than being an inmate in the United States is being a mentally ill inmate. And these inmates who are released face an impossible challenge of rejoining society and not returning to our jails and prisons.

We will explore the mental health crisis, how it impacts the criminal justice system and how the system is responding (or not responding) at every step from arrest to long-term incarceration to probation and parole. We will explore how the law - civil and criminal law - has evolved and how it operates today for the mentally ill, their families, and legal and criminal justice professionals. We will also devote significant time to the history and evolution of the insanity defense and other defenses related to mental illness and personality disorders and how those defenses operate today.

Core Objective 10 – Diversity and Equity
This course satisfies Core Objective 10: Diversity and Equity. Students will develop a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of contexts. Students will engage in modes of analysis attentive to considerations of diversity and equity. Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.
Student Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students will be able to:
* identify the major types of mental illness, summarize the history of the mental health system in the United States, and describe the history and current status of the mentally ill as a marginalized group in the United States
* describe the movement to deinstitutionalize the mentally ill and its impacts on the lives of the mentally ill and their contacts with the criminal justice system
* identify and explain the major steps in the civil commitment process and the intersection of civil law and criminal justice
* identify and describe the legal, procedural, and policy issues associated with a mentally ill person's contact with each stage in the criminal justice process from issues of mental competency to incarceration and re-entry
* integrate and synthesize knowledge of mental illness, the mentally ill population, law, and policy in the context of discrimination, equitable treatment, and the rights of the mentally ill.

Accordingly, students should be able to identify the complex elements important to members of the mentally ill population in relation to its/their history, values, politics, economy, or beliefs and practices. Further, students must articulate an awareness of the central historical and present diversity issues addressed in this course, including classification, treatment and rights of the mentally ill. The professor will cover topics from assigned texts and additional non-text material through lecture, media, and discussions.

The professor will assess student learning outcomes through objective and subjective examinations/quizzes, and through writing assignments of varying lengths and depth. Writing assignments and discussion questions will include those that encourage students to integrate, synthesize, and apply knowledge of one or more of the central diversity issues affecting the mentally ill population in the United States and abroad. Where the law or policy is unsettled, examinations and assignments will test a student’s ability to predict the most likely outcome or answer by analyzing issues and applying established principles.

Tentative Semester Schedule

Week 1  Topic Overview/Flowchart
Introduction to Mental Illnesses & History of Treatment

Week 2  History of Treatment Cont’d, Deinstitutionalization and Affected Populations (CO10)
Writing Assignment re: Social Stigma (CO10)

Week 3  Overview of the CJ System; Intro to the Civil Commitment Process
The Civil Commitment Process & Intersection with The CJ System
Research Papers Assigned

Week 4  The Civil Commitment Process, Cont’d
Special Issues re: Sex Offenders
Writing Assignment re: Social Stigma Due [DATE/DAY]
Week 5  Forced Treatment – History, Policy, Law & Debates
   Quiz & Discussion: Mad Pride/ Other Rights Groups (CO10)

Week 6  Mentally Ill in The CJ System – Overview & Crimes Triggering Interaction with Affected Populations (CO10)

Week 7  Arrest and Jail – Procedural, Legal & Diversity Issues (CO10)
   Crisis Intervention Teams
   Writing Assignment: CIT Training Effects on Officers & Affected Populations

Week 8  Jail, Cont’d & Diversion

   MidTerm Exam

Week 9  Charging Decision & Competency (Plea & Trial)
   Forced Treatment for Competency
   Writing Assignment on CIT Due [DATE/DAY]
   Assignment: Case Reviews on Affected Populations (CO10)

Week 10 Mental Illness & Mens Rea
   Insanity & Other Capacity Defenses
   Research Papers Due [DATE/DAY]

Week 11 Insanity & Other Capacity Defenses, Cont’d
   Case Reviews on Affected Populations Due [DATE/DAY]

Week 12 Sentencing & Incarceration
   Quiz: Availability of Diversion Programs – Geographic, Demographic and Legal Issues (CO10)
   America’s Prisons: The New Asylums

Week 13 Mental Illness & The Death Penalty
   Competency for Execution

Week 14 Release, Re-Entry and Recidivism

Week 15 Current Policy, Initiatives and Trends
   Discussion re: Future of The Mentally Ill (CO10)

   Final Exam: [DATE] @ [TIME]
**Rules and Tools**

**Preparation/Participation:** Students must read all assigned material before class and be ready to participate in discussions/questioning. I do not post or give copies of PowerPoints or notes. If you miss class, you must get notes from another student. If you miss class for a valid reason with prior notice (via e-mail, voicemail, or in person), you can view any missed video presentations during my office hours or as scheduling permits.

**Classroom Conduct:** All provisions of the UNR Student Code of Conduct and any other applicable rules or regulations are incorporated herein and apply to this class. Using cell phones (or other PDAs) in a disruptive manner during class can and usually will constitute a violation of those rules and I can take appropriate actions, including removing you from the class and/or lowering your final letter grade. Be polite and considerate and we all of these possibilities.

**Communications:** You can contact me via email, phone or during my office hours (see above) – email is preferred because I can get back to you more quickly. I will also post announcements/ notices regarding due dates, syllabus changes (if any), class cancellations or other matters on WebCampus so be sure this course appears on your WebCampus course list and that you have provided a valid email address as your contact through WebCampus.

**Exam Policy:** You must read and understand the CJ Department's "Policy on Missed Examinations" (available on WebCampus and the CJ Dept. website, at [http://www.unr.edu/criminal-justice/student-resources/policies/missed-exams](http://www.unr.edu/criminal-justice/student-resources/policies/missed-exams)). No early or late exams will be given and you will suffer a one-letter grade reduction if you miss an exam with no documented justification as required under the Policy and two missed exams will result in a failing grade for the course. No grade deduction will occur if one exam is missed for an excusable, documented reason provided by the student (see the Policy for examples).

**Statement on Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the [University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog](http://www.unr.edu/drc).

**Statement of Disability Services:** Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations (784-6000 - Pennington Student Achievement Center Suite 230 or visit [http://www.unr.edu/drc](http://www.unr.edu/drc)).

**Statement on Audio and Video Recording:** Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

**Resources/Academic Success Services:** Your student fees covers funding of the Math Center (784-4433 or [www.unr.edu/mathcenter/](http://www.unr.edu/mathcenter/)), Tutoring Center (784-6801, [www.unr.edu/tutoring/](http://www.unr.edu/tutoring/)), and University Writing Center (784-6030, [www.unr.edu/writing_center](http://www.unr.edu/writing_center)). These centers support your classroom learning but it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.
**Reading, Writing & Exams**

**Required Texts/Materials:** Crazy - A Father’s Search Through America’s Mental Health Madness - Pete Earley; The Criminalization of Mental Illness – Risdon N. Slate & W. Wesley Johnson; Miscellaneous handouts/readings (to be posted on WebCampus)

**Writing Assignments:** All writing assignments are due in class or during my office hours on the due date (I do not accept papers that are slid under my office door). **I do not accept late or unstapled papers.**

- Writing Assignment on Social Stigma – 50 points
- Case Studies on Affected Populations – 50 points
- Writing Assignment on CIT – 25 points
- Research Papers – 100 points

**Exams/Quizzes:** You cannot make up a missed exam or quiz unless you give me prior notice (via voicemail, email, in writing, or in person) that you have a legitimate reason to miss the scheduled exam or quiz and you will have to provide documentation for your excuse/reason (see Exam Policy above).

- Midterm Exam – 100 points
- Final Exam – 100 points
- Quiz on Mad Pride/Other Rights Groups – 25 points
- Quiz on Availability of Diversion Programs – 25 points

**Grades**

Midterm + Final + Quizzes + Writing Assignments = 475 points

90-100% of total points = A  
80-89% = B  
70-79% = C  
60-69% = D  
59%-below = F  
(No plus/minus grading)