SENIOR SEMINAR - CRJ 450

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

Senior Seminar, CRJ 450, gives criminal justice students the opportunity to look back on their education and undergraduate experiences and to look forward to their professional goals and future careers in a small classroom setting that facilitates sharing knowledge and experiences. As a seminar, class time will not focus on lectures but rather on group discussion of the readings and individual and group presentations and research.

While there are many approaches to (re)examining the criminal justice system in senior seminar, our focus will be twofold: first, the examination of society and the criminal justice system in the context of misconceptions and mythology of our criminal justice and legal systems which impact policy choices, and justice. Second is the related focus on career planning in the context of ethical decision making in a diverse society. Readings, discussions, and assignments will emphasize honing skills in critical thinking and analysis, research, and writing as well as verbal communication skills and public speaking. Today, we live in a society with information overload not simply in regard to the amount of information but in its variety and accessibility. How we select our sources of information as well as how we use them is important to decision making affecting us as individuals and impacting policies in critical institutions.

It is important to note that each student brings unique experiences to the classroom. While you all have taken certain required courses, you bring a diversity of learning experiences from your coursework in criminal justice as well as from classes taken outside of the department. In a seminar setting, students will have the opportunity to share experiences and lead class discussion.

This Course will satisfy Core Objective 12 (Ethics) as part of a sequence of two courses (CRJ 301 and CRJ 450/451). CO 12 states: Students will demonstrate understanding of ethical principles in general or in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design processes.

The Department of Criminal Justice has designated CRJ 301, Research Methods, and CRJ 450 or CRJ 451 as a sequence of courses satisfying CO 12. CRJ 301 in the first few weeks of the semester introduces students to ethical issues in criminal justice research focusing on social science methodology. CRJ 301 is a pre-requisite/co-requisite for CRJ 450/451, but the two courses address distinct ethical issues or topics. Thus, CRJ 450/451 will examine moral decision-making and ethical theory in the context of the criminal justice system, its components, and the policies and actions of criminal justice agencies and professionals. Completion of CRJ 450 or CRJ 451 will satisfy CO 12.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES – CRJ 450 and CRJ 451 have three common SLOs:

* Students will be able to identify and analyze the construction of misconceptions and mythology in our society impacting the criminal justice system and policies in a variety of contexts.
* Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical theories and issues in a variety of contexts relevant to the criminal justice system and employ moral decision-making in confronting ethical dilemmas (CO 12)
* Students will exhibit an understanding of the complexity of diversity issues in criminal justice and their context

Additional instructor SLOs expect students to:

* Demonstrate enhanced verbal and written communication skills through class presentations, discussion
and written assignments.
* Show evidence of effective research skills in developing successful research strategies and identifying and utilizing resources appropriate to a research assignment, including critical analysis of sources.

WORKING TOWARD A SUCCESSFUL CLASS:
Student discussion and leadership are central to the success of a seminar. As small classes, seminars focus on and facilitate roundtable discussion; learning becomes a dialogue among students. In this, there are individual responsibilities requiring a commitment to the class and to your fellow students. These responsibilities include continuity in attendance, preparation for class in completing and reflecting on the readings, and thoughtful, respectful participation. To this end, attendance will be taken and participation will be part of your grade.
While reading and listening are important, so too is note-taking. We actually absorb and retain more information when we take notes, so take notes on the readings and class presentations. What is the goal and focus of the author, of the reading, of the presenter? There will be quizzes and essays based on our readings, discussions, and presentations.
Webcampus will be our home base for the semester schedule, assignments, quizzes, grades, and additional readings.

READINGS:
* Selected readings/handouts on ethics will be placed on the class’s webcampus including Joycelyn Pollock, Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice, Thomson Wadsworth. chs. 1 & 2; and excerpts on ethical leadership and decision-making.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:
Compliance with all University & Department policies & rules regarding attendance, conduct, and academic honesty.

1. Academic Dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is a disservice to the student cheater as well as the instructor and other students. High ethical standards are essential to the legitimate functioning of our legal and criminal justice systems; so too, must they be expected of students who may be anticipating careers in justice or justice related fields and graduate education. In regard to any type of written assignment, unless an assignment is designated a group project, when you place your name on a paper, exam/quiz, essay, or reflection, you are certifying that you completed and wrote the assignment (this does not mean that you cannot seek advice, for example from the Writing Center, regarding organization or content or have your work proof read for writing mechanics). Impermissible conduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, copying another student's work, allowing a student to copy your work, buying/selling papers, turning in a paper that is substantially the same for two different classes unless the instructor is informed & willing to accept the paper.

Plagiarism violates university and departmental policy. Unfortunately it can become a bad habit, an easy way out, that insults the reader, the source, and the writer. When directly quoting material, use quotation marks and provide a citation to the source, including the page. When using ideas from a reference, but putting them in your own words or paraphrasing, also provide a citation. You, obviously, do not need to cite your own ideas, comments, conclusions. When in doubt, err on the side of caution. Note, proper citation is critical not only to the content of your paper but also to your writing mechanics.

You can find UNR's policies on academic misconduct at the Academic Central site. Any cheating, plagiarism, or other violation of department or university policy on academic misconduct cannot be
tolerated. The penalty for any violation will be swift & certain: you will receive a zero on the assignment and may be referred to the university administration for disciplinary action.

2. Policy Regarding Electronic Devices. With the exception of laptops/notebooks being used for the class readings and discussions, all cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or muted during class times and turned off during exams. While laptops/notebooks are permitted, they are to be used for notetaking or viewing handouts on webcampus. Under department policy, classes may not be videotaped in any form, and if you wish to audiotape a class, you must notify the instructor and obtain their permission. The Board of Regents has also adopted a policy addressing the use of electronic devices which provides: “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.”

3. Course Grading. The course will be graded based on **400 possible total points** based on an A/A- at 90% or 360 points; a B/B- at 80% or 320 points; and a C/C- at 280 points. No one should even think about putting out so little effort that they receive a D.

As noted in the course description and student learning objectives, this class focuses on written and oral communication skills. In that context, the substantive issues for the semester will be myths/misconceptions, ethics, diversity, and careers.

Quizzes and essays, and resume (20 points each) ------------------------- 120 pts.
A reflective essay on an ethical dilemma will be required
A resume assignment will be included
Career Research paper (80 points) & presentation (20 points) ------------- 100 pts.
7-8 pages (one source must be interview) a guide will be posted and discussed in class.
Students must include research on ethical codes and issues in their chosen career as well as diversity issues.
Mythology and misconceptions research paper -------------------------- 80 pts.
7-8 pages – you may select your own issue or use the readings to select a topic – a guide will be posted and discussed in class. Students must include research on ethical and diversity issues in the topic they select.
Group project on current topic ---------------------------------------- 40 pts.
Individual presentations of chapters (40 pts) & discussion (20 pts) ------ 60 pts.

*If you have a disability for which you need to request accommodation, please contact the staff at the Disability Resource Center, Thompson Building, phone 784-6000.

CLASS SCHEDULE OVERVIEW - Note, this is a tentative schedule and modifications may occur based on the time needed for presentations. As a class centering on discussion, the schedule must to be a degree flexible.

**Week 1.** Introductions, syllabus review, & course expectations. **Write a list of 10 of current issues or hot topics in criminal justice.** Be prepared to discuss. And, consider **what are your career goals.** Be prepared to discuss.

**Weeks 2-3.** Introduction to myths and misconceptions. Introduction to career resources. Guest speaker from the career studio.

**Readings week two: Bohn and Walker, Introduction.** What are myths and misconceptions?
How are they constructed and what are their impacts? What is true/truth? **Webcampus readings – Ch. 1 Kapeler & Potter** – who are the mythmakers and what are the policy impacts of myths? **Bohn and Walker, ch. 1 on** we will discuss this chapter on crime reporting and statistics to introduce the format of the text expand on our understanding of crime reporting.

**Week three – Guest Speaker from Career Studio; add to mythology readings Smith’s last chapter on webcampus, constitutional myths & misconceptions.** Do you really ‘know’ your rights?

Selecting Chapters from Bohn and Walker to present & discuss in class (the order will be by chapter, the selection by lottery). Selecting research paper topics on myths and misconceptions (a signup sheet). Identifying group topics/group projects. These will be cover big issues/hot current topics in criminal justice in depth, so the projects will have components needing group work. For example, one topic is police use of deadly force: this topic addresses police training and policies and diversity in police departments; who is killed and the debate over fear of black men and race; the investigation of such deaths, the role of the prosecutor and courts? What is the role of grand juries in charging? What about ethics? How likely is an officer to be charged, much less convicted of a crime? How is our knowledge shaped by the media? What are the myths and misconceptions? What don’t we know? What can we find out? We could easily have six or more students researching aspects of this topic. **Guides will be posted for all assignments. Note every topic we discuss or research will have ethics and diversity components.**

**Weeks 4– 6. Understanding ethics, ethical theory, and moral decision-making. Adding diversity to the discussion. Group time.**

*Readings: webcampus Pollock, chs. 1 & 2; excerpts from Pollock on ethical leadership and decision-making.*

**Weeks 7-9. Individual presentation of chapters from Bohn and Walker.** The chapters are fairly short, so we will cover (beyond ch. 1) 18 of the 28 chapters, three per class (20 min. each). Critical to such discussion will be identifying key issues and information and taking a lot of information and summarizing it. What are the author’s central goals; what do you want the class to know and remember? You may wish to use powerpoint or handouts. Write five questions that you would expect the class to be able to answer from your presentation and turn them in to me (short essay, T/F, fill-in-the-blank). **These will form the basis for three quizzes.**

**Weeks 10-12. Group projects/presentations (last quiz).** We would expect two class periods per project

**Weeks 13-15. Career paper presentations.** Roughly Four per class (15 minutes each). Papers will be due the day you present!