Syllabus - Senior Colloquium in Criminal Justice—CRJ 451

Course Time and Location: ******  
Instructor: Timothy “Skip” Griffin  
Office Hours and Contact ****

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Through class discussions, written examinations, and required writing assignments, students will gain an appreciation of criminal justice policy issues that will help prepare them as thinkers and leaders in the criminal justice field. Students will also discuss issues related to professional and personal success and the role of criminal justice leaders in addressing complex policy questions. Central to being critical thinkers and professionals in criminal justice is an understanding of ethics and the role of ethics in criminal justice policy and actions.

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 the 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.

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO). 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

REQUIRED READINGS: Myths And Realities Of Crime And Justice by Steven E. Barkan and George J. Bryjak and Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Crime and Criminology by Thomas Hickey, editor. Both are available at the bookstore and online.

Webcampus Readings: Joyceln Pollock, Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice, Thomson Wadsworth. chs. 1 & 2; and excerpts on ethical leadership and decision-making.
**GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS:** There are two possible “tracks” by which grades are determined. They are standard track (maximum grade possible is B+), and A-track (maximum grade possible is A). A-track requires you to write the crime philosophy paper. Standard track requires no paper other than the Application/Knowledge Paper if you do not do an in-class presentation.

Here is a graph that best explains the grading system and what is required of you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Score for Work Completed</th>
<th>Grade for Standard-Track</th>
<th>Grade for A-Track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-87</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-77</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-67</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Weights**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B-track</th>
<th>A-track</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm 1</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation/Paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Philosophy Paper</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class Participation:** Here is how class participation works in this class. I will develop a class participation list every day and randomly call on people to answer simple true-false questions based on the “Points of Interest” from the readings. If you are absent for a lecture, that counts as a zero in your participation score for that day, but if you are present, it counts as nothing for or against your score if you are not called.

If you’re called, I will ask you a simple true-false question. You may decline to answer by taking a “safety”, worth two (2) points. If you choose to answer and you are incorrect, you will receive one (1) point. If you choose to answer and you are correct, you will receive three (3) points. Your average class participation score will be on a 100 percent scale based on your average answers. I will add 0.08 to everyone’s participation score at the end, so if you just show up every day and take safeties you’ll get 75 percent on your participation score for the semester, even if you read and answer nothing.
My motive for providing this opportunity is first, to encourage you to read, but most important, to reward those who choose to prepare for class diligently. It helps you learn, and that is my job—to facilitate your education and reward those who are taking steps to learn the material.

Lateness: Lateness counts as a “1” on (one of) your participation score(s) for the day; sometimes people are called more than once. You can still participate for full credit or safeties when called, but you’ll get a “1” for the tardiness.

Midterms and Final: The midterm and the final will be true-false and essay. Fifty percent of the grade will be true-false; 50 percent will be long and short essay questions allotted points based on the complexity/length of the question.

Legibility affects your grade on the essay questions to the extent that they affect my TAs ability to understand your answer. In fairness to others who articulate themselves accurately and clearly on an exam, my TA is forced to disregard all unintelligible portions of an essay question. Please, for your own sake, make sure your essay answers are intelligible. Furthermore, the best answers are not always the longest answers. I want your essay answers to be complete, but my TA will disregard extraneous verbiage that is not related to the essay question. Furthermore, be very careful what you write. The risk you take if you fill your answer with material unrelated to the question is that this material could be wrong and will be so graded.

Knowledge/Career Applications/Papers: Individual application of class material is crucial in my view, so you either need to do an individual class presentation or a 500-to-1000 word summary that you would submit to me via webcampus. Both of these assignments must address ethics.

Here are the options for the individual presentation/paper.

1. **Knowledge application:** In your paper or presentation take the assigned reading materials and apply the knowledge acquired from them to a recent criminal justice situation, policy debate, or event that has not been previously discussed in class.

2. **Career Application:** In your paper or presentation how the ideas learned in class could be applied if you were a leader in your field, if your first career choice out of UNR involves a criminal justice occupation. (If you are not going into a CJ field, you can pretend if you like.) Include a discussion of how likely these ideas are to be applied, what would have to happen for them to be applied, and whether you think they should be applied at all.

Presentations will be graded on a pass/fail basis. If you do “well enough” and obviously put solid effort into it you will get full credit. If you do not do so, I will seriously consider requiring you to make it up through a written submission if you gave an in class presentation or a resubmission of your paper.
The presentation schedule will be determined based on the final class size and how much time will be available for individual presentations.

Rules for Crime Philosophy Papers (A-track option paper):

For this assignment, you will describe your philosophy on crime control, applying the ideas of from the required readings as they agree or disagree with you, and as you see fit. In this paper, you will describe your views of punishment, the purposes of the criminal justice system, what problems you perceive, and how to solve them. Demonstrating an excellent understanding of the readings—whether you agree or not—is a crucial part of this assignment.

Crime Philosophy Papers must be double-spaced, in 12-font. They must include a cover sheet with your name and a title explaining which writing assignment it is. Papers must not exceed 2000 words. They must be submitted via WebCampus via the provided links!

Paper will be graded on the following criteria:

1. Spelling and grammar (10%; each editing error is -1 percentage point).
2. Organization and logical flow (20%; make ideas flow together sensibly)
3. Depth of understanding (50%; showing understanding of the readings)
4. Overall assessment (20%; most subjective; here is where smoothness of presentation and overall “quality” of the paper are subjectively addressed.)

An additional guide will be provided and the requirements will be discussed in class.

CLASS POLICIES:

Behavior: Please be courteous and don’t talk out of turn or otherwise create distractions in class. Most folks are great this way, but there are always a couple of exceptions, so this must be pointed out. NO CELL PHONES, SMART PHONES, LAPTOPS, NOTEPADS, OR ANY OTHER DEVICE WHICH MIGHT SERVE AS A DISTRACTION.

Attendance: Strictly speaking, attendance is not mandatory, but realistically, it would be imprudent to miss a class because of the quizzes. Work, vacation, and having a very demanding schedule are NOT valid excuses to miss class. Furthermore, to ensure it does not become an issue in the future, traffic delays and car trouble are NOT valid excuses to miss class.

Documented illness, documented death of a near family member, or documented, necessary professional training sessions are valid excuses to miss class and/or an exam.

If you have a documented, valid reason for missing a test, please see me to arrange an appropriate time to make up the exam.
The simplest way to avoid all these complications is to just come to class on time, all the time, and prepared.

**Missed Exam Policy:** The department has a Missed Exam Policy which is available on its Website.

**Class Perspective:** This class is challenging. Please be realistic in your understanding of what it will take to do well here. A cavalier attitude toward daily preparation, quality papers, and poor preparation for exams and quizzes is an outstanding formula for a low grade. By contrast, daily preparation and diligent work on papers and exam prep will yield the treasured fruit of academic excellence.

**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 have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”

**Laptops/Cell phones:**
Laptops are NOT permitted in class. All other electronic devices should be on silent and should not be taken out during class.

**Statement of 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 Catalog](http://www.unr.edu). I will check all assignments for signs of plagiarism. You may also not submit any assignment that has been turned in for a previous class. Turning in a paper that you completed for a prior class, even if it is only a portion of the assignment, will result in a 0 for the assignment.

**Statement of Disability Services:**
"Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations."

**Statement for Academic Success Services**
"Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-443, [www.unr.edu/mathcenter](http://www.unr.edu/mathcenter)). Tutoring Center (784-6801 or [www.unr.edu/tutoring-center](http://www.unr.edu/tutoring-center)), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or [http://www.unr.edu/writing-center](http://www.unr.edu/writing-center)). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services."

After introducing Pollock, Chs. 1 & 2, Why Study Ethics?, Moral Decisionmaking and Ethical Theory, discussion for most weeks will include applying theory and decision-making to ethical issues and dilemmas. Ethical discussions are noted.

WEEK 1: DISCUSSION 1: CLASS INTRODUCTION (NO READING)—1/21/15

WEEK 2: Introduction to Myths and Mythology
DISCUSSION 2: B&B Chs.1&2 (“What No One is Telling You about Crime and Justice”) & 2 (“The Crime Problem”) - 1/26/15
DISCUSSION 3: B&B Ch. 3 (“How Much Crime is There and Who Commits It”) — 1/28/15

WEEK 3:
DISCUSSION 4: Intro to Ethics and Ethical Theory, Discussion of Pollock Chs. 1 & 2
DISCUSSION 5: Intro to Ethics continued, discussion of Pollock excerpts on ethical decision-making.
Issues 7&19—2/4/15
Issue 7 debates whether exposure to pornography increases sexual violence, invoking ethical consideration regarding both freedom of expression and potential sexual victimization. Issue 19 debates the constitutionality and ethical implications of indefinitely confining sex offenders, inviting discussion regarding the competing ethical considerations of public safety and defendants’ rights.

WEEK 4: Application of ethical theories to issues and dilemmas
DISCUSSION 6: B&B Ch. 5 (“Hookers, Dopers, and Corporate Crooks: Exploitive, and Consensual Crime”)—2/9/11
B&B Chapter 5 examines the complexity of how “crime” is defined and the crucial ethical implications associated with such definitions, such as the relative threat posed by different categories of criminal and justifications for different approaches to punishment.
DISCUSSION 7: Issue 15/Partial Supplemental Video: The Union—2/11/14
Issue 15 looks at the various arguments and counterarguments regarding whether marijuana should be legalized. The video, The Union, examines the ethical implications of the illegal status of marijuana in terms of its impact on incarceration of low level offenders for a “victimless crime”.

WEEK 5:
[No Class on—Presidents Day]—2/16/15
DISCUSSION 8: B&B Ch. 6 (“Victims and Victimization: Will You be Next?”)—2/18/15
WEEK 6:
DISCUSSION 9: B&B Ch. 7 (“Crime and Criminal Law: Order, Liberty, and Justice for All?”)—2/23/15
Chapter 7 examines myths (e.g., rigorous attention to justice outcomes through trials) and realities (e.g., assembly line justice via plea bargaining) of the modern day American court system. It specifically requires students to contemplate the ethical orientation of the current justice process.


WEEK 7:
DISCUSSION 11: B&B Ch. 8 (“Why They Break the Law”—3/2/15
Issue 9 specifically requires to students to consider the ethical implications of the alleged public safety benefits of strict sentencing laws as balanced against the arguments against them—that they inevitably disproportionately affect minorities and the poor and overly punish individuals for minor crimes.

WEEK 8:
Issue 11 requires students to contemplate the competing arguments surrounding, and ethical implications of, one of the most controversial crime policies in America—the death penalty—by considering the arguments for retribution versus concerns for inequitable, or even wrongful application of the ultimate penalty.

MIDTERM: BRING NUMBER 2 PENCILS FOR SCANTRON AND/OR PENS FOR ESSAYS (3/11/14)
NO CLASS 3/16/15 OR 3/18/15—SPRING BREAK

WEEK 9:
DISCUSSION 14: B&B Ch. 9 (“Taking It to the Streets: Cops on the Job”—3/23/15
Chapter 9 examines a subject ripe with ethical concerns, such as potential for officer corruption and abuse of power and the potentially disparate impact of traditional police work on traditionally excluded groups.

The ethical ramifications of using race as to identify potentially dangerous/criminal suspects is clear enough.

WEEK 10:
DISCUSSION 16: B&B Ch. 10 (“Pretrial Procedures and Plea Bargaining: From Arrest to ‘Let’s Make a Deal’”—3/30/15
DISCUSSION 17: Catch Up/Review/Flex Day—4/1/15

WEEK 11:
DISCUSSION 18: B&B Ch. 11 (“Criminal Trials and Courtroom Issues: Convicting the Innocent; Exonerating the Guilty”) —4/6/15
As with the earlier Chapter on the general court process, this chapter allows for a discussion of the practical ethical dilemmas facing judges, jurors, and attorneys in the criminal courts, and forces challenging questions as to whether the system in place allows for truly “just” outcomes in these cases.

DISCUSSION 19: Issue 16 (“Should Juries be Able to Disregard the Law and Free “Guilty” Persons in Racially Charged Cases?”)—4/8/15
Issue 16 examines the ethics of juror nullification, with one discussant arguing the procedure has been used for morally/ethically defensible purposes in the past with another cautioning it should be motivated by “racial payback.”

WEEK 12:
DISCUSSION 20: B&B Ch. 12—4/13/15
DISCUSSION 21: Issue 20 (“Does an Imprisoned Individual Have a Constitutional Right to Access the State’s Evidence for DNA Testing?”)—4/15/15
Issue 20 requires students to balance the ethical considerations of a “finality of judgment” required for an effective justice process with the legitimate interest of a convicted offender to seek evidentiary redress for possibly wrongful conviction.

WEEK 13:
DISCUSSION 22: B&B Ch. 13—4/20/15
DISCUSSION 23: Issue 6 (“Should Juvenile Courts be Abolished?”)—4/22/15
Issue 6 examines the debate over whether the juvenile court system genuinely attempts to “treat” juveniles and whether it is ethical to leave their fate in a juvenile court system which, according to some, gives them none of the benefits of treatment but still punishes them without due process protections.

WEEK 14:
Issue 18 examines the ethical grounding of death penalty, specifically from the perspective of whether it could be applicable to juveniles, by examining the how the improving science of brain development could challenge traditional notions of “culpability”.

DISCUSSION 25: B&B Ch. 14—4/29/15


CUMULATIVE FINAL: BRING NUMBER 2 PENCILS FOR SCANTRON AND/OR PENS FOR ESSAYS
ROUGH DRAFTS OF CRIME PHILOSOPHY PAPERS DUE AT 11:59PM,
FINAL DRAFTS OF CRIME PHILOSOPHY PAPERS DUE AT 11:59PM,