



**CJS 294: Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice**  
**Middlesex Community College**  
**Criminal Justice Department**  
**Course Syllabus**

**STUDENT COURSE OUTLINE**

**COURSE:** Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice      **COURSE NO:** CJS 294

**SEMESTER:** Spring 2017 – 5 Week/April 9 – May 15      **SEMESTER HOURS:** 3

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dawn M. Bradanini      **CLASS TIME:** Online

**EMAIL:** Please contact me through the Blackboard shell. If Blackboard is down email: [dbradanini@mxcc.commnet.edu](mailto:dbradanini@mxcc.commnet.edu)

**A. COURSE SCOPE/DESCRIPTION:**

In this course students will be exposed to the contemporary issues that impact the functions, and organization of Criminal Justice agencies in the United States. Topics in the course includes issues such as; racial profiling, torture, capital punishment, gender, social stratification, social class, politics, and use of force. The focus and content of the course will change each year to reflect the changes in political and social thought and their impact on public policy.

**PRE- OR CO-REQUISITE:**

Instructor approval AND ENG\*101-ALP, ENG\*101E, or ENG\*101 with a “C-” or better.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*Taking Sides, Clashing Views in Crime and Criminology*

**Author:** Hickey

**Copyright Year:** 2013

**Publisher:** McGraw Hill

**TECHNOLOGY:**

Course materials will be delivered via Blackboard. Students may also use PowerPoint, MS Word and any other systems deemed necessary.

**B. SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

1. Identify the critical arguments for and against various contemporary issues within the field of criminal justice.

2. Appreciate how research is being utilized to support and disprove theories of crime and punishment.
3. Utilize critical thinking and problem solving successfully to defend their stance on a controversial topic.

**C. COURSE REQUIREMENTS- OVERVIEW:**

1. Blackboard will be utilized and students will be able to complete their academic work in a flexible manner - completely online. The course is broken down into five modules as units: Unit #1: 1.1 and 1.2, Unit #2: 2.3 and 2.4, Unit #3: 3.2 and 3.3, Unit #4: 4.1 and 4.3, and Unit #5: 5.2.
2. It is strongly recommended that students read the textbook and consider all positions of the subsections.
3. You must contact the instructor **in advance** if you have a good reason to miss any assignment. If you contact after the due date, you will still be subject to the late penalty regardless of reason!
4. Reading assignments must be completed before completing the discussion forum. Questions may be posted on the discussion forum to assure that the readings have been completed, the materials understood, and to stimulate class discussion.
5. Assignments must be turned in on time. **If late work is accepted, you will lose 10 points for each day it is late. After 5 days you will receive an F.** Instructor reserves the right to modify this rule only in exceptional cases.
6. Your grade is the calculation of points earned and total possible points based on the results of:

Discussion Forums: Weighted equally	<b>70 points</b>
Final Project (30 points total)	
-PowerPoint	<b>15 points</b>
-Writing Piece	<b><u>15 points</u></b>
	<b>Total: 100 points</b>

NOTE: The Discussions are worth 70 percent due to the fact there are no quizzes/exams (although I reserve the right to give a pop up quiz if I feel students are not participating).

“Extra credit” opportunities will not be offered on an individualized basis. This course is structured in such a way that student reading, participation and the course writing assignment provide each student with the opportunity to achieve a satisfactory grade.

Self-motivation will be very important for success in this class. It is an intellectually rigorous course with challenging discussions and difficult analysis. Staying on top of your weekly work is most important. You must be able to access and review Announcements daily as there will be specific necessary information.

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### CRIMINAL JUSTICE GRADING SCALE

#### Letter Grade and Percentage:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79

#### Letter Grade and Percentage:

C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62'
F	Below 60

#### DISCUSSION BOARD: (similar to a legal puzzle from other classes)

The Discussion Board questions (which you may have known as a legal puzzle) is either a hypothetical scenario/a real scenario or in depth question in which students must analyze, deduce and possibly apply laws, then answer the question being asked. The main objective for students is to utilize critical thinking skills and apply information that they are learning in the course (or have learned in prior courses).

There will be nine discussions total posted for the five weeks of class. You will find them each week on the Discussion page. Students must complete all 9 discussions which are worth 70 percent of your final grade.

Each student must post the individual, initial response to the questions on the **Discussion Board and submit it through Safe Assign by 11:59 pm on Wednesday. Five points will be deducted each day the initial post is later thereafter see late work policy.** You will see the Discussion Board Safe Assign upload under the Course Work tab.

Students must interact with other students in the course by posting questions and addressing the initial posts of **TWO** of their classmates. **Response posts are due by Sunday evenings by 11:59 pm.** These responses must be informative and contribute to the advancing knowledge of the topic. "Good job," or "nice post," are not acceptable.

### **Initial Post Requirements: (Due every Wednesday)**

- Minimum 250 words in length – (refers only to the body of your response)
- 12 font – Times New Roman
- Proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
- Supported by two scholarly sources (when a source is necessary) – one will be the textbook and the second is the student's choice. **Wikipedia** is not a scholarly source. Please refer to the “Criminal Justice Writing Resources” section on the Criminal Justice Program Blackboard shell.
- In text citations and references required.
- Please note that all rules in regards to plagiarism and proper citations must be followed.
- **Type your answer in WORD and then paste it into the discussion forum AND submit it through the Safe Assign assignment module. The assignment module will check the document for plagiarism.**
- \*\*\*\*When you have a question about citing information correctly – ASK FOR HELP!\*\*\*\*
- DO NOT send assignments via a message or email – they will not be accepted.
- Five points deducted for each day initial post is late.

### **Response Posts Requirements: (Due every Sunday)**

- Respond to at least 2 classmates' initial posts.
- Each post must be at least 125 words in length.
- 12 font – Times New Roman
- Proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
- See late policy in discussion description.

### **POWERPOINT AND WRITING PIECE**

**PowerPoint:** Each student will be required to choose a “Criminal Justice Issue” in any of the Units that we did not cover. Then create a Powerpoint slide presentation regarding the topic. You **MUST** inform me of your choice no later than 11:59pm ending Week 1. If you do not inform your choice you will lose 10 points and one will be assigned to you. In the PowerPoint, defend a particular issue, theory, or belief. For example, research and defend the death penalty (which we no longer have in Connecticut). Present beliefs and defend them using analysis and detail. The student is responsible for having an accurate bibliography with a minimum of three outside sources other than the text book, videos and YouTube. See requirements below.

**Writing Piece:** You must also complete a 4-6 page paper regarding the same topic for your PowerPoint. Some of the material may be duplicated however keep in mind a

PowerPoint is to highlight and make the material stand out while your Writing Piece will showcase your writing skills. You must upload your Writing Piece to Safe Assign no later than the due date. See requirements below.

### **PowerPoint Requirements:**

- 15-20 Slides that are clear and easy to read.
- 12 font – Times New Roman
- Proper citation using APA.
- Proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
- Do not use first person – No I, we, us, you, etc.
- Please note that all rules in regards to plagiarism and proper citations must be followed
- When you have a question about citing information correctly – ASK FOR HELP!

### **Writing Piece**

- 4-6 pages in length
- 12 font – Times New Roman – 1 inch margins – 1.5 spacing.
- Proper citation using APA.
- Proper grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
- Do not use first person – No I, we, us, you, etc.
- Please note that all rules in regards to plagiarism and proper citations must be followed

### **D. IMPORTANT DATES: SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

1. Discussion Forums (Further Exploration): All Initial posts due on **Wednesdays by 11:59pm**. Responses due **Sunday by 11:59pm**.

Sunday, April 2	Access to Class – PreUnit Review
Sunday, April 9	Class Officially Begins PreUnit/Unit 1
Wednesday, April 12	Week 1 Discussion #1: Initial Post Due
	Week 1 Discussion #2: Initial Post Due
Wednesday, April 19	Week 2 Discussion #1: Initial Post Due
	Week 2 Discussion #2: Initial Post Due
Wednesday, April 26	Week 3 Discussion #1: Initial Post Due
	Week 3 Discussion #2: Initial Post Due
Wednesday, May 3	Week 4 Discussion #1: Initial Post Due
	Week 4 Discussion #2: Initial Post Due
Wednesday, May 10	Week 5 Discussion #1: Initial Post Due

2. ALL STUDENT RESPONSES DUE BY SUNDAYS 11:59PM

3. PowerPoint – Writing Assignment  
Sunday, May 14                      Week 5 PowerPoint Due

Sunday, May 14

Week 5 Writing Assignment Due

**REMINDER: MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, TESTS, QUIZZES OR EXAMS:**

These all have scheduled dates. The college does not provide facilities for making up tests nor do I allow make-ups. If I see a need for a make-up (valid reason and prior permission) within a reasonable time frame a minimum of 10 points will automatically be deducted each day it is late. After 5 days you will receive a failing grade.

**ANTI-PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE**

SafeAssign, TurnItIn or other anti-plagiarism detection software products may be used in this course. Anti-plagiarism detection software products assist faculty and students in preventing and detecting plagiarism. Professors may utilize such software in order to check the originality of the academic work students submit in a course by comparing submitted papers to those contained in its database consisting of submitted papers and other sources. Anti-plagiarism detection software returns an “originality report” for each submission. The report is limited in scope to merely identifying passages that are not original to the author of the submitted work and which may include correctly cited quotations and information. Professors and students must carefully review such reports. No adverse action may be taken by a professor with respect to a student solely on the basis of an originality report which indicates the potential for plagiarism.

In this course you may be asked to submit your academic papers and other creative work containing personally identifiable information for originality reporting. By doing so, your work along with personally identifiable information will be retained in the product database and may be subsequently reported out containing your personally identifiable information not only to your professor, but also to professors of other universities and colleges within Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) as part of subsequent originality reports.

You may decline to submit your work for originality reporting. If so, you must be provided an alternative method in which to submit your work. However, your professor, after removing your personally identifying information, may nonetheless submit limited portions of your academic work for originality reporting.

The Writing Piece will be submitted via a Safe Assign Assignment in the Blackboard Course Shell. Please note that assignments that are not submitted via Blackboard will not be accepted.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

**NOTE:** NEW MATERIAL RELEASED SUNDAY TO SUNDAY OF EACH WEEK.

### **WEEK 1:**

Introduction. Course Overview.

#### **Unit 1 Explanations of Crime by Hickey**

- 1.1 Is Crime Beneficial to Society?
- 1.2 Is Criminal Behavior Determined Biologically?

### **WEEK 2:**

#### **Unit 2 Contemporary Public Policy Issues in Criminology and Criminal Justice**

- 2.3 Should Juvenile Courts Be Abolished?
- 2.4 Is Exposure to Pornography Related to Increased Rates of Rape?

### **WEEK 3:**

#### **Unit 3 Punishment by Hickey**

- 3.2 Do Three-Strikes Sentencing Laws and Other “Get Tough” Approaches to Crime Really Work?
- 3.3 Does Imprisoning Drug Offenders Reduce Crime Rates?

### **WEEK 4:**

#### **Unit 4 Trends in Criminology and Criminal Justice**

- 4.1 Should Serious Sex Offenders Be Castrated?
- 4.4 Should Marijuana Be Legalized?

### **WEEK 5:**

#### **Unit 5 The US Supreme Court, Crime and Justice System by Hickey**

- 5.2 Should it Be Lawful for the Police to Conduct Jailhouse Strip Searches of Persons Arrested for Minor Offenses?

\*\*\*\*\*POWERPOINT/WRITING PIECE DUE: May 14<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm

**Instructor reserves right to adjust dates/chapters due to any unforeseen changes.**

**WITHDRAWAL:**

Withdrawal: Student may withdraw from the class with a grade of "W" by May 5. After that date, students will receive a "W" or an "F." Students may withdraw from the course only after speaking with the instructor and filing all the proper paperwork. Note: The primary responsibility for initiating a withdrawal rests with the students. Withdrawal from the course is official only when initiated in writing through the Records office, all requested signatures are obtained, and the proper papers are filed with the Records Office by the indicated deadlines.



## **IMPORTANT COLLEGE POLICIES!! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!**

For information about the college's policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, accessibility/disability services, attendance, audio-recording in the classroom, grade appeals, plagiarism, religious accommodations, weather and emergency closings, and more, please go to the following website: [www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/](http://www.mxcc.edu/catalog/syllabus-policies/) or scan the QR code with your smart phone. Also, please become familiar with the policies regarding nondiscrimination, sexual misconduct, and general student conduct at the following website: [www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/](http://www.mxcc.edu/nondiscrimination/).



## **NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

Middlesex Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, national origin, marital status, ancestry, present or past history of mental disorder, learning disability or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or genetic information in its programs and activities. In addition, the College does not discriminate in employment on the additional basis of veteran status or criminal record.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries or complaints regarding non-discrimination policies and practices:

- Primary Title IX Coordinator  
Dr. Adrienne Maslin  
Dean of Students/Title IX and Section 504/ADA Coordinator  
amaslin@mxcc.edu; 860-343-5759; Founders Hall Room 123|
- Secondary Title IX Coordinator  
Ms. Queen Fordham  
Coordinator of the Meriden Center Welcome Desk  
qfordham@mxcc.edu; 203-608-3011

Info: Please email to [dbradanini@mxcc.commnet.edu](mailto:dbradanini@mxcc.commnet.edu) no later than Week 1.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact info  
(phone/email): \_\_\_\_\_

Best way to contact you: \_\_\_\_\_

Education (Prior CJ Courses and highest level of education):

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Reason for taking this  
course: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken an online course prior to this? \_\_\_\_\_

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Personal issues that might impact your ability to succeed in this class (this info will be not be released without student permission). This includes allergies, medical conditions, learning challenges, etc:

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Questions, Comments, or Concerns about this course:

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## **Topics Covered in Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice**

Below is a list of topics that will provide a guide for students during the semester. The students should become which the students will develop competencies.

### **Unit #1 - Explanations of Crime**

#### Specific Objectives:

- List the arguments for and against crime being beneficial to society
- Explain the difference theories on whether criminal behavior is determined biologically
- Outline the argument that a person's body type links them to criminal behavior.

### **Unit #2 – Contemporary Public Policy Issues in Criminology and Criminal Justice**

#### Specific Objectives:

- Outline the pros and cons for the controversy in regards to whether the US has the right to torture suspected terrorists
- Define racial profiling and explain if it is an acceptable law enforcement strategy.
- List the arguments for and against abolishing juvenile courts.
- Explain how exposure to pornography related to increased rates of rape.

### **Unit #3 - Punishment**

#### Specific Objectives:

- Explain the controversy in regards to using Supermax (Control Unit) prisons as a way to punish hardened criminals.
- Outline the "three strikes" law and explain the "get tough" approach
- List the pros and cons for private "for profit" corporation running US prisons
- Explain the arguments for and against the use of capital punishment

### **Unit #4 – Modern Trends in Criminology and Criminal Justice**

#### Specific Objectives:

- Differentiate between the arguments for and against castration of serious sex offenders
- Explain the pros and cons for stricter gun control and does the policy reduce homicides in the U.S.
- Outline the pros and cons for police enforcement zero-tolerance laws.
- List the various rationales both for legalizing and criminalize marijuana
- Explain whether juries should be able to disregard the law and free "guilty" persons in racially charged cases.

## **Unit #5 – The US Supreme Court, Crime and The Justice System**

### Specific Objectives:

Explain whether or not the US Constitution protects the rights to possess firearms.

Outline the arguments for and against the death penalty as unconstitutional punishment for juvenile offenders

List the various arguments for and against confining sex offenders indefinitely in mental hospitals after they have served their prison sentence and does it violate the Constitution.

Explain whether or not incarcerated individuals have a constitutional right to access the state's evidence for DNA testing.