

CCJS 330: Contemporary Criminological Issues
Art-Sociology Building, Room 1213 MW: 3:30-4:45

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Include CCJS 330 & sign your name on ALL emails
Office Hours: 2:00—3:00 on Wednesday & Thursday or by appointment

Texts:

1. Best, Joel. (2008). *Social Problems*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
ISBN: 978-0-393-92877-8
2. Various readings as assigned. These will be posted on the blackboard.

Course Description: Criminology is the study of the making of laws, the breaking of laws and the reaction to the breaking of laws. Appreciating the importance of the first and third element requires a familiarity with politics and ideology. This course will draw your attention to this issue through our discussions, guided by the Socratic method. Exploring controversies allow us insight into just how the issues in criminal justice are effectively framed and decided. Defining deviancy is a difficult proposition but there are better and worse methods of approaching the question. This semester will challenge you to formulate a more fully informed rationale for addressing these difficult problems through introducing you to the pros and cons of selected arguments.

Blackboard technology will be used throughout the course to make announcements, post grades and documents. Please make certain that you have access to this course through ELMS (<http://elms.umd.edu>) and that the email listing you have attached to this account is active and routinely monitored.

Course Policies:

Attendance: You are expected to attend all class meetings. Exams will cover reading and in-class discussions. Therefore, missing multiple classes will likely adversely affect your final grade. Earning top marks in the course will require a mastery of both the content read and discussion material; they are not one and the same. I will **NOT** share the notes for discussions you have missed. I encourage you to appeal to others enrolled in the course for these materials in the event you cannot be present.

Classroom Behavior: You are expected to extend professional courtesy to your fellow student and myself. Being disruptive includes, but is not limited to, repeatedly coming late to class or leaving the classroom without authorization, making conversation or distracting noises, sleeping, speaking without being called upon and badgering the discussant (that's me). Laptop use is encouraged, provided that its use does not present a distraction to others. In the event I discover you are using your laptop for any other

purpose than taking notes I may revoke your right to use it for the remainder of the term. The use of cell phones is prohibited. If your presence is deemed a distraction to the progression of the lecture I will ask you to leave.

Discussion Decorum: This course will demand that you give thought to defining your perspective on a variety of contentious issues. A few of these topics are selected precisely because the political divisions are so stark. Many of you already have closely held and deeply rooted opinions on these matters. I encourage you to share these with your peers while being open to respectful criticism. It is only through acknowledging these critiques that you will develop and strengthen your own argument. The maxim that will guide these guided discussions will be ideas will be dissected and criticized, in a collegial and professional manner; I will insist throughout—through applying disciplinary measures if need be—that individuals will not be attacked.

Teaching Approach: I will assume a posture of strict neutrality throughout the course by facilitating discussion. My task will be to elicit meaningful exchanges among you, the student. This agnosticism is the result of the subject matter being rhetorical in the truest sense of the term; science cannot answer moral questions, nor should I be abusing my responsibilities through attempting to indoctrinate you. You will be evaluated in terms of how well defended your argument for a particular perspective is. Are the logic and facts that you bring to bear more or less convincing? I look forward to challenging opinions offered from all manner of position through applying a Socratic approach. This will not be done in a spirit of being adversarial simply for the sake of being a pest. This is a collaborative process. I will have been a successful instructor only if I am able to, first, maintain strict neutrality and, second, make you a better educated advocate for your position, whatever it may be.

Present & Prepared Policy: Rather than assessing your reading and understanding of the assigned readings through a series of quizzes the present and prepared policy will allow me to adjust your class participation grade one increment in either direction depending on your in-class contributions. At the beginning of class a roster will be provided. You will have roughly the first five minutes to check your name off, indicating your willingness to be called on during the discussion. This policy will begin on September 3rd and conclude November 7th. The maximum grade you can attain will be determined by the number of classes in which you make yourself eligible to be called upon is listed below:

- A—17 to 19 times (90-95-100%, respectively)
- B—14 to 16 times (80-85-89%, respectively)
- C—11 to 13 times (70-75-79%, respectively)
- D—8 to 10 times (60-65-69%, respectively)
- F—7 times or less (each absence will result in a 8.5% deduction)

However, if you check your name off and I call on you and find that you are not prepared, your class participation grade will be reduced one increment. I also reserve the right to raise a student's grade by one increment (whether or not the student has already

received the present and prepared bonus) if, in my judgment, that student has consistently made extraordinarily valuable contributions to class discussion. Such an increase will be made only for truly exceptional performance and will be an extremely rare event.

In the event I inadvertently call on you despite your not having checked your name, please inform me and I will correct the error.

The additional purpose of the policy is to ensure your being present. If you fail to check your name *for any reason* this will count against your tally. The only exception to this rule will be excused absences (see points raised below). Your grade will be recalibrated as a result. Each excused absence will result in the subtraction of one from both the numerator and denominator in the final participation calculation. The grade assigned will correspond to the percentage participation most nearly consistent with the scale listed above.

This policy applies only to that portion of the course in which assigned readings are discussed (i.e. non-presentation days).

Missed In-class Writing, Presentation or Final Paper: No late work is accepted.

Make-up grades will be offered only under the following limited number of circumstances: a medical problem (self or dependant), a death in the immediate family, a religious holiday (see below), or participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, and other compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Prior notification is required in all instances for excused absences for major scheduled graded events listed in **bold** under the Course Calendar heading below. Additionally, documentation including an obituary/death notice, an official health center excused absence form, or hospital records must be provided. Make-up work must be completed within one week of its original due date. All necessary arrangements must be made with myself via email. Preserving this agreement in writing ensures there is no discrepancy at some later point. I reserve the right to alter the content of the assignment, including making the make-up exam a short answer or essay format.

Addendum on Medical Absences: The in-class writing exams, presentations, and final exam are considered to be major scheduled graded events (noted in bold under the course calendar section below) and therefore the new university medical excuse policy (<http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/V-100G.pdf>) which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does **NOT** apply to them. In the event you become chronically absent, missing more than two consecutive weeks of class, due to the same persistent illness this must be verified by a health professional in writing and be brought to my attention in writing. Any absences from major scheduled graded events will be counted as zeroes in the event you have failed to inform me of these developments within one week of the grades for the remainder of the class being posted on blackboard. Please refer to the link above in locating the items that must be included in both the signed honor statement and chronic absence verification.

A Note on Presentations: Expectations in terms of the content to be presented during the concluding portion of the course will be posted on ELMS at the appropriate time. Briefly, a 5 to 7 minute oral presentation summarizing your term paper is to be presented in class. Your classmates and I will then have an opportunity to react to your contribution with

constructive commentary. No reading material will be assigned during this portion of the course but your attendance and reaction is encouraged.

A Note on Writing Reflections: Following the second exam there will be no further exams. To evaluate your understanding of the assigned reading material and student presentations you will be required to post 4 ½ page reflections on a discussion board on ELMS. Two of these reflections should be posted between the second exam and the beginning of presentations. The remaining two will be posted on presentations *on days in which you are NOT scheduled to present*. You are invited to post reactions to others reflections as well as engage your colleagues' comments. The 8 students whom I evaluate as having offered the best reflections and/or are the most active in terms of furthering debates can earn an opt-out on the presentation. The students who demonstrate extraordinary effort here will be allowed to choose to waive the oral presentation requirement and have their final paper constitute 30% of their final grade.

An extended explanation of the term paper expectations will be posted on ELMS at the appropriate time. Roughly, the paper is to be 5 to 7 pages in length addressing a contemporary criminal justice issue within the analytic framework established in Joel Best's book.

Grade Disputes: If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe I should review them, you must submit a written request via email that describes your concern in detail. This request must be submitted within one week of the day that grades for the relevant assignment are disseminated.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Council. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication of information used in assignments, plagiarism, and knowingly facilitating the academic dishonesty of another. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Honor Council, please visit the following website:
www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html.

Religious Observance: If you have a request for an alternate time to sit for an exam, quiz, or in-class writing assignment listed on the syllabus due to religious observance reasons, you must submit this request to me in writing (email) with the specific details by Friday, September 14th.

Students with Disabilities: I will make all necessary accommodations for students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. This form must be presented to me by Friday, September 14th. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide me with documentation that has been reviewed by DSS after this date. DSS students who are requesting to take their exams at the DSS Center need to provide me with a testing form for each exam that must be turned in to me no later than one week prior to each exam. The student is expected to take the exam at the same time as the rest of the class.

Athletes: Official athletic schedules must be submitted to me by Friday, September 14th. Practices do not count as an excused absence; in cases of an excused absence (e.g., a game). Athletes who major scheduled graded events due to games or other commitments, yet never submitted an official athletic schedule by the date listed above, and never spoke with me will receive a grade of zero for the missed event.

Course Evaluation: Your feedback about this course is very important to me and therefore we will do several forms of evaluation throughout this semester. One way is to fill out the online evaluation at the end of the semester. CourseEvalUM will be open for students to complete their evaluations for Fall 2012 courses on Tuesday, November 27th. Students can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete their evaluations. Students who complete evaluations for all of their courses in the previous semester (excluding summer), can access the posted results via Testudo's CourseEvalUM Reporting link for any course on campus that has at least a 70% response rate.

Inclement Weather Policy: On occasion, classes may be cancelled due to inclement weather. If the university is closed on the day a graded item is scheduled the graded assignment will be rescheduled for the next class meeting in which the university is open. If a final exam is cancelled, we will follow university rules for rescheduling.

Grade Weighting

In-class writing exam 1: 20%

In-class writing exam 2: 20%

Overall class participation (Present & Prepared): 10%

Writing Reflections: 20%

Term Paper Project: Presentation: 15% Final Paper: 15%

Grade Scale:

A+ (97-100%)

B+ (87-89%)

C+ (77-79%)

D+ (67-69%)

A (94-96%)

B (84-86%)

C (74-76%)

D (64-66%)

A- (90-93%)

B- (80-83%)

C- (70-73%)

D- (60-63%)

F (59% and below)

Course Calendar

Week 1 (August 29): Course introduction

Week 2: (September 3 & 5)

Defining deviancy (see blackboard postings)

Best, Chapter 1

Week 3: (September 10 & 12) Constructing Social Problems and Making Claims

Best, Chapters 2 & 3

(Deadline for notification of special accommodations: DSS, religious observance, and athletics is Friday, September 14th.)

Week 4: (September 17 & 19) Activists & Experts as Claimsmakers
Best, Chapters 4 & 5

Week 5: (September 24 & 26)

****Monday—In-class Writing Exam 1****

This exam will require you to demonstrate an understanding of the content of the course through integrating the discussion and readings in offering extended written replies in an essay format. You will have duration of class in which to draft your responses in a “blue book”.

Wednesday: The Role of the Media—Best, Chapter 6

Week 6: (October 1 & 3)

Best, Chapter 7 & 8

Week 7: (October 8 & 10) Policy Making and Policy Outcomes

Best, Chapters 9 & 10

****Wednesday—In-class Writing Exam 2****

Week 8: (October 15 & 17) The (D)evolution of Claims

Sustainability (see blackboard)

Abortion and the Crime Decline (see blackboard)

Week 9: (October 22 & 24)

Criminal Justice and the War on Terror (see blackboard)

Civil Commitment (see blackboard)

Week 10: (October 29 & 31)

****Monday, Abstracts due via email by the beginning of class****

[This is a brief (150-250 word) explanation of your proposal for the term paper.]

The Drug War (see blackboard)

Week 11: (November 5 & 7)

The 2nd Amendment (see blackboard)

Hate Crimes Legislation (see blackboard)

Week 12: (November 12 & 14)

****Monday—Student presentations begin and continue through the conclusion of the semester. Schedule TBA****

WEDNESDAY, CLASS CANCELLED

Week 13: (November 19 & 21)

WEDNESDAY, CLASS CANCELLED

Week 14: (November 26 & 28)

Week 15: (December 3 & 5)

Week 16: (December 10)

Final Papers Due via email Saturday, Dec 15th by 3:30PM.

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