

**JUSTICE STUDIES DEPARTMENT  
SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY  
MASTERS OF SCIENCE (M.S.) PROGRAM**

**INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE AND NEWLY-ADMITTED STUDENTS**

**Applying to the Program – General Information:** SJSU requires on-line applications. Information about application requirements and deadlines is available in the “Letter to Prospective Graduate Students” posted on the Justice Studies website under “Graduate Program.” All required materials – transcript, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, GRE scores (if required), etc. – are due on the application due date. Applications which are incomplete may result in a denial of admission.

**Applying to the Program – the Statement of Purpose:** In addition to undergraduate transcripts and other documents, we require each applicant to submit a statement of purpose. There is no required length, but most statements are about 1 – 1 ½ pages. In most cases, they should not exceed three pages. The statement of purpose both provides us with a sample of your writing, and also helps us evaluate your readiness to undertake graduate study. The statement of purpose should address your reasons for applying to graduate school and for choosing San José State, your academic and/or career goals, and relevant academic, work or volunteer experience in the justice field (if any). Your statement of purpose should also discuss any unique experiences, talents or abilities you may possess that might distinguish you from other applicants (e.g., having lived abroad, fluency in a second language, notable achievements, personal obstacles overcome, etc.). We seek a diverse student body (“diverse” in the broadest sense), since a diversity of experience greatly enriches the learning environment. Finally, if there is anything in your undergraduate record you wish to highlight (e.g., honors) or to explain (e.g., one semester of bad grades due to a family emergency), you should also include that in your statement of purpose. You may submit your statement of purpose (typed) directly to the Justice Studies Graduate Coordinator, or you may include it on Part B of the online application.

**Applying to the Program – Letters of Recommendation:** Two letters of recommendation should be submitted to the Justice Studies Graduate Coordinator (not sent to Graduate Studies). You should request letters from people who know you in an academic or professional capacity and who are able to assess your potential for success in graduate school. Ideally, you will submit letters from professors who worked with you in your undergraduate or previous graduate program. In some cases, applicants will need to submit letters from work supervisors instead. In both situations, ask your recommenders to discuss your potential to succeed in masters-level study, and to discuss the basis for their evaluation of your potential. Letters should be typed on the recommenders’ professional letterhead and sent directly to the Graduate Coordinator, Justice Studies Department, San José State University, One Washington Square, San José, CA 95192-0050, USA.

**Applying to the Program – Other Information:** We do *not* require that you possess a Bachelor's degree in Justice Studies/Criminal Justice in order to apply. Students with a Bachelor's degree in *any* field may apply to the Justice Studies Master's program. As discussed in the "Letter to prospective graduate students," applicants who lack a background in justice studies or a closely related field but who meet the application requirements will be admitted, but may have to complete one or more prerequisites before beginning the graduate program. Your prerequisites, if any, will be listed in the admission letter.

**Newly-admitted Students – What to Expect in Graduate School:** Faculty and students share an interest in maintaining the strong reputation of the Justice Studies Master's program. **The Master's degree is an achievement that reflects significant study and training beyond a Bachelor's degree** (according to the 2005 US Census, less than 7% of American adults have a Master's degree). In order to ensure that the M.S. degree in Justice Studies continues to "mean something" when you are done, you must devote the necessary time, effort and attention to your graduate studies. The faculty wants our graduate students to succeed both academically and professionally, and are willing to work with students who need help to succeed, as long as students take their studies seriously and put in the effort needed.

Most graduate classes are conducted in a seminar format or other "active learning" approach. This means that students bear a significant responsibility for their own learning, and the learning of fellow students. Specifically, students are expected to come to class prepared, having completed the reading, research and/or writing assignments on time and being ready to discuss or critique the material or raise pertinent questions. **Preparation, regular class attendance and regular participation in class are essential to success in graduate school.** Naturally, graduate students are also expected to understand what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, and scrupulously to avoid it.

Finally, **what distinguishes people with master's degrees from people without them is critical thinking, writing and research skills, so we place a high priority on your development of those skills.** Graduate school papers should represent your best work; you will want to take the time to ensure that your research identifies relevant, reliable, scholarly sources and that your written analysis is thoughtful, logical, and appropriate in scope.

**Newly-admitted Students – Administrative Matters:** As you move through the program toward graduation, the University requires you to complete several forms. Among others, these include the "change of classification" form (if admitted as conditionally classified), the "advancement to candidacy application" form, and the application for graduation. **Graduate students are responsible for keeping track of the required paperwork, ensuring that their academic records are up-to-date, and that all required forms are submitted in a timely manner.**

These and other forms are available on the Graduate Studies website:  
<http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/Current/Forms.html>

Deadlines are also listed there, at:

[http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/Current/Grad\\_File\\_Dates.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/gradstudies/Current/Grad_File_Dates.html)

**Newly-admitted Students – Notes on some required courses:**

JS 201 – offered in Fall semester – must be passed with grade of “B” or better (not B-) (this course satisfies the “competency in written English” requirement)

JS 203 – offered in Spring semester – a passing grade satisfies the “project” requirement for students on “Plan B” (see below)

JS 204 – is required for students admitted Fall 2006 and thereafter

JS 216 – offered in Spring semester. Satisfies “culminating experience” requirement.

**Note: students may enroll in 216 only when they have completed 21 units toward the Master’s degree, including courses taken concurrently with 216.**

**Newly-admitted Students – Plan A vs. Plan B**

These plans are described in more detail in the course catalog, but briefly, “Plan A” involves writing a thesis and “Plan B” involves the completion of a project as part of the required course JS 203. Theses are especially appropriate and strongly recommended for students who plan to continue their academic work in a PhD program, although students with other goals may choose to write theses also. Students writing theses are expected to possess the initiative and ability to undertake a major research project, and the ability to work independently in researching and writing the thesis. Thesis students can expect to spend more time completing the master’s program, as they must put together a thesis committee (composed of two Justice Studies faculty members and one faculty member from another department, or a professional in the justice field) and must successfully orally defend their thesis proposals before the committee, before completing the thesis writing.