

## **JS 159**

### **Senior Seminar**

#### **Course Description**

The primary purpose of the class is to identify, discuss and analyze selected problems in the criminal justice system. **Mandatory prerequisites** for the class include **completion of:** 1). JS 105, 2). 100 W or equivalent, and 3). senior standing (2<sup>nd</sup> semester seniors and graduate students will be given preference). A selected criminal justice topic will be explored through the preparation of a policy paper. Three units.

#### **Course Objectives**

To provide the student with an opportunity to critically analyze contemporary problems and policies regarding the justice system through in-class discussion of assigned readings; and the preparation and presentation of a policy paper based on empirical research found in high quality research journals.

#### **Text**

Walker, S. (2006). *Sense and Nonsense About Crime and Drugs*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth).

#### **Course Requirements**

1. **Participation:** come to class prepared to discuss and critique assigned readings; prepare a Most Important Topics (MITs) discussion of three (3) topics for each chapter.
2. **Policy paper:** prepare a literature review/policy analysis paper of an approved justice-related topic; the topic must not have been previously written on or researched.
3. **Presentation:** a formal class presentation of the policy paper, including paper outline and reference page.

#### **Class Evaluation**

Policy paper = 40%  
Paper presentation=10%  
Participation = 25%  
MITs= 25%

**NOTE:** A **grade of C-** must be earned to fulfill this course requirement.

**Incompletes:** Assigned only for serious, **medically documented** health reasons; **NOT** because paper could not be completed on time.

#### **Class Participation**

In order to participate, one must be in attendance. Attendance per se, however, is not considered to be participation, and cannot factor into the grade. In class comments indicating knowledge of the subject matter and asking probing questions is considered to be participation. This means that assigned materials must be read and "digested" prior to each class meeting.

**Participation Grading:** Levels of participation will be assessed on a weekly basis with an overall grade determined at the end of the class. Assessments will be based on **pertinent and knowledgeable comments** with respect to chapter materials (see MITs below), and additional follow-up comments regarding other student comments. Daily scores will be assigned on a **plus, check plus, check, or zero (no credit)**, based on the depth and knowledge of the comment. A plus is based on 2 to 3 pertinent and knowledgeable comments; a check plus is based on 2 comments; a credit is based on at

least 1 comment; and a zero is assigned if no pertinent or knowledgeable comments are made, or if one is absent from class. An overall score, based on a class curve, will be assigned.

**MITs:** A participation requirement is that you identify **three (3) Most Important Topics (MITs)** for **each chapter**; these are topics that you believe to be the most crucial and insightful and will form the basis for your class discussion. Each chapter's MIT will consist of **four parts** and be presented in the following manner:

**(I) List:** the topic itself (briefly), utilizing key words and phrases.

**(II) Explain:** in a sentence or two why you believe the topic to be important (impact or practice).

**(III) Support:** the topic's importance with **empirical data** (utilizing at least one original source of research found in Walker); Part III should be no longer than one paragraph in length.

**(IV) Reference:** cite the **original source(s)** utilized by Walker **using APA 5<sup>th</sup> ed.** at the **end** of the MIT. (**Note:** some of Walker's sources are **incomplete**; cite as much information as you have available).

**Length** each MIT should be approximately 2/3 to 3/4 of a page in length (but, not longer than one full page), not including the sources cited.

**MIT Preparation and Collection:** Each chapter's MITs will be typed, double spaced, and handed in at the **end of the class**. Staple **each chapter's** three MITs together, include the **chapter's number and your name** on the first page. The MITs will be collected **randomly**; that is, you must be **in attendance** to hand them in (**only exception** requires medical documentation). Students will be chosen to discuss their MITs; you may also volunteer.

**MIT grading:** MITs will be graded on a plus, check, or zero (no credit) basis. A **plus** will consist of all four parts (described above) for each MIT **and** be well written and explained. A **check** will consist of all four parts but not be as well written or explained. A **zero** will consist of not meeting requirements for a check, or being absent. **Other considerations in grading:** using your own words (**paraphrasing is not allowed** and will result in no credit); proper APA 5e. citations; sentence structure; research cited; and grammar. An overall score, based on a class curve, will be assigned.

**Note:** Missing **2** or more MITs will result in a failing grade for this part of the course.

## Policy Paper

A policy paper on a justice-related topic (on which you have not previously written) will be required. You, in consultation with the instructor, will choose an appropriate topic. Once chosen, a topic **may not be changed without instructor consent**. The paper will review the empirical literature on the topic, and will formulate new or improved policies based on the empirical evidence. The **goal** of the paper is to review empirical research from high quality justice-related journals which establish **relationships between and among independent and dependent variables**, and to draw **policy implications** based on these empirical relationships. See Policy Paper Guidelines handout.

**Note:** It is important to understand that social science research findings either **support or do not support** relationships between and among independent and dependent variables; they **never PROVE**--in absolute terms--research findings.

## Paper Subject Searches and References

1. **CJ Abstracts** (2nd floor) HV60001.C67 (Current references on-line)  
**Social Sciences Index** HV6001.E9
2. **Interlibrary Loan (ILL)** no direct access ([www.sjsulibrary.org](http://www.sjsulibrary.org))
3. **JS Reference Librarian:** Nyle Monday (408) 808-2041)
4. **APA 5th ed. Manual** and [www.sjsu.edu/orgs/pkp/resources.htm](http://www.sjsu.edu/orgs/pkp/resources.htm)
5. **Paper Writing Assistance:** Writing Center, Clark Hall, Suite 126 (408) 924-2308  
( [www.sjsu.edu/writing center](http://www.sjsu.edu/writing center)). **NOTE:** Do not wait until the end of the semester to make reservations at the WC for help.

**Due Dates:** Final papers, and research articles, are due on the last class meeting (see schedule). Papers can be late only if **excusable and documented due to serious illness or tragedy**. One grade point per day late will otherwise be deducted.

### **Paper Presentation/Outline**

A 15-20 minute **formal** presentation of your policy paper is required. The presentation will be based on a brief outline (1-2 pages) and reference page of sources cited, which will be distributed to the class prior to the presentation. The **paper may not** be used during the presentation. 4 X 6 cards will be utilized for the presentation; the **outline and/or charts** can be utilized, but only for support purposes. The outline will follow the prescribed paper format: **Part I: Introduction** (brief overview); **Part II: Research methodology/findings** of each empirical study; **Part III: Policy implications**.

**Presentation Grading:** The presentation will be graded based on level of competency and flow, knowledge of the subject, and relevant answer(s) to directed questions. **Practice** your presentation (preferably in front of someone who can critique your work) several times.

**Note:** Directly reading your presentation--or major parts thereof--will result in a failing presentation grade.

**Attendance** during presentations and asking relevant questions about the subject matter will result in **added participation points**; "skipping" presentations is greatly discouraged and may result in a reduced grade for one's overall participation score.

### **Class Schedule**

**Meeting      Activity**

- Aug 27            Registration: prerequisites for class; senior standing, etc.  
Introduction: participation requirements; MITs and APA 5th ed. references.  
MIT example reviewed.
- Aug 3             Collect phone numbers and e-mails. MIT discussion.  
Walker: Chaps. **1, 2 & 3 Discussion (MIT due)**
- Sep 10            MITs Feedback  
Policy Paper Discussion: Requirements/Topics/Relationships Between and  
Among Independent and Dependent Variables; Control Variables; Delimiting Titles.  
Literature search; including CJ Abstract examples and use; ILL. Policy paper example.
- Sep 17            Walker: Chaps. **4, 5 & 6 Discussion (MIT due)**  
Policy Paper Discussion Continued  
Policy paper example follow-up.
- Sep 24            Walker: Chaps. **7, 8 & 9 Discussion (MIT due)**  
**Determine Individual meeting times**
- Oct 1             **Individual Topic Meetings Begin**  
**Requirements for meeting: Delimited title and one empirical study in hand.**  
  
**NOTE:** If possible, several empirical studies would be desirable; remember, at least two  
(2) empirical studies **MUST be approved** prior to writing paper.
- Oct 8             **Individual Topic Meetings**
- Oct 15            **Individual Topic Meetings**
- Oct 22            Walker: Chaps, 10, 11 & 12 (**MIT due**)
- OCT 29           Walker: Chaps, 13 & 14 (**MIT due**)  
**Presentation Sign-up**  
**Presentation Q & A:** format; 4 X 6 cards; attendance; student/instructor questions
- Nov 5             **Individual Paper Review/Research Day**  
**Limit:** Description of research methodology (Part II Paper Guidelines) for **one study**  
  
**Note:** depending on number of students, **presentations may need to start this day.**
- Nov 12            **Presentations Begin**  
Outline & References page distributed
- Nov 19            **Presentations Continue**  
Outline & References page distributed
- Nov 26            Thanksgiving Holiday
- Dec 3             **Presentations Continue**  
Outline & Reference page distributed  
**Final Papers Due**

## 159 Policy Paper Guidelines

### Paper Requirements

1. **Minimum Words: 2,500 words** (10 pages) **and maximum 3,000 word** (12 pages) not including reference pages and appendices. **Note:** A page is considered to be 250 words in length. **Required format: Times New Roman** with a **12 font**. **Note: Count words not pages.**

2. **Minimum Cites: Three empirical (3) studies** must be reviewed for the paper, (i.e., articles from high quality research journals that identify significant relationships between and among variables); with a minimum of **five (5) total references cited**. In addition, the three empirical studies **must have been published** within the **last ten years** (i.e., 1999 or later). In general, a high quality study will run approximately **10-15 pages** in length; that is, **do not use** relatively short studies.

In addition, **two (2)** of the studies MUST be cleared by the instructor prior to writing the paper,

**Note:** Internet references or documents **cannot** be used in the paper. However, many, if not most, of the journals you will use can be found through the library's website and often can be downloaded.

**Note:** The empirical articles that should be used for this class can most easily be found in the **Criminal Justice Abstracts** using the library website (the instructor has the hardbound copies of the Abstracts in his office available during office hours or individual meetings).

3. **No plagiarism** or **prior work** on topic.

4. The paper and research **must** be described **in your own words**; with **NO paraphrasing** using the author's words, or through the use of lengthy quotes or descriptions. **FOR THIS PAPER: USE NO QUOTES.**

5. The three empirical research articles **must be turned in with the paper.**

6. **All** of the empirical articles to be used must be **approved by the instructor** prior to writing the paper.

7. American Psychological Association (APA) 5<sup>th</sup> ed. citation style **must** be used. This includes a **References Cited** section at the end of the paper containing **all** the sources used in the paper.

8. The paper **must be organized** according to the **Paper Format Section**; see **Parts I-IV** described below.

9. **Writing Style and Presentation:** The paper must be written in **formal** English (i.e., **do not use contractions** such as can't and won't; abbreviations; and slang), using proper **punctuation and tenses**. **Spelling, grammar and neatness** are also considered important; too many of these errors will lead to a mandatory one grade point deduction. **Hint: Proofread** the paper (more than once) prior to handing it in.

10. **Six common paper errors include (PAY ATTENTION here):**

(1) APA 5th ed. format not followed (in paper and/or references section)

(2) cites in the paper do not match those in the reference section

(3) inadequate description of studies

(4) weak policy implications

(5) policy implications that do not match the research reviewed

(6) paper titles that do not specify relationships between or among independent and dependent variables

**Paper Grading:** Meeting minimum requirements 1 through 9 means that the paper is at least at the C- level. **A failing grade** on the paper will be assigned if requirements 1-6 are not met. **Grade deductions**, from .50 to a full grade, will be taken if requirements 7 or 8 are not met. **One full grade** will be deducted if too many of the formal English requirements are not met in number 9.

## Required Paper Format

The paper **must be organized** according to the following format:

**Part I: Introduction**

This section includes a relatively brief introduction to the topic; may include history of subject, relevance, concepts, definitions, current policies, and so on.

**Part II: Review of Literature**

This section primarily describes the research on the subject, and focuses on defining the major relationships (statistical) between and among independent and dependent variables (e.g., the relationship between a treatment program, the IV, and recidivism, the DV).

**First**, introduce each study by author(s) and purpose of the study (e.g., Smith and Jones (2007) who analyzed the impact of a drug treatment program on drug-related recidivism rates.

**Second**, describe the **research methodology** of each study with respect to:

**Sample** (number of subjects and how chosen)

**Variables Measured** (independent, dependent, and control variables; e.g., age, race, gender)

**Findings:** (statistically significant relationships between/among variables).

**Limitations:** (variables not controlled)

The **more comprehensive** the description of the above methodologies, the better.

**Note:** not all research is created equal; that is, more **valid** and **reliable** research is found in high quality **academic journals** (e.g., *Criminology*, *Crime & Delinquency*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Police Quarterly*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*). **Practitioner journals**, (e.g., *Federal Probation* and *Police Chief*), tend to include only program descriptions or non-scientific research. Further, relatively short articles (5-7 pages) should be avoided, since they are unlikely to provide valid and reliable research findings.

**Part III: Policy Implications**

From the research results discussed, the need for new and/or improved policies will be described. These policy changes and revisions must be based on a **realistic** assessment with respect to budget, time, resource allocation and constraints, and politics. This suggests that the policies should be aimed specifically at program developments with respect to the research reviewed and the practical implications of their implementation.

**Part IV: References Cited**