

AJ 159 Senior Seminar

Course Description

Identification, discussion and analysis of selected problems in the criminal justice system.

Prerequisites are AJ 105 and senior standing. A selected criminal justice issue will be explored through the preparation of a policy paper. Three units.

Text

Walker, S., *Sense and Nonsense About Crime and Drugs*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA.: West/Wadsworth), 1998.

Course Objectives

To provide the student with an opportunity to critically analyze contemporary problems and policies regarding the criminal justice system through in-class discussion of assigned readings, and the preparation and presentation of a policy paper.

Course Requirements

1. Participation: come to class prepared to discuss and critique assigned readings; a requirement is to write down three (3) "most important topics" per chapter.
2. Policy paper: a literature review/policy analysis of an approved criminal justice topic; must not have been previously written or researched.
3. Class presentation of policy paper, including topic outline and reference page.

Student Evaluation

Policy paper = 60% (includes presentation)

Participation = 40% (includes MIP's)

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

Class Participation

In order to participate, one must be in attendance. Attendance per se, however, is not considered to be participation. Actual discussion indicating knowledge of the subject matter and/or asking probing questions is considered participation. This means that assigned materials must be read and "digested" prior to each class meeting. As noted above, as you read each chapter identify and write down 3 "most important topics" (MIPs) that can be discussed in class. In this way, you will always be able to participate on any given day. MIPs will be collected periodically and will count up to 10% toward your participation grade.

Participation will be assessed on a daily basis and a final participation score and grade will be determined at the end of the class. Points will be assigned as follows:

- 5 points = active and intelligent comments on the topic.
- 3 points = general comment(s) on the topic.
- 1 point = present in class.
- 0 points = absent from class.

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 the topic. The paper will briefly review the literature on the topic, and will analyze the topic from a "what works"/policy perspective.

Paper Requirements

1. 12 to 18 pages in length (not including reference pages and appendices). **Note:** A typical page is considered to be 250 words in length; thus, the paper must be no less than 3,000 words. A paper less than the required length will receive a failing grade.
2. Include at least 6 relatively recent (since early '90's) scholarly references (i.e., journal articles) taken from the *CJ Abstracts*; at least two of which must be empirical or theoretical in nature. Internet references may not be used except from sources like Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and only one of these may count as a scholarly reference.

Other references, such as magazines, newspapers, and textbooks, may, and most likely will, be used in the review, but journal research articles should be the focus of the review.

3. American Psychological Association (APA) citation style is to be used. This includes a References Cited section at the end of the paper containing all the sources used in the paper.
4. The paper must be organized according to the format described on the last page. The paper must also be written in proper English; avoid contractions such as can't, don't, won't, and so on. Spelling and grammar are also considered; it is also common practice for formal papers to be written in third person (This paper will report on . . .) rather than in first-person (I will report on . . .).
5. No Plagiarism or prior work on topic.
6. **Proof read the paper** (more than once if possible) prior to handing it in. It is critical that each of the above criteria be met. Grade points will be deducted if requirements 2 through 4 are not met; a failing grade will be assigned if the paper does not meet requirements 1 and 5.

Paper Presentation

A formal presentation of approximately 20 minutes is also a requirement (so that others may share in the knowledge you have gained). Note cards will be used and the presentation will be from the podium. A brief outline (1-2 pages) and reference page of sources used will be distributed to the class prior to the presentation.

Following the presentation, questions and discussion about the paper (e.g., research studies and findings, new policies and programs, etc.) will be asked by the class and instructor. The presentation and discussion is considered an extension of the paper and is not normally graded; however, in extreme cases (either good or bad), it may impact the overall paper grade by one-half point. Also, discussion at this time is considered to be an important part of class participation.

Due Dates

Final papers are due on the last class meeting (see schedule). Papers can only be late if excusable (e.g., sickness, tragedy, etc.); otherwise a grade of U will be assigned.

It is **strongly encouraged** that you turn in a paper for **early review** (see schedule) - even if only partially completed (e.g., intro, some lit. review, and some references). The paper will be critiqued and handed back for final completion.

Paper Format

The paper will be organized according to the following breakdown.

Part I Introduction

This section includes a relatively brief introduction to the topic; may include history of subject, relevance, concepts, definitions, and current policy (ies).

Part II Review of Literature

This section primarily describes the research which has been done on the subject, and focuses on defining the major relationships (statistical) between and among important variables (e.g., the relationship between a treatment program and recidivism). In general, each study will be described with respect to:

- Study design (survey; quasi-experimental; observational)
- Sampling (50 inmates, randomly chosen)
- Variables measured (independent & dependent; recidivism and treatment program)
- Control variables (age, race, gender, crime committed)
- Results (relationship between recidivism and treatment program)

During the description of the research, each study (i.e., its design, sampling, and findings) should be described separately. You may also wish to use subheaders in this section in order to separate primary topics; this will allow studies on related topics to be organized coherently (e.g., recidivism and treatment program).

It should also be noted that some research is more valid and reliable than other research (usually the better controlled studies), and these should receive the bulk of your attention. For instance, research journals such as *Justice Quarterly* or the *Journal of Criminal Justice* generally have empirical investigations while practitioner journals such as *Federal Probation* and *Police Chief* generally have descriptive research or reporting.

Part III Conclusions and Policy Implications

Overall conclusions of the studies reviewed are drawn. From these conclusions the need for change and revisions with respect to new or revised policies are made. Such changes and revisions should be based on a realistic assessment of what can be accomplished with respect to budget, time, and resource constraints.

Class Schedule

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Activity</u>
Aug. 28 & 30	Introduction (class prerequisites, participation, policy paper). Literature review (CJ Abstracts, Internet) of research methods. Start reading Walker: Preface, Chap. 1
Sept. 5 & 7	Introduction continued; topic discussion. Walker: Chaps. 2-4
Sept. 12 & 14	Walker: Chaps. 5-6 Topic discussion: delimiting subject matter
Sept. 19 & 21	Walker: Chaps. 7-9 Topic Description Due on 19th: (1-2 typed paragraphs; working title; several references) Topic description critique returned on 21st
Sept. 26 & 28	Walker: Chaps. 10-12 Individual Progress Meeting Dates Determined
Oct. 3 & 5	Individual Progress Meetings Begin Required: Description; delimited title; and 3 empirical/theoretical references
Oct. 10 & 12	Individual Progress Meetings
Oct. 17 & 19	Individual Progress Meetings
Oct. 31 & Nov. 2	Walker: Chaps. 13-14 Determine Presentation Order
Nov. 7 & 9	Paper Presentations Begin Required: Outline & Reference Page
Nov. 14 & 16	Paper Presentations Early Review of Partial Papers (14th) Return of Early Papers (16th)
Nov. 21	Research Day (no meeting)
Nov. 23	Thanksgiving
Nov. 28 & 30	Paper Presentations
Dec. 5 & 7	Paper Presentations Final Papers Due