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## AJ 159 - 1,2 Senior Seminar

### Course Description

The identification, discussion and analysis of selected problems in the criminal justice system. Prerequisites are AJ 105 and 100 W or equivalent, and senior standing. A selected criminal justice issue 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 criminal justice system through in-class discussion of assigned readings, and the preparation and presentation of a policy paper.

### Text

Walker, S. (2001). *Sense and Nonsense About Crime and Drugs*, 5<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)* list describing **three** critical topics per chapter.
2. **Policy paper:** prepare a **literature review/policy analysis** paper of an **approved** criminal justice topic; must not have been previously written or researched.
3. **Presentation:** a **formal** class presentation of the policy paper, including topic outline and reference page.

### Student Evaluation

Policy paper/Presentation = 60%  
Participation = 40%  
MITs= Can Enhance the Participation grade.

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, and cannot factor into the grade. Actual discussion indicating knowledge of the subject matter and/or asking probing questions **is** considered to be participation. This means that assigned materials must be read and "digested" prior to each class meeting.

As noted above, a participation requirement is that as you read each chapter you identify and describe three (3) **Most Important Topics (MITs)** that can be discussed in class. The description of each MIT will be at least one full paragraph (approximately 3 to 4 sentences). In this way, you will always be able to participate on any given day. The MITs will be collected **randomly in class**; that is, if you are not in class on that day you **cannot** turn them in. They will be read and assigned a score.

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

- 4 points= at least two intelligent or insightful comments on the topic.
- 2 points= at least one intelligent or insightful comment on the topic.
- 0 points= absent from class or no comments.

### 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. 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 **establish relationships between and among important variables** and to draw policy implications based on these empirical relationships.

### Paper Requirements

1. 12 to 18 pages in length (not including reference pages and appendices). Note: A page is considered to be 250 words in length; thus, the paper must be a **minimum of 3,000 words**.

2. Include a **minimum of five (5) total references**; at least **two (2)** of which must be **empirical** in nature (that is, you are looking for significant relationships between and among variables), and reviewed from a **research journal**. The articles must be contemporary in nature, since 1993. **All** empirical journal articles **must** be selected from the **CJ Abstracts**. (For graduate students taking this course as a prerequisite, the totals are: three (3) empirical and seven (7) total references).

Internet references may not be used except as follows: (1) the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) or (2) the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), and these do not count as empirical references; generally, these sources are used for descriptive purposes.

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 **Paper Format** (Parts I, II, and III) described on the last page.

5. The paper must also be written in **formal English** (i.e., avoid contractions such as can't, don't, won't, and abbreviations such as vs., etc). **Spelling** and **grammar** are also considered important; too many of these errors will lead to a mandatory grade point deduction. Based on these criteria, it is imperative that you **Proofread** the paper (more than once?) prior to handing it in.

6. **No plagiarism** or prior work on topic (this will result in a failing grade).

7. **Meeting minimum requirements 1 through 6** means that the paper is at least at the C level. Higher grades may require additional references. **Grade Point Deductions:** A **failing grade** will be assigned if requirements 1, 2, or 6 are not met. Grade point deductions will be assigned if the other requirements are not met.

### Paper Presentation

A **formal presentation** of approximately 20 minutes is also required (in order that others may share in the knowledge you have gained). Note Cards should be used and the presentation will be from the podium (i.e., **do not** simply read from your paper). A brief **outline** (1-2 pages) and **reference page** of sources used will be distributed to the class prior to the presentation. The purpose of the presentation is

to briefly describe the research reviewed with respect to methodology, findings, limitations and policy implications.

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. A question and answer period will follow the presentation; queries regarding the paper will be asked by the class and instructor.

### 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, **one grade point** per day late will be deducted—no exceptions.

### 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, and current policies.

#### ***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 important study variables (e.g., the relationship between a treatment program and recidivism). Each empirical study **must be described** with respect to:

#### **Study Design**

- Type of study** (survey, experimental, observation)
- Sample** (random, snowball, questionnaire, personal interview)
- Variables Measured** (independent, dependent, control)

**Findings** (statistically significant relationships between and among study variables).

**Limitations** (variables for which study did or did not control)

In this section, each empirical study reviewed (i.e. type of study, sampling, variables, results and limitations) must be described separately.

It should also be noted that some research is more valid and reliable than other research; that is, the better controlled studies, which will receive the bulk of your attention. For instance, academic journals such as *Criminology*, *Crime & Delinquency*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Police Quarterly*, or the *Journal of Criminal Justice* include empirical research while practitioner journals such as *Federal Probation* and *Police Chief* include program descriptions.

#### ***Part III Policy Implications***

From the research results reviewed, 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

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Aug. 26 & 28	Introduction: class prerequisites; participation; MITs; and policy paper. Delimiting topic; use of CJ Abstracts; paper format.
Sept. 2 & 4	Introduction continued (collect name, phone number, and e-mail address) Walker: Preface; Chaps. 1, 2 & 3
Sept. 9 & 11	Walker: Chaps. 4, 5 & 6 <b>Discussion: Paper Topics (11<sup>th</sup>)</b>
Sept. 16 & 18	Walker: Chaps. 7 & 8 <b>Discussion: Paper Topics (16<sup>th</sup>)</b> <b>Determine Individual Topic Meetings (16<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>)</b>
Sept. 23 & 25	Individual Topic Meetings Begin <b>Required: Working title and one empirical reference; or no meeting.</b>
Sept30/Oct 2	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct. 7 & 9	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct. 14 & 16	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct. 21 & 23	Walker: Chaps. 9, 10 & 11
Oct. 28 & 30	Walker: Chaps. 12 & 13 Determine Presentation Order (30 <sup>th</sup> )
Nov. 4	Walker: Chaps. 13 & 14
Nov. 6	<b>Drop-In: Paper Questions</b>
Nov. 11 & 13	<b>Paper Presentations Begin</b> <b>Outline &amp; Reference pages distributed by presenters</b>
Nov. 18 & 20	Paper presentations
Nov. 25	Paper Research Day/No Class
Dec. 2 & 4	Paper Presentations <b>Final Papers Due on 4th</b>
Dec. 9	Paper Presentations