

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 include: 1). JS 105, 2). 100 W or equivalent, and 3). senior standing. 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 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*, 5th 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 of four or five 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= 50%
Paper presentation= 10%
Participation = 30%
MITs= 10%

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

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.

A participation requirement is that as you read each chapter you identify three (3) Most Important Topics (MITs) that can be discussed in class; these are topics that you believe to be particularly crucial and insightful. For each MIT you should describe the topic in one paragraph, utilizing key words and phrases which helps describe the topic (be sure to refer to figures and tables as well). The purpose of the MITs is to help aid you in class discussions. MITs will be collected randomly in class; that is, if you are not in class on that day you cannot turn them in. Keep each chapter's MITs on a separate page. Overall, MITs will account for 10% of the overall grade.

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. 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 establish relationships between and among important variables and to draw policy implications based on these empirical relationships. This can only be accomplished by reviewing research-oriented journals.

Paper Requirements

1. 12 to 16 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 including a **minimum** of two (2) which must be **empirical** in nature; that is, articles from research journals that identify significant relationships between and among variables. The articles must be contemporary in nature and published within the last seven years. It is strongly suggested that you use the *CJ Abstracts* to find your sources. These are minimum requirements; **higher grades** will include three (3) empirical cites. **Note:** Internet references **may not** be used as one of the required cites.
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** (i.e., Parts I, II, and III) described on the last page.
5. The paper must be written in **formal English** (i.e., avoid contractions such as can't, don't, won't, and abbreviations such as vs.), using proper punctuation, tenses and so on. Spelling and grammar are also considered important; too many of these errors will lead to a mandatory one 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.
7. **Paper Grade:** Meeting minimum requirements 1 through 6 means that the paper is at least at the C level. **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. **Common errors include:** 1. APA format not followed (in paper or reference section); 2. cites in paper do not match those in reference section; 3. inadequate description of studies; 4. weak policy implications; and 5. policy implications not matching the research reviewed. **Note:** The research must be described in your **own words**, except for direct quotes (of which there should be few).

Presentation

A **formal** presentation of approximately 20-25 minutes is required (in order that others may share in the knowledge you have gained) and will be graded (10% of grade). The presentation will be from note cards and your prepared outline from the podium (i.e., you **may not** have your paper at the podium.). 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 describe the research reviewed with respect to methodology, findings, limitations and policy implications.

A **Q & A** period will follow the presentation; queries regarding the research and policy implications will be asked by the class and instructor (**note**: these queries also count toward one's participation grade).

Due Dates

Final papers are due on the last class meeting (see schedule). Papers can be late only if **excusable** (i.e., documented sickness, tragedy, etc.), and **accepted** by the instructor. **One grade point** per week late will be deducted (one day equals one work week, etc.).

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 will be described with respect to:

Study Design

Study title or Authors (abbreviated)

Type of study (e.g., survey, experimental, observation)

Sample (e.g., random, snowball, questionnaire, personal interview)

Variables Measured (e.g., independent and dependent; including control variables-age, race, gender, education, etc.)

Findings or Results (i.e., statistically significant relationships between and among study variables).

Limitations (i.e., variables for which study did or did not control)

In this section, each empirical study will 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* tend to include only program descriptions.

Part III Policy Implications

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

Class Schedule

Meeting	Activity
Aug. 26	Introduction: class prerequisites; participation; and MITs. Policy paper review; delimiting topic; use of CJ Abstracts; and paper format.
Aug 30/Sep 2	Introduction continued (collect names, phone number, and e-mail address) Walker: Preface; Chap. 1 (2 nd)
Sep 7 & 9	Walker: Chaps. 2, 3 & 4
Sep 14 & 16	Paper Topic Descriptions (be prepared to describe your topic in class) Determine Individual meeting times (16th)
Sep 21 & 23	Walker: Chaps 5 & 6
Sep 28	Walker: Chaps 7 & 8
Sep 30	Individual Topic Meetings Begin Required for meeting: delimited title and one empirical reference.
Oct 5 & 7	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct 12 & 14	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct 19 & 21	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct 26 & 28	Walker: Chaps 9, 10 & 11
Nov 2 & 4	Walker: Chaps 12 & 13 Determine Presentation Order (4 th)
Nov 9	Walker: Chaps. 14 Q & A: Paper/Presentation
Nov 11	Paper Presentations Begin Outline & Reference page Distributed
Nov 16/18	Presentations Continue
Nov 23 & 25	23 rd No Class ; 25th Thanksgiving
Nov 30/Dec 2	Presentations Continue
Dec 7 & 9	Presentations Continue Final Papers Due (9 th)

Policy Paper Subject Searches

1). Abstracts—2nd floor

CJ Abstracts: HV6001.C67
(most current references on-line)

Social Sciences Index H1s64x

2). Most Recent Journals

This Year Only—4th floor

3). Older Journals

Previous Years—Lower Level

4). Interlibrary Loan

ILL—no direct access; must use online

www.sjsulibrary.org

5). JS Reference Librarian

Susanne Liu

