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AJ 159 Senior Seminar

Course Description

The primary purpose of the class is to identify, discuss and analyze selected problems in the criminal justice system. **Prerequisites** include: 1). AJ 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%
Participation = 40%
Paper Presentation= 10%

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.

A participation requirement is that as you read each chapter you identify at least **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 write down key words and/or a single sentence 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 be used to enhance the participation 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. 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 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 including a **minimum of two (2)** of which must be **empirical** in nature; that is from **research articles/journals** that explore significant relationships between and among variables. The articles must be contemporary in nature; since the mid-1990s. It is **strongly suggested** that the empirical references be selected from the **CJ Abstracts**. These are minimum requirements; **higher paper grades** will include three (3) empirical cites. The **maximum number** of total references is ten (10).

Note: Internet references may not be used (i.e., they will not be counted).

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 also 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 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. **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.

When in Doubt: Review the above criteria.

Paper Presentation

A **formal presentation** of approximately 20 minutes is also required (in order that others may share in the knowledge you have gained) and will be **graded** (10% of grade). Note Cards **MUST** be used, along with your outline, and the presentation will be from the podium (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 question and answer 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 only be late if **excusable** (e.g., sickness, tragedy, etc.); otherwise, **one grade point** per day late will be deducted.

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

List study title (abbreviated)

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** 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

- Jan. 29 Introduction: class prerequisites; participation; MITs; and policy paper.
Delimiting topic; use of CJ Abstracts; paper format.
- Feb. 3 & 5 Introduction continued (collect names, phone number, and e-mail address)
Walker: Preface; Chap. 1
- Feb. 10 & 12 Walker: Chaps. 2, 3 & 4
- Feb. 17 & 19 Walker: Chap. 5 & 6
Discussion: Paper Topics (be prepared to describe your topic in class)
Determine Individual Topic Meetings (19th)
- Feb. 24 Walker: Chap. 7
Discussion: Paper Topics
- Feb. 26 Individual Topic Meetings Begin
REQUIRED: Working title and one empirical reference.
- March 2 & 4 Individual Topic Meetings
- March 9 & 11 Individual Topic Meetings
- March 16 & 18 Individual Topic Meetings
- March 23 & 25 Walker: Chaps. 8, 9 & 10
- March 30/April 1 SPRING BREAK
- April 6 & 8 Walker: Chaps. 11 & 12
- April 13 & 15 Walker: Chap. 13 & 14
Determine Presentation Order (13th)
Paper Questions (15th)
- April 20 & 22 **Paper Presentations Begin**
Outline & Reference page Distributed
- April 27 & 29 Paper Presentations
- May 4 & 6 Paper presentations
- May 11 & 13 Paper Presentations
- May 18 Paper Presentations
Final Papers Due

AJ 159 Policy Paper: Things to Know

- 1). Abstracts—2nd floor

CJ Abstracts: HV6001.C67

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

808-2000

5). AJ Reference Librarian

Susanne Liu

Criminal Justice Website and Library Information

The following internet websites may provide valuable reference materials for use in crime and justice research papers.

NCJRS

Recent publications

Phone number to order materials: 1-800-851-3420

www.ncjrs.org/justinfo/

National Institute of Justice

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij

Bureau of Justice Statistics

CJ data, including: crime, victims, criminals, police, jails and prisons

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

Bureau of Justice Statistics Update

Publications and Abstracts

Update additions to BJS Website

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/gbjsws.htm

CJ Reference Librarian

Susanne Liu
Clark Library