

**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 (2nd semester seniors may 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; the preparation and presentation of policy paper based on empirical research findings..

Text

Walker, S. (2006). *Sense and Nonsense About Crime and Drugs*, 6th 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 you consider the most important.
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 topic outline and reference page.

Class Evaluation

Policy paper/presentation= 50%

Participation = 30%

MITs= 20%

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. Class participation will be evaluated on a per meeting basis as follows (final participation grade will be based on a class curve):

6 points= two to three intelligent or insightful comments on the topic.

3 points= at least one intelligent or insightful comment on the topic.

0 points= absent from class or no comments.

A participation requirement is that you identify three (3) **Most Important Topics (MITs)** for each chapter; these are topics that you believe to be particularly crucial and insightful and will be the basis for your class discussion. Each chapter's MITs will follow this format: **(I) describe** the topic itself (utilizing key words and phrases), **(II) explain** why you believe the topic to be important (impact or practice), **(III) provide support** for the topic (with empirical data, information, or logical argument (each part should be a sentence or two in length. Failure to **complete** all **three parts for each topic** will result in no credit for the MIT.

Each MIT will be typed, double spaced, identified by chapter, and handed in at the end of the class. Keep each chapter's MITs on a **separate page**. They will be collected **randomly**; that is, you must be in

attendance to hand them in (**no** exceptions). The purpose of the MITs is to aid you in class discussion; therefore, in each class you must **volunteer** to discuss your MITs. MITs will be graded on a plus, check, or no credit basis.

POLICY PAPER AND PRESENTATION

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 research-oriented journals for empirical articles which **establish relationships between and among independent and dependent variables**, and to draw policy implications based on these empirical relationships.

Paper Requirements

1. 12 to 14 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** and a maximum of 3,500. **Required font:** Times New Roman with a 10 font.

2. Include a **minimum of five** (5) total references, with a **minimum of two** (for a C grade) or three (for an A or B grade) which are **empirical** in nature (i.e., articles from research journals that identify significant relationships between and among variables). **Note:** Internet references may not be used.

The empirical articles **must be** selected from the **Criminal Justice Abstracts** or the **Social Sciences Index**. Two of the three (or 2 of 2) empirical articles **must be** published within the last **ten years** (1996 or later).

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

4. The research must be **described in your own words**; not **paraphrased** using the author's words or thoughts, or through the use of **lengthy quotes** from the articles authors (of course, direct quotes—which should be few and short—must be in quotation marks).

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

6. **American Psychological Association** (APA) 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.

7. The paper **must** be organized according to the **Paper Format** section; see Parts I, II, and III described below.

8. The paper **must** be written in **formal English** (i.e., avoid contractions such as can't, don't, won't; abbreviations; and slang), 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. **Proofread** the paper (more than once) prior to handing it in.

Paper Grading: Meeting minimum requirements 1 through 8 means that the paper is at least at the C-level. A **failing paper** grade will be assigned if requirements 1-4 are not met. Grade point deductions will be taken if requirements 6-8 are not met. A **failing class** grade will be assigned if requirements 3 or 4 are not met; in addition, your name will be turned into the **Judicial Affairs Office** for possible further action (for further information on **academic integrity** refer to the University Catalog).

Common paper errors include: (1) APA format not followed (in paper or reference 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 not matching the research reviewed, and (6) paper titles that do not specify relationships between or among independent and dependent variables.

Presentation

A **formal** presentation of approximately 15-20 minutes is required (in order that others may share in the information you have gained) and will be graded. Your presentation **must** be from **note cards**, with possible assistance from your outline, and presented from the podium (i.e., you may not use 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 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**).

Grading: An excellent presentation will result in a one-half grade (+.5) addition to your paper; an average presentation will have no effect; and a poor presentation (not meeting all of the above requirements) will result in a one-half grade reduction (-.5) from your paper.

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** (i.e., documented sickness, tragedy, etc.). **One grade point** per work 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, 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 important study variables (e.g., the relationship between a treatment program and recidivism). **Each empirical study will be described separately and with respect to:**

A. Study Design

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

Sample (number of subjects and how chosen—random, snowball)

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

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

C. Limitations: (variables for which the study did not control)

It should be noted that not all research is created equally; that is, more **valid** and **reliable** research is found in **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 (3-5 pages) should be avoided, since they are unlikely to provide valid and reliable research findings.

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** 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.

Class Schedule

Meeting	Activity
Aug 24/29	Introduction: prerequisites for class; participation requirements and MITs. Policy paper overview, including delimiting topics; and use of CJ Abstracts .
Aug 31/Sep 5	Introduction continued, focusing on policy paper requirements and literature search; collect phone numbers and e-mails. Walker: Preface; Chaps. 1 & 2
Sep 7/12	Walker: Chaps. 3, 4, 5 & 6
Sep 14/19	Paper Topic Descriptions: Each student will briefly describe his/her paper and title. Paper Q & A Paper Examples Reviewed
Sep 21/26	Walker: Chaps. 6, 7, 8 & 9 Determine Individual meeting times
Sep 28/Oct 3	Individual Topic Meetings Begin Requirements for meeting: Delimited title and one empirical reference. (Note: There will be no meeting if the requirements are not met).
Oct 5/10	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct 12/17	Individual Topic Meetings
Oct 19/24	Individual Topic Meeting
Oct 26/31	Walker 12, 13 & 14
Nov 2	Paper Q & A: Both classes may attend
Nov 7/9	Paper Presentations Begin Outline & Reference page distributed by presenters
Nov 14/16	Presentations Continue
Nov 21 & 23	No Class
Nov 28/30	Presentations Continue
Dec 5 & 7	Presentations Continue Final Papers Due

Policy Paper Subject Searches

1). Abstracts—2nd floor

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

Social Sciences Index HV6001.E9

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 (408) 808-2088

6). APA Style.org

Electronic References

Course Add/Drop Statement

Instructors are permitted to drop students who fail to attend the first scheduled class meeting and who fail to inform the instructor prior to the second class meeting of the reason for any absence and their intention to continue in the class. Some instructors will drop students who do not meet the stated course prerequisites. However, instructors are not required to drop a student from their course. ***It is the student's responsibility to make sure classes are dropped.*** You, **the student**, are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc. found at: http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers. We all share the obligation to maintain an environment which practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development for disciplinary action which could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University. The policy on academic integrity can be found at: http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct

To better understand plagiarism and to aid you in making sure that you are not plagiarizing, please see me and/or visit: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/plagiarism/index.htm>

American with Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

Justice Studies Department