

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. In class comments 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.

Participation Grading: Levels of participation will be assessed on a weekly basis with an overall grade determined at the end of the class. Assessments will be based on **pertinent and knowledgeable comments** with respect to chapter materials (see MITs below), and additional follow-up comments regarding other student comments. Daily scores will be assigned on a **plus** (4 points), **check** (2 points), or **no credit** (0 points) basis. A plus is based on 2 to 3 pertinent and knowledgeable comments; a check is based on 1 to 2 comments; no credit is assigned if no pertinent or knowledgeable comments are made, or if one is absent from class. An overall score, based on a class curve, will be assigned.

MITs: 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 MIT will consist of three parts: **(I) Describe** the topic itself (utilizing key words and phrases), **(II) Explain** why you believe the topic to be important (impact or practice), **(III) Support** the topic with empirical data, information, and/or logical argument (**cite original sources** in Walker). Each part should be 1 to 3 sentences in length.

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** except medical and documented). Students will be chosen to discuss their MITs; you may also volunteer.

MIT grading: MITs will be graded on a plus (4 points), check (2 points), or no credit (0) basis. A **plus** will consist of all three parts (described above) for each MIT AND proper "original" citations from the text. A **check** will consist of all three parts; not as well thought out/reasoned; or, improper cites. A **no credit** will consist of not meeting requirements for a check; or being absent. **Other considerations in grading:** using your own words (paraphrasing not allowed and will result in a zero); proper citations (APA, 5h ed.); sentence structure; presentation; and grammar. An overall grade, based on a class curve, will be assigned; missing 3 MITs will result in a failing grade.

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 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 12 font.

2. Include a minimum of **five (5)** total references, with a minimum of **three** 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; however, you may research/use articles found on the internet.

The empirical articles must be selected from the **Criminal Justice Abstracts** or the **Social Sciences Index**. Two of the three empirical articles must have been published within the last **ten years** (1997 or later).

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

4. The research must be described **in your own words**; with **no paraphrasing** using the author's words, or through the use of lengthy quotes or descriptions (of course, short, direct quotes—which should be few—must be in quotation marks and cited with the page number).

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

6. American Psychological Association (APA) 5th ed. 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-IV 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. **Hint:** Proofread the paper (more than once) prior to handing it in.

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.

Paper Grading: Meeting minimum requirements 1 through 8 means that the paper is at least at the C-level. A failing grade will be assigned if requirements 1-5 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 over to the Judicial Affairs Office for possible further action (for further information on academic integrity refer to the University Catalog).

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.

Presentation/Paper Outline

A 15 minute **informal** presentation of your policy paper is required. The presentation will be based on a brief outline (2 pages) and reference page of sources cited, which will be distributed to the class prior to your presentation. The outline will be formatted as follows: **Part I: Introduction** (brief); **Part II: Research methodology** of the three empirical studies reviewed (see below); **Part III: Summary** (of the research findings); and, **Part IV: Policy implications**.

Grading: Since the presentation is informal, it is assumed that the presentation/outline will fall in the normal range, and thus will not be graded. However, if the presentation far exceeds standards, a one-quarter point grade upgrade (+.25) will be added to your paper; conversely, a presentation far below standards will result in a one-quarter grade point reduction (-.25) added to your paper.

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 independent and dependent variables (e.g., the relationship between a treatment program and recidivism). **First**, introduce each study by author(s), purpose, and study design (i.e., survey, experimental, quasi-experimental, observation, etc.). **Second**, describe the **research methodology** of each study with respect to:

Sample (number of subjects and how chosen)

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

Findings: (statistically significant relationships between/among ind./dep. variables).

Limitations: (variables not controlled)

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: Summary and Policy Implications

Provide a brief overview of the findings of the empirical studies reviewed. 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.

Part IV: References Cited
Class Schedule

Meeting	Activity
Jan 25	Introduction: prerequisites for class; participation requirements; MITs; and policy paper overview.
Feb 1	Introduction continued, focusing on policy paper requirements and literature search (CJ Abstracts and ILL). Collect phone numbers and e-mails. Walker: Preface; Chaps. 1 & 2
Feb 8	Walker: Chaps. 3, 4 & 5 Paper Topic Q & A
Feb 15	Walker: Chaps. 6, 7 & 8 Paper Q & A
Feb 22	Paper Topic Descriptions: Each student will briefly describe his/her paper topic and title. Determine Individual meeting times
Mar 1	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).
Mar 8	Individual Topic Meetings
Mar 15	Individual Topic Meetings
Mar 22	Individual Topic Meeting
Mar 29	Spring break
Apr 5	Walker 9, 10 & 11 Policy paper Q & A
Apr 12	Walker 12, 13 & 14 Paper Review Sign-up Presentation Q & A
Apr 19	Individual Paper Review/Research Day (limit: brief introduction and one empirical study)
Apr 26	Paper Presentations Begin Outline & Reference page distributed
May 3	Presentations Continue Outline & Reference page distributed
May 10	Presentations Continue Outline & Reference page distributed 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