Course Description

This course provides an overview of contemporary issues in the American court system such as prosecution, sentencing and punishment. Theoretical perspectives on courtroom decision-making integrated with empirical research will be examined in depth throughout the semester. Discussions will revolve around the fairness of court and sentencing processes, with special attention to issues of gender and racial disparities, and sentencing reforms.

Course Prerequisites: 
CCJS105

Texts

2. Occasional handouts, Court Cases, and journal articles (copies posted on ELMS)

Course Communication

Consider the UMD based Canvas system the best course communication tool in our arsenal. Please make certain that you have access through ELMS (http://elms.umd.edu) and that the email listing you have attached to this account is active and routinely monitored. Please try to always email me through it (if you are unable or forget to do so, then at least make sure to include CCJS 345 in the subject line and sign your name on ALL emails sent to atosouni@umd.edu).

I will be using ELMS to post the syllabus, brief lecture outlines, grades, and any relevant communication. I suggest that you check the course website frequently so that to not miss important updates and/or urgent messages.

Course Assessment
Each student is expected to attend class regularly, complete the assigned readings, and participate in class discussion. Failure to attend class or do the required readings before each class will diminish your chances of success in this course. On the other hand, attendance and participation in class discussion will increase your chances for receiving a satisfactory grade.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENT, GRADING SCHEME, AND DUE DATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Brief</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Week 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (2)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Week 4; Week 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question of the Day</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Unannounced</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Assignments</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Course grades will be based on the following grading scale:

- A+ = 97-100%
- B+ = 87-89.9%
- C+ = 77-79.9%
- D+ = 67-69.9%
- A = 92-96.9%
- B = 82-86.9%
- C = 72-76.9%
- D = 62-66.9%
- A- = 90-91.9%
- B- = 80-81.9%
- C- = 70-71.9%
- D- = 60-61.9%
- F = below 60%

**Exams (20% each):** Each exam will test the student on material covered during the previous portion of the course. The student will be held responsible for all assigned readings, lecture materials, as well as class discussions. The exams will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. **The exams will not be cumulative.**

There will be NO make-up exams, unless extreme circumstances (e.g. illness) arise, and ONLY after your instructor’s permission (please see “Missed Assignments” policy below for more details)

**Quizzes:** There will be two 10-item quizzes during the semester. The quizzes will be given during the first 15 minutes of class. The primary purpose of these quizzes is to assess whether you are keeping up-to-date with weekly reading assignments and gauge the depth of your understanding of the content covered in the course. As with exams, quizzes will test you all assigned readings, lecture materials, as well as class discussions and will not be cumulative. Quizzes are also considered to be major scheduled graded events, and therefore make-up opportunities are governed by the same rules as missed exams (please see “Missed Assignments” policy below for more details)

**Legal Brief (30%):** This is easy: You are to write a legal brief for a Supreme Court Decision that was made in the last 5 years. I have posted a detailed guide/rubric for this on ELMS. The last section (the analysis) of the paper is particularly important as it requires you to connect the decision to broader issues AND most importantly to your life and how you think it has affected it.

*How do you decide which case to brief?* Search news outlets or other legal/ SCOTUS web blogs or guides. I recommend [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/tag/supreme-court/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/tag/supreme-court/) or [http://www.oyez.org/cases/2015](http://www.oyez.org/cases/2015) but you can definitely find a case that has been discussed in the Court elsewhere (maybe a case that you read about in this or another course). Once you find a case that sparks your interest, submit it to me (via ELMS) by October 31st, in order to receive my approval. Then, go to LexisNexis Academic in order to find a copy of the decision. Be careful to find the actual original decision, not a summary of or commentary on it. It is easy to find cases on LexisNexis, so please don’t ask me for further assistance here; this will be part of the exercise.

*When do you turn this in?* At ANY time as long as it is BFORE or ON the deadline.

*How many pages?* About 4-5 pages would be ideal; NTR 12p. fonts, double-spaced, and 1” margins all around.
*A Note on Plagiarism: PLEASE DO YOUR OWN WORK. If you need help, let me know and we can discuss strategies to make this material clearer for you. If you ask for help, we will figure it out together. However, if you cheat, I will follow university policy (see Academic Dishonesty Policy below).

**Question-of-the Day (5%):** Beginning February 2nd, and each day of instruction after that point, I will **randomly** select a number of students (number will depend on enrollment), each of whom will be asked to answer a course-related question that reviews material covered in the preceding lecture or assigned readings. You will receive a maximum of 5 points for your answer. If your name is called but you are not in class, you will get a 0 and NO chance to remake (so if you plan to miss a class, and have a valid excuse, you may ask me in advance to not call your name on that day. “In advance” means no later than the day before, not the night before or the morning of…Of course, it will be up to my discretion to grant your request. If you are in class but fail to give any answer, or you answer incorrectly you will receive 1 or 2 points. If you answer semi-OK (meaning if you don’t really know the answer but make an educated guess which demonstrates some basic knowledge of the topic in general) you will get a 3 or a 4.

**Participation (10%):** This class is yours as much as it is mine. I do not want to just talk to you…I am genuinely interested in your active involvement in the classroom and expect you to engage in lively discussion and debate with me and your classmates. **Do not be surprised if I call on you during lecture.**

It is crucial that you contribute meaningfully to this course. Meaningful contributions are typically offered by well informed participants, so please make sure to read the material before coming to class. Meaningful participation will demonstrate that you have studied the material, you are interested in the topics, and you are able to assess, evaluate, question, and ultimately comprehend what is presented to you. Generally speaking, I will base your grade on this on the consistency, and quality (not quantity) of your engagement. In addition to that, being able to associate course material with current events as well as your personal, social, and cultural experiences will give you an extra bonus (that is, the + on the “A”). Random and unsubstantiated comments, will not necessarily get you in trouble (I do appreciate free speech) but will also not count towards your participation grade. Questions such as: Are you going to post the notes online or How many questions are in the exam do not qualify as participation. Because of the large number of students in this class, participation opportunities will be offered occasionally by way of in-class, or homework assignments that I will announce in class (schedule permitting).

*Note: You are welcome and encouraged to react to others’ (mine included) views and statements, but make sure you do that in a respectful and professional manner. If you have an objection, express your objection to the view not to the person.*

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit option available for this course

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all lectures. Exams and quizzes will cover reading and in-class discussions. Therefore, missing multiple classes will likely adversely affect your final grade. Earning top marks in the course will require a mastery of both the content read and lecture material; they are not one and the same. I will NOT share the notes for lectures you have missed. I encourage you to appeal to others enrolled in the course for these materials in the event you cannot be present.

**Missed Work:** No late work is accepted. Exams, quizzes, and the group project deadlines are considered to be major scheduled graded events (noted in bold under the course calendar section below) and therefore the new university medical excuse policy (http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/V-100G.pdf) which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does NOT apply to them. Makeup grades will be offered only under the following limited number of circumstances: a medical problem (self or dependent), a death in the immediate family, a religious holiday (see below), or participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, and other
compelling circumstances beyond the student’s control. Prior notification is REQUIRED in all instances for excused absences for major scheduled graded events—listed in bold under the Course Calendar heading below—and unannounced quizzes. Additionally, documentation including an obituary/death notice, an official health center excused absence form, or hospital records must be provided. Makeup work must be completed within one week of its original due date. All necessary arrangements must be made depending on the assignment, via email. Preserving this agreement in writing ensures there is no discrepancy at some later point. I reserve the right to alter the content of the assignment, including making the make-up exam a short answer or essay format.

**Grade Disputes:** If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe that I should review them, you must submit a written request over email that describes your concern in detail. This request must be submitted within one week of the day that grades for the relevant assignment are disseminated.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Council. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication of information used in assignments, plagiarism, and knowingly facilitating the academic dishonesty of another. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Honor Council, please visit the following website: [www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatsis.html](http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatsis.html).

**Religious Observance:** If you have a request for an alternate time to sit for an exam, quiz, or in-class writing assignment listed on the syllabus due to religious observance reasons, you must submit this request to me in writing (email) with the specific details the second week of class.

**Students with Disabilities:** I will make all necessary accommodations for students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. This form must be presented to me by the second week of class. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide me with documentation that has been reviewed by DSS after this date. DSS students who are requesting to take their exams at the DSS Center need to provide me with a testing form for each exam that must be turned in to me no later than one week prior to each exam. The student is expected to take the exam at the same time as the rest of the class.

**Athletes:** Official athletic schedules must be submitted to me by the second week of class. It is the student's responsibility to inform me regarding upcoming absences. Practices do not count as an excused absence; in cases of an excused absence (e.g., a game), students are expected to submit the work to be missed **BEFORE** the deadline. Athletes who miss exams/quizzes/discussion section/paper deadlines due to games or other commitments, yet never submitted an official athletic schedule by the date listed above, and never spoke with me and/or your TA, will receive a grade of zero for the missing assignment.

**Course Evaluation:** Your feedback about this course is very important to me and therefore we will do several forms of evaluation throughout this semester. One way is to fill out the online evaluation at the end of the semester. CourseEvalUM. Students can go directly to the website [www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete their evaluations. Students who complete evaluations for all of their courses in the previous semester (excluding summer), can access the posted results via Testudo's CourseEvalUM Reporting link for any course on campus that has at least a 70% response rate.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** On occasion, classes may be cancelled due to inclement weather. If the university is closed on the day a graded item is scheduled the graded assignment will be rescheduled for the next class meeting in which the university is open. If a final exam is cancelled, we will follow university rules for rescheduling.

**STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT/ DISRUPTION OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Students must adhere to the Code of Student Conduct. Students unable to show civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or me will be subject to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police.
I expect the classroom environment to be intellectually stimulating and respectful. Behavior which disrupts the teaching–learning process during class activities will not be tolerated. While a variety of behaviors can be disruptive in a classroom setting, more serious examples include belligerent, abusive, profane, and/or threatening behavior. Less serious, but nevertheless disruptive behaviors such as engaging in side-conversations with your fellow classmates during lecture, sleeping, wearing earphones, or being perpetually tardy will also not be tolerated. Make sure you silence and put away your cell-phones as soon as class starts or else you will be asked to leave. You are welcome to use laptops or tablets solely for note-taking. Last, if you come in late, or need to leave early, please sit in the back rows and try to make it fast and quiet.

I very much welcome students’ comments, questions, and concerns. Please do not hesitate to share them with me in person or via email. I am normally very good at responding back within a short period of time. But there is a certain etiquette that should be followed in these communications. Please be polite and respectful at all times, even if you are really-really upset about something. Rude emails (emails without greetings; emails using inappropriate language, including “texting” grammar. Example: “omg, missed class2day r u gonna post slides”) will NOT receive a reply. I will also NOT respond to questions that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Copyright: The lectures I deliver in this class and the course materials I create and distribute are protected by federal copyright law. My lectures are recorded or delivered from written lecture notes in order to ensure copyright protection. You are permitted to take notes of my lectures and to use course materials for this class. You may not record, reproduce, or distribute my lectures/notes for any commercial purpose without my written consent. Persons who sell or distribute copies or modified copies of my course materials, possess commercial copies of my notes (i.e. Terpnotes), or assist another person or entity in selling or distributing those materials may be considered in violation of the University Code of Student Conduct, Part 9(k).
**Tentative Course Schedule**

*Please study respective readings BEFORE coming to class/discussion section*

*Purple Italics: Handout found on ELMS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Major Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introduction to the Criminal Court System</td>
<td>Lecture notes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Courtroom Actors: Prosecutors and Defense Attorneys</td>
<td>Lecture notes; <em>Sorensen &amp; Wallace, (1999): Prosecutorial Discretion in Seeking Death</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Video: Gideon's Army</td>
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<td>Quiz 1 (Tuesday 2/16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Courtroom Actors: Judges and Jurors</td>
<td>Lecture Notes; <em>Shepherd (2002). Reflections on a Rape Trial</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Pretrial Proceedings</td>
<td>Lecture Notes; <em>Henning &amp; Feder (2005): Criminal Prosecution of Domestic Violence Offenders</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM Thursday 3/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Goals of Sentencing</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The sentencing Process</td>
<td>Ch.2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How Judges Decide</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
<td>Quiz 2 (Tuesday 3/29) Legal Brief Proposal (Saturday 4/2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gender Disparities and Discrimination</td>
<td>Ch. 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Racial Disparities and Discrimination</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sentencing Reforms</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Impact of Sentencing Reforms</td>
<td>Ch. 7</td>
<td>Legal Brief Due (Saturday 4/30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>In-Class Review</td>
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**Final Exam on Thursday, 5/12 at 8AM**