

Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice

CCJS 331: CONTEMPORARY LEGAL POLICY ISSUES

Fall 2021

Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m. or by appointment

COVID REQUIREMENTS

Our masking policy -- **announced August 6, 2021** -- requires everyone to **wear a mask** in public indoor spaces and on Shuttle-UM buses, regardless of vaccination status. For unvaccinated individuals, masks are also required while outdoors in crowded spaces. Additionally, every member of our campus community -- faculty, staff and students -- is expected to comply with the **University System of Maryland vaccine mandate**. Followed effectively, these two protocols can help ensure a vibrant and engaging fall semester.

From the very beginning of this pandemic, our University has followed national, state and county health guidance and we will continue to do so. We understand that changing guidance can be confusing, but as this virus continues to evolve, including the Delta variant, so too must our protocols.

Our goal remains the same: to provide a healthy and safe environment for every member of our campus community to learn, work, live and teach.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of this course is to introduce students to a range of current criminal, civil, and constitutional issues. We will evaluate the legal, ethical, and social implications of these controversial concerns. We will cover topics ranging from institutional racism and the issue of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, political inequality in connection with policing, social movements such as Black Lives Matter, Proud Boys and other right-wing groups and the role of politics and laws influencing these issues. We will further explore issues regarding excessive use of force by the police, the first amendment and the right

to protest, and the criminal prosecution of the individuals accused of storming the capital, the pandemic, the right to refuse vaccinations, the rights of citizens not to be exposed to Corona Virus. We will examine white justice as compared to justice for people of color. Additionally, we will view issues related to the Second Amendment and mass shooting, mass incarceration of people of color, immigration policies, law enforcement and politics, and other similar issues that arise during the semester. Selected readings will frame the legal problems on center stage, allowing us to dissect the multiple layers of each issue. In order to fully explore these topics, we will consider, discuss, and analyze all sides and various arguments in favor of and in opposition of the selected questions. We will mostly debate these issues by analyzing legal opinions, commentaries, readings as assigned, your research, and academic journals. Students will ultimately become familiar with the intricacies of a myriad of moral, ethical, legal, and social dilemmas which currently face and will face our society, our nation, and the world.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There is no required text for this course. Course materials will be provided on ELMS, before and during lectures, through videos, newspapers, magazines, and from the internet. All students will be expected to have read the assigned materials before class. Again, this will be considered as part of your class participation.

COURSE WEBSITE

This class utilizes Canvas (ELMS) for distribution of important course information. To access Canvas, go to <http://elms.umd.edu> and log in with your Directory ID and password. If you have any problems accessing your account, contact the support desk at 301-405-1400. You must be registered for the class to access the course website. The syllabus, additional required readings, class announcements, and grades will be posted on Canvas. You are responsible for knowing the material posted on the website. Writing assignments will also be submitted via Canvas.

COURSE GRADING

Participation: 15%

- Participation refers to active engagement in class discussions

Writing Assignments: 20% each for 3 written assignments and 25% for the fourth assignment. The fourth assignment will be considered as a final for the course in lieu of a final exam.

Percentage points will be converted to a letter grade as listed below:

A+ (97-100%) B+ (87-89%) C+ (77-79%) D+(67-69%) A (93-96%) B (83-86%) C (73-76%) D (63-66%)

A- (90-92%) B- (80-82%) C- (70-72%) D- (60-62%) F (<60%)

Written Assignments: There will be no written exams in this course. There will be relevant topical papers regarding the subject matter discussed or viewed in class or in homework assignments. Students are required to submit the written assignments on time. A failure to turn papers in on time will result in grade reductions.

UNDERSTANDING ASSIGNED READINGS The required readings for this will be provided to you in advance of class. You will be expected to read, analyze, and discuss the articles in class.

ASSIGNMENTS

You will be assigned several short written assignments/exercises throughout the semester that will be announced in class as well as on ELMS. These assignments will typically pertain to current events that are relevant to class discussions.

GRADE DISPUTES

If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe 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 after grades for the relevant assignment have been posted.

COURSE RELATED POLICIES The University of Maryland now maintains a webpage that provides students with information about students' rights and other course-related university policies. Please visit <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html> to review these policies.

DISABILITY SUPPORT I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. To receive documentation, please call DSS at 301-314-7682. This form should be presented to me by September 11, 2018. 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. DSS students who are requesting to take their exams at the DSS Center must submit a request with DSS online 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.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

If you are unable to take an exam due to a religious observance, you will need to notify and discuss the absence with me in advance of the religious observance. Failure to notify me of a religious observance in advance may result in a reduction of point toward your grade.

.ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty of any form will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty encompasses the traditional behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc., but also includes activities such as possessing and/or reviewing previous semesters' exams. Additionally, students will be asked to write the

University approved Honor Pledge on each exam. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student, you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit

<http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/StudentAcademicDishonesty.aspx> .

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

I expect that all students will come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned material to have a productive discussion, assigned readings must be complete PRIOR to the class period and you should come prepared to ask and answer any questions and to provide your opinion on the material. Class discussions are essential to understanding the course material, so please come prepared to participate in group discussions, debates, class games, and group activities. I also expect that students pay attention and take notes during lectures. My lectures and slides WILL NOT be available online. If you miss class, you must get notes from a classmate. If you would like me to review those notes for completeness, please stop by my office hours or make an appointment to discuss what you missed. In order for this class to be a success, we must maintain a respectful environment that is conducive to learning. Disruptive behavior or disrespect toward me or other students will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with each other or with me will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct. The University of Maryland's Code of Academic Integrity defines classroom a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class." This includes such things as leaving the classroom repeatedly, making loud and distracting noises, and conversing with other students during the course lecture. This also includes reading outside material, sleeping, text messaging, and using prohibited technological devices. Repeated classroom disruptions will result in being asked to leave the class and may ultimately affect the grade you receive.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology used for any purpose other than note-taking during class is prohibited. I will allow you to use a laptop to take notes during class if you like, but cell phones, mp3 players, etc. must be turned off during class and put away at all times. If devices are seen or used during class for any purpose other than note-taking, you will be asked to leave class. If any technological devices are seen and/or used during an exam, the exam will be collected from you, and you will no longer be allowed to continue taking the exam. The exam score will be noted as zero and you will be referred to the Student Honor Council. The only exception to the use of technology policy is required accommodations through DSS.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY If the University is closed due to inclement weather on a day that a graded assignment is due, the graded assignment will be due for the next class meeting in which the University is open. This does not apply to the writing

assignment- which is to be uploaded to ELMS at the scheduled time since you need not be present to upload. If the final exam is cancelled, I will follow the University rules for rescheduling.

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

Students will be allowed with my prior approval.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Your feedback about this course is very important to me. An online evaluation will be conducted at the end of the semester. You can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluation.

COPYRIGHT

The lectures that I deliver in this class and the course materials I create and distribute are protected federal copyright law. You are permitted to take notes of lectures and to use course materials for your use in this course. 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 Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Date Topic Assignment Due

Week 1: 9/1 I will review the syllabus with you and address any questions you may have concerning its contents. Thereafter, we will have a class discussion concerning contemporary legal issues and policy that face society today and in the future. Finally, we will start our first discussion about the roots of racism in the United States

Week 2: 9/8 I will discuss with you the history of racism in this country, its contribution to institutional racism, and how it influences our legal and political institutions and their impacts on people of color. This discussion will include socioeconomics and poverty's role on the topics above.

Week 3: 9/15 I will discuss the development of groups such as Black Lives Matters, Antifa, Proud Boys, and other similar groups and their influence on the legal system.

Week 4: 9/18 I will begin to discuss policing, and the use of excessive force

Week 5: 9/22 First written assignment concerning racism and its impact on our legal and political institutions as well as society. (This is a tentative date and is subject to change. I shall, of course, keep you apprised of the actual due date for this assignment.)

I will begin the discussion of the storming of the capitol. Was it an expression of the exercise of the First Amendment or a violent criminal attack on democracy?

.Week 6: 9/29 I will continue the discussion of the storming of the capitol. Was it an expression of the exercise of the First Amendment or a violent criminal attack on democracy? The prosecution of the participants.

Week 7: 10/6 I will begin a discussion of the pandemic and issues concerning the constitutionality of mandatory vaccinations at the federal and/or the state level. I will further discuss whether the vaccination should be required at certain specific institutions, such as federal and state government employees

Week 8: 10/13 of Debates on Gun Control I will discuss mass shootings, will gun control reduce the number of mass shootings, by regulating guns, are we depriving citizens their right to possess the gun of their choosing, and are we depriving citizens of their right to not be injured or killed by not controlling guns? What does the Second Amendment say concerning gun ownership and legislation restricting gun ownership?

Week 9: 10/20 Assignment of second written assignment concerning the pandemic and issues concerning the constitutionality of mandatory vaccinations at the federal and/or the state level. I will further discuss whether the vaccination cards should be required at certain specific institutions, such as federal and state government employees, businesses, and entry into public transportation.

Nov 3: Written Assignment Two Due

Week 10 10/27 I will begin discussion of our criminal justice system. We will explore whether the criminal justice system has two systems of justice, one for white people and the other for people of color. Further, we will look at various actors in the criminal justice system discriminate concerning issues such as who should arrested. Who should be prosecuted, and the types of sentences imposed based upon race and ethnicity.

Week 11: 11/3 Mass Incarceration. What are the reasons for mass incarceration? Are the reasons given valid and do they meet the reasons given for enacting such penalties? Are sentence racist?

Week 12: 11/10 I will begin the discussion of the storming of the capitol. Was it an expression of a legitimate exercise of the First Amendment or a violent criminal attack on democracy? Explain you answer.

Week 13: 11/17 I will continue the discussion of the storming of the capitol. Who should be prosecuted for alleged crimes? What sort of evidence should be required for conviction? Video on the allege assault on the capitol?

Thanksgiving Break 11/24--/11/28

Week 14: 12/1 Third Written Assignment to be given.

I will discuss climate change.

12/8 : **Last Day of Classes Free for All Assignment.** Students will bring to class an original topic for discussion of contemporary legal issues.

Written Assignment 3 December 15