

**University of Maryland, Universities at Shady Grove**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**CCJS 345 COURTS AND SENTENCING FALL 2025**

<b>Class Begins:</b> 9/6/25	<b>Class Ends:</b> 12/8/25	<b>Final Project:</b> Due 12/8/25
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### **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Carlotta A. Woodward	Office: N/A
E-mail: cwoodwar@umd.edu	Phone Number: 240-777-7499(work) or 240-388-3482(cell)
Office Hours: by appointment; before/after class	TA: none

### **Course Information**

Course: CCJS345	Credits: 3
Prerequisites:	Co-requisites:
Meeting Day(s): Monday	Meeting Time(s): 12:30 – 1:45 Building III – Room 3225

### **Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice** **Univ. of MD, College Park @ Shady Grove**

Director: Wendy Stickle, Ph.D.	Phone number: 301-738-6307
<a href="mailto:wstickle@umd.edu">wstickle@umd.edu</a>	Building III; rm 5105

### **Course Description**

This course is intended to provide students with a better understanding of American criminal courts. We will focus on how criminal courts operate, who the important actors are, and the most pressing issues facing United States criminal courts today. Over the semester we will cover a variety of classes ranging from criminal prosecution, judicial discretion, racial disparities in sentencing, and the connection between criminal courts and the United States correctional system. Students will be expected to consider both theoretical perspectives and empirical research evidence regarding criminal courts as well as to think critically about how our current knowledge about criminal courts and sentencing can help inform the future development and amelioration of the United States.

### **Course Website**

This class utilizes Canvas (ELMS) for distribution of important course information. The syllabus, additional required reading and video, class announcements, group assignments, homework assignments, writing assignments and exams. You are required to know and be responsible for knowing the material posted on the website.

### **Text(s)**

Required Text: Hemmens, C., Brody, D., Sphon, C. <i>Criminal Courts A contemporary Perspective</i> , 5 <sup>th</sup> Ed. Sage Publishing
(Other readings as assigned)

## Progress Report

Students may review their progress at any time by entering the “grades” feature in ELMS.

By the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> week of the semester, you will have an opportunity to evaluate your progress in this course and decide if you need to make any adjustments (additional study, tutoring, conference with instructor) to assure your success in this course.

## Assessment Method

Exams / Discussions / Paper / Homework	Point Value
1 Midterm (100 points)	100 pts
Discussion Board (10 @ 20 pts. each week)	200 pts
Participation in class topics and discussions	100 pts
Homework/Final Project (2) 300 pts total	300 pts.
Extra credit	Additional points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>700</b>

## Grade Distribution

A+: 97% and above	B-: 82% to 80%	D: 66% to 63%
A: 96% to 93%	C+: 79% to 77%	D-: 62% to 60%
A-: 92% to 90%	C: 76% to 73%	F: Less than 60%
B+: 89% to 87%	C-: 72% to 70%	
B: 86% to 83%	D+: 69% to 67%	

## Codes of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Students are required to uphold the Code of Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. Students who violate either of these codes may receive a failing grade in the class. Regarding assignments and exams, students should always observe the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Your academic work should be the result of your efforts, thoughts, and ideas. When writing papers or assignments, you should use an appropriate citation style consistently, indicating exactly where you are quoting, or have been inspired by, the work of others.

Cheating on any assignment or exam will result in the following disciplinary actions:

- (1) “XF” (a cheating F) will be the grade earned for the course, and (2) possible expulsion from the UMCP’s B.A. Program in Criminology & Criminal Justice at the Shady Grove Center, effective the following semester. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Student Honor Council at UMCP.
- (2) Examples of conduct meriting such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - (1) cheating on an exam, either with or without assistance of another student or students, (2) submitting as your own work a paper that is either wholly or partially plagiarized, such as purchasing a paper from an internet site or superficially rewriting the work of others without proper citation, or (3) collaborating with fellow students on assignments or take-home exams for which you were instructed to work alone.

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized *Code of Academic Integrity*. 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://www.shc.umd.edu>

**Papers and assignments are subject to an originality check via turnitin.com. I submit all papers to this site to verify original work.**

**All electronic devices (cell phones, etc.) must be turned off and put away. Laptops are permitted for note-taking purposes only. You cannot participate fully if you are engaged in other activities.**

Should a student need accommodations in the classroom or for assignments/exams due to a verified, documented learning or physical disability, please inform me of your situation immediately, so that proper UMCP documentation and accommodation procedures are followed. <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/dss/>

Link to University course policies: <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

## Participation, Attendance and Make-up Policy

Students are expected to adhere to the class schedule, attend and participate in every class, come to class on time and remain in class until it is completed. **Class participation, to include discussion, group and individual class work, and respectful interaction between the instructor and students are emphasized in this course.**

If you are absent from class, you cannot participate; therefore, class should only be missed for serious illness, emergency, religious holidays, or participation in official college functions. Opportunities to make-up missed in-class work will only be given in cases of excused absences and **official documentation is required**. Exams and assignments are considered to be Major Scheduled Graded Events and therefore the University medical excuse policy which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does not apply to them. Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, required school activities, and required court appearance. If a doctor will not write you a note, you will need to get a copy of your medical record from them to verify your illness. By law, you are entitled to get a copy of this and it is your responsibility to do so. I must be notified in person or by phone or email PRIOR to missing an in-class assignment for me to consider giving you a makeup. If you know you will not be in class for in-class work or a date an assignment is due for an excused reason it is your responsibility to turn in the work PRIOR to the due date.

What to do if you must seek to be excused from class: Contact me by email or phone at the contact number on this syllabus as soon as you know you will be unable to attend class. Excusal will be granted, at my discretion, and make up work and late assignments accepted in these emergency cases as contracted and documented in email between the student and instructor. In case of excused absence, students are responsible for requesting missed material from another student or the instructor.

**PER UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND POLICY FOR A STUDENT'S MEDICALLY NECESSITATED ABSENCE FROM CLASS, students shall now make a reasonable attempt to inform the instructor of his/her illness prior to the class; and, upon returning to class, present their instructor with a self-signed note attesting to the date of their illness. Each note must also contain an acknowledgment by the student that the information provided is true and correct. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 9 (h) of the *Code of Student Conduct* (V-1.00(B) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT) and may result in disciplinary action.**

[https://pdc-svpaapl.umd.edu/teach/attend\\_student.html](https://pdc-svpaapl.umd.edu/teach/attend_student.html)

## Lecture, Exams and Assignment Schedule

<u>Class</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
9/8	Introduction to the course/Sources of Law	Chapter 1 and Chapter 2	
9/15	Sources of Law	Chapter 2	Online Discussion
9/22	Types of Law	Chapter 3	Online Discussion
9/29	Court Organization and Structure	Chapter 4	Online Discussion
10/6	Prosecutors and Defense Attorneys	Chapter 5 and 6	Online Discussion
10/13	FALL BREAK – NO CLASS		
10/20	Judges and Criminal Defendants and Crime Victims	Chapter 7 and Chapter 8	<b><u>HOMEWORK #1 DUE</u></b> Online Discussion Review for Exam
10/27	<b>MIDTERM</b>	Chapters 1-8	
11/3	The Jury	Chapter 9	Online Discussion
11/10	Pretrial Procedures	Chapter 10	Online Discussion
11/17	The Criminal Trial	Chapter 11	Online Discussion
11/24	Sentencing	Chapter 12	Online Discussion
12/1	The Appellate Process/ Specialized Courts	Chapters 13 and 14	Online Discussion
12/8	<b>FINAL PROJECT</b>		<b><u>FINAL PROJECT DUE -</u></b> <b><u>MUST BE SUBMITTED BY</u></b> <b><u>1:45 P.M.</u></b>

### **\*\* Discussion Board and Participation Policy \*\***

Class participation, to include participation in the discussion board, individual class work, and respectful interaction between the instructor and students are emphasized in this course.

**Participation:** The class participation for this course is designed within the framework of online classes and class lectures, and is intended to support the learning process. Being active and involved in the conferences is considered your “Discussion” grade in this course, and students are expected to participate fully in all course activities. To complete this course successfully you do NOT have to be online at a particular day or time. However, the course follows a weekly schedule. Students are expected to complete all the work assigned for a particular week and to observe all deadlines throughout the semester. In case of illness, emergency, religious holidays, or participation in official college functions, students remain responsible for completing the requirements of the course. ***Late assignments will not be accepted unless approved by the instructor ahead of time. Home computer problems will not result in a deadline extension.***

**Discussion Board:** I will label the discussion “Week 1, 2, etc.” This will make it easier for you to track the discussions. Each week will begin on Monday (I will have it online by Monday at 1:45 p.m. and close on the following Monday at 12:30 p.m. (EST). **That means you have seven (7) days to complete your discussion board work. I will post a question/topic on the discussion board each week. The discussion board is set up to be a “reflection loop.” In other words, you will need to respond to my initial question/topic (post) on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of each week; this posting is worth a maximum of ten (10) points. You will then need to respond to at least two of your classmates’ posts between Thursday and Monday.** Early posts create more discussion, so I do encourage posting early in the week. These postings are worth a maximum of five (5) points each. Thus, you could earn a maximum of 20 points per week by participating on the discussion board. We will use the discussion board for most weeks (with the exception of the test weeks) of this class and/or if there is a change that I will announce during class or via email. Maximum points for the discussion board are 200 (10 pts. for each post to the initial question; 5 pts. for each of the two postings to your classmates’ posts; for a maximum total of 20 points per week), and there will be a total of 10 discussions.

Your responses should be in paragraph format and although the conferences are somewhat informal, spelling and grammar are still important. “I agree” will not count as a post. Below is the grading rubric for the discussion board. **NOTE:** You will only be able to post for the current week. If you forget to post the previous week, then you lose your opportunity to earn any points for that week. (You can post as many times as you like each week. The more you post, the more you participate, and the higher your grade will be). **The discussion board will close by Monday at 12:30 p.m. (EST).**

*Netiquette:* You will be communicating with one another via the discussion board. It is likely that you will not always agree with the opinions of your fellow classmates. Disagreement is fine but you will need to respect others’ views. Thus, personal attacks and derogatory comments will not be tolerated. If, however, you do disagree with someone, then I expect you to state your position in an articulate fashion on the discussion board.

**Grading Rubric:**

0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points	4 Points	5 Points
Does not respond to postings; does not participate freely. No effort to participate in learning community as it develops. Didn't post in each required topic for each week.	Does not respond to most postings. Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent. Comments or questions were not responsive to the discussion questions.	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group. Comments or questions provided some evidence that the participant had read the course material.	Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely. Comments or questions enhanced the quality of discussion (i.e., suggested new perspectives on an issue, asked questions that helped stimulate further discussion, etc.)	Consistently responds to posting; demonstrates good self-initiative. Frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic. Participant posted a significant response in the form of comments and/or questions to all required conference topics posted for that week.	Exceeds all expectations when responding to posts.

**Homework/Final Project:** There is one homework assignment and one final project. You must submit the assignment on the due dates. **There will be no exceptions.**

### **Homework Assignment #1 (100 points)**

#### **THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AS ENTERTAINMENT CRITIQUE**

There are many programs that showcase the criminal justice system on TV or Streaming Services. As opposed to *Law and Order*, *CSI*, *How to get Away with Murder* and the like, these programs purport to be fact-based.

For this assignment, you must choose a series that denotes the criminal justice system as the basis for the series. I would prefer you pick a series that is based upon a true case. Note: The following are examples: *Making a Murderer*; *Cold Justice*; *Unbelievable*

***You must email the instructor and get approval for use a specific program for this assignment. I would be happy to provide ideas for series for each student based upon what may be more interesting to that student.***

### **Critique Requirements and Formatting**

Papers must be a minimum of three (3) (not including the cover page), double-spaced, typed pages, and must include the following:

1. Cover page with your name, project title, course and date of submission.
2. Section 1: Introduction, purpose, brief synopsis of each episode or program selected.
3. Section 2: Which area(s) of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections) is highlighted? How is this segment(s) of the system portrayed? How is the "juvenile/criminal" portrayed (if applicable)? Which theory would explain the criminal behavior (if applicable)? How is the "victim" portrayed (if applicable)? How is the victim treated by the system (if applicable)? Does the victim receive justice (if applicable)?
4. Conclusion: What message do you feel the public receives about the criminal justice system as a result of watching these programs? What do you feel is the value of these shows in either making the public more aware of crime and justice in American or de-sensitizing them to the seriousness of crime in America?
5. Reference page – If you don't use any outside sources or the text, both of which I encourage you to incorporate into your paper, you must still list the show itself as a reference.

## **Homework Assignment #2/Final Project (200 points)**

### **COURTROOM OBSERVATION**

To truly understand how the court system works with respect to Courts and Sentencing, each student should observe the Court process.

For this assignment, each student is required to attend a Circuit Court matter or a District Court docket in Montgomery County, Maryland or the county that is easiest for you. As an Assistant State's Attorney, I will help facilitate you in the courtroom. In observing a docket, you will be able to also observe the Sheriff's, Parole and Probation, Courtroom Clerk, Law Clerk, Judge, attorneys, defendants and in some cases juries. The dockets are in the morning and this will allow you to get a good feel for the criminal justice system. Each student can contact me and I can direct you where cases are being heard.

### **Critique Requirements and Formatting**

Papers must be a minimum of six (6) (not including the cover page), double-spaced, typed pages, and must include the following:

1. Cover page with your name, project title, course and date of submission.
2. Section 1: Introduction, purpose, brief synopsis of each case observed.
3. Section 2: Which areas of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections) did you observe while you were in Court? What is your observation as to Court process? How did the sheriffs interact with the defendants, judge, attorney's, and witnesses? What did you observe with respect to the State's Attorney's and the defense attorneys? What, if anything, did you observe with respect to the defendant's family and their role in this process? What, if anything, did you observe with respect to the victim or victim's representative?
4. Section 3: How did this experience relate to class, what you have learned in class and what your thoughts were before you took this class?
5. Conclusion: Does this experience change or enhance your views of the Courts? How did this experience affect you and your thoughts about the Courts?