

Introduction to Criminal Justice

CRJU 1113 |

Tues & Thurs 9:30 AM to 10:50 AM | Martin #108

Instructor information

Michael Alpers

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Office Hours: Tues. 9-12, Thurs. 9-12

Email to arrange appointments

Course description

This course provides students with engaging, comprehensive, and up-to-date coverage of all aspects of the criminal justice system. This course will give students the foundational knowledge that they need to be critical thinkers and active participants within the criminal justice field. By exploring criminal justice from a balanced perspective with an issues-oriented approach, students will understand how decision-making is critical to the criminal justice process. In particular, students will come to appreciate how their own future careers will be shaped by the decisions they make. I chose a textbook that explores criminal justice from a student-centered perspective by presenting research-driven material in an accessible, clear, and succinct writing style.

Course objectives

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how criminal justice is a social science;
- Discuss the legal, social, and behavior perspectives of crime;
- Describe the process of ethical decision making in the criminal justice system;
- Evaluate the importance of studying crime typologies;
- Identify the five theoretical frameworks that criminological theories use to explain crime;
- Compare and contrast the goals of punishment;
- Identify how technology has influenced criminal justice and crime.

Course instructional methods

The course will be taught through D2L as an online course. If necessary students may be called in to defend work, or present work to the instructor if required.

Course required text and materials

Robert Regoli, John Hewitt, Marie-Helen Maras : Exploring Criminal Justice; The Essentials (3rd Edition)
ISBN# 9781284112979.

Recommended resources for additional exploration

The [Introduction to Criminal Justice student companion website](#):

This site is a particularly good resource for review.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Discussions (14) 10 Points Each = 140 points
- Quizzes (4) (100 points each = 400 points)
- Writing Assignments (x2) –(100 points each = 200 points)

- Midterm Exam–100 points
- Final Exam –200 points
- Total =1040 Points

Grading Scale:

- ❖ A = 1040 (100%) – 936 pts (90%)
- ❖ B = 935 (89%) – 831 pts (80%)
- ❖ C = 830 (79%) – 726 pts (70%)
- ❖ D = 725 (69%) – 621 pts (60%)
- ❖ F = 620 (59%) – 0 pts (0%)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will be required to submit 2 writing assignments during the semester. The assignment needs to be 5 pages in length and follow the format that will be discussed in dropbox on d2l. Further details about the rules of these assignments will be given in class. The format for the papers will be the most current APA rules and format.

QUIZZES:

Students will be given 4 quizzes throughout the course relating to chapter content. The date of each quiz will be given in the class meeting before the quiz. ***Makeups will not be given for quizzes.**

EXAMS:

There will be two exams – a midterm and a final. Each may be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, identification, short answer and/or essay questions. The exams are designed to test your familiarity with the lecture material, reading assignments, and your independent ability to apply what you have learned.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

If you do not attend class you will not do well. Per school policy, I will be taking attendance daily. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences in this course. Students who exceed the maximum number of unexcused absences may be administratively withdrawn from the course or receive a failing grade in the course.

MAKEUP AND LATE WORK

The scheduled dates of all exams are clearly indicated in this syllabus. No make-up exams or late papers will be accepted without my **PRIOR APPROVAL**.

CLASSROOM POLICY – Does not apply to online format.

Cell Phones, headphones, earbuds, games etc. must be turned off and put away during.

EARBUDS must not be in your ears or ear during class! This includes having an earbud dangling from one ear. Violation of this policy will result in you being counted absent for that day. More than two violations will result in you being administratively dropped from the course. Sleeping, reading newspapers or books is also prohibited.

Support for students with disabilities

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an 'invisible disability' such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services. This instructor will be as flexible as possible to accommodate the needed services. Any student who has a concern or needs to make special arrangements for meeting the requirements of the course is encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Academic honesty policy

Be sure that you understand the university's Academic Honesty Policy. It is important that you refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. You should also be aware that as a member of the academic community, it is your responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the honor system. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: inappropriate citations of sources, "padding" your references, purchasing/copying a paper from the internet or friend, copying and pasting from a resource etc. Plagiarism of assignments will result in a grade of 0 and will be reported

Faculty Expectation:

Professor Alpers' Faculty Expectations Message

As a professional educator, I have some reasonable expectations of my learners. My first goal in this course is that you learn the maximum amount of material possible. However, I am reasonable. Research into pedagogy and andagogy indicate that learners will remember less than 10% of course material a year after the course has concluded. As such, there are some topics within each course that I teach which, in my professional experience, I believe you will find most useful and needed as a scholar-practitioner.

Academic Integrity

All assignments, discussions boards, etc. should follow the rules of academic integrity established by Midwestern State University, as well as your discipline. Please see MSU's policy on academic integrity for more information. If you should ever have a question regarding academic integrity please contact me.

Length of Class

This class is designed to be 16 weeks long. Each week you will be responsible for reading, responding to discussion questions, responding to your learner colleagues' discussion questions, submitting assignments, and so on. It is imperative that you develop and maintain the discipline to keep up with the course work.

Syllabus

On the course home page you will find a link to your course syllabus. Please review this syllabus very thoroughly and get in touch with me ASAP if you have a question or reservations as to whether or not you will be able to complete the course given the time-frame.

Learning Unit Objectives and Activities

Within each of the learning units you will find learning unit objectives and activities. This is a very handy tool for you to use to help guide you through the course successfully. You can also use this section of the course as a "checklist" to ensure that you have completed all the required assignments and discussions for the week.

The discussions you respond to each week are a critical and integral portion of the course. This is where I can make the determination, or non-determination, that you are (1) reading, (2) comprehending, (3) applying, and (4) correlating the knowledge you learn to other aspects of the course and your degree program in general.

Proper References and Citations

You should utilize APA 6th edition referencing whenever and wherever possible throughout the course. Proper referencing and citations are a key component to preventing plagiarism and avoiding academic dishonesty (both

intentionally and unintentionally).

Asking Questions

A link may be provided for you in the course room entitled "Ask Professor Alpers." I strongly advise you to heavily use this link (if present) for questions you have which will help the entire class. Of course, feel free to e-mail me directly with private concerns. However, do not feel offended when if you send me an e-mail asking a question and I ask you to post it in the "Ask Professor Alpers" section. All this indicates is that you have asked an important question that I believe the entire class will benefit from hearing the answer. If this link is not present, then please e-mail any questions to me at michael.alpers@mwsu.edu.

E-Mail Etiquette

When attempting to communicate with a faculty member regarding a class, please include the class name, number, and course section in the subject line of the e-mail. Without this, the faculty member may have a great deal of difficulty determining which course you are in, and may also result in additional time-consuming e-mails trying to figure this out. E-mails sent to Professor Alpers which are lacking this information shall be deleted without further review or response.

Pop-Up & Download Blockers

Be sure that your pop-up blocker is turned OFF when working in WebCT. Also, make sure that you do not have a download blocker on when working in WebCT.

Grading

Grading in this course will be assessed on the 100 point scale utilizing criterion-based assessments. The syllabus contains a section entitled "Grading" which specifies the weights associated with each assignment.

Additionally, your class grade and class letter grade are based on a "running total" in the class. As such, when I enter a grade for you, the class grade and class letter grade will reflect ONLY the information I have put into the database. For this reason you will see "low grades" until all grades are submitted. Thus, if you see that you only have, for example, a "3" in the course after the week one participation grades are in, and that your course grade is "F", there is no need to panic. These grades will change and increase as more grades are entered. If you send me an e-mail about this later in the term I will refer you to this faculty expectations message.

Exceptional Cases/Exigent Circumstances

In the event of exigent circumstances (i.e., family emergency, death in the family, etc.) I will make modifications to the due dates for learners on a case-by-case basis. You must contact me as soon as practicable in the event that an exception needs to be made. I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate your needs.

Professor Alpers' Contact Information

You may e-mail me at michael.alpers@msutexas.edu with any questions, thoughts, or concerns that you have in the course.

What you can expect of me

I will answer all e-mail messages within 48-hours of seeing them during the work week. On weekends I will be unavailable. I will respond to discussion postings, assignments, etc. that you make within 72 hours of seeing it (excluding weekends).

Professor Alpers' Teaching Philosophy

I believe that teaching is a discipline of inquiry and that teachers should be dedicated to the scholarship and advancement of the field. Teaching is a discipline of inquiry in that a teacher must be curious about the world in which he or she lives in order to seek out the requisite knowledge to become an expert in her or his field of study. Without inquiring minds, there would be no need for teachers, because there would be no students. Students, by their nature, are inquiring minds. They want to know more about the subject matter, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to convey his or her knowledge in an effective, efficient, and impartial manner.

I believe that to be an effective teacher you must have a deep understanding of the subject matter as well as the underlying pedagogical theory. A teacher must have read all of the current research on his or her subject and be ready, able, and willing to answer all conceivable questions. Inevitably, though, some questions are asked that the teacher does not know the answer to. I believe it very wise and humble to tell your students that you do not know the answer, but that the next time you see them that you will know the answer and that it will be referenced. If a teacher does not know his or her subject matter thoroughly, then the best that s/he can do is to teach directly out of the book, a true travesty of education. The course textbook(s) should be considered a guide, not the primary conveyer of knowledge. In my view, students pay a great sum of money to attain a liberal University education and to have qualified professors teach to them, not preach to them from the book.

I believe that a teacher must know his or her students in order to be effective. If a teacher does not know his or her students, then the teacher cannot understand the needs of those students. It is my obligation as a teacher to attempt to get to know my students on a personal, academic level. It is this interaction between student and professor that ensures the great traditions established in academe and furthers the educational process.

I believe that the primary role of a teacher is as an enabler. This means that the teacher should enable students to become responsible enough to advance their own learning outside the classroom. The ability and willingness of a student to seek knowledge, without the constant prodding of a professor, is a direct measure of the effectiveness of a person's ability to teach. In this capacity it is my belief that a teacher should expose the student to more than just a few sources of information and perspectives on a subject. That is, the student should be exposed to the broad spectrum of perspectives that exist in a globalized world. I believe this to be the true cornerstone of a liberal education.

I believe in advancing cultural and intellectual diversity, which enhances both the breadth and depth of learning. Cultural diversity enhances student's understanding of the world in which they reside. Students soon discover that there is more than their hometown perspective when they are exposed to people from cultures and countries from around the world. Intellectual diversity means that students should be exposed to a broad array of thought process paradigms. This includes the Socratic method of teaching law, learning in a seminar environment, and many other types of conveying knowledge and honing analytical reasoning skills.

I believe that writing is a critically important skill that a student must develop. If students do not develop the ability to write in accordance with their stage in life, then there is no one to blame but the teachers responsible for their education. I believe that students should have to write a paper or series of papers for every class they take in the social sciences. Once the paper has been written, it is the responsibility of the teacher to thoroughly edit and critique the paper. I edit all papers from senior level courses as if they are being submitted for publication. I then return the papers to the students with a grade and give them the opportunity to revise the paper for an improved grade. I inform my students that to get an "A" on the course paper means that the paper is

publishable, albeit with more refinement. I have found this to be important to students because they enjoy seeing their work published. Publication gives students a genuine sense of accomplishment.

I believe that pedagogy should be studied and advanced. The science and art of pedagogy is an area in which all teachers should be thoroughly read. Journals such as the Journal of Criminal Justice Education provide excellent resources for current literature on pedagogical issues specific to criminal justice education. I also believe that teachers at the University level should take an active research interest in all of their classes and approach each one as a pilot experiment. That is, each class should contribute and build upon the next in a continual learning process. This process of enhancing our own pedagogical skills does not stop after a few years of teaching, but must be aggressively pursued.

Finally, there are four themes that have emerged in my limited experience as a teacher. I attempt to hone:

1. Reflective practitioners,
2. Collaborative thinkers,
3. Effective communicators, and
4. Persons who appreciate diverse subject matter.

I consider these themes to be my personal duty to confer upon each student. A reflective practitioner is a creative person who can think independently and who can learn how to learn for themselves. A collaborative thinker is a person who has good listening and analytical skills and who is willing to share their ideas with others. An effective communicator is a person who can organize their thoughts and reasoning and who can write and speak effectively. Finally, persons who appreciate diverse subject matter are people that understand complex concepts, who value new knowledge, and who appreciate high standards of quality. I consider all of these themes to be critically important as a personal measure of teaching success.

Course Schedule (SEE D2L)

Internet course is broke down into weeks. Students should complete all work in the tab for the week.