GRADUATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE
CRIM 7400 – 01
Fall 2014

Professor: Gregory M. Zimmerman, PhD
Office: Churchill Hall 417
Email: g.zimmerman@neu.edu
Class: Churchill Hall 200, M 1:35–4:05
Office Hours: R 1:30–4:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course offers Masters students an opportunity to integrate knowledge of criminological theory and justice policy with the research skills gained while working toward completion of the graduate degree. Successful completion of this course requires the formulation of a research question that addresses a societal problem, the conceptualization of the scope of the answer to the research question, and the submission of an in-depth analysis of the question with reference to theory, methodology, and policy. There are three key learning outcomes:

- To bring together and utilize the diverse sets of skills and knowledge gained throughout the Masters coursework.
- To gain in-depth knowledge on a criminological or criminal justice topic of interest to the student.
- To gain new skills (and have an opportunity to practice) researching and writing a paper on a criminological or criminal justice topic.

COURSE PROJECT

The first part of the semester will be devoted to formulating a research question embedded in criminological discourse. There is flexibility in the nature and scope of student questions, but the Professor must oversee and approve all topics. Over the course of the semester, students will work both with the Professor and with their fellow students to research their topics and design studies to address their research questions, which must take into account theory, methodology, and policy. The paper will be submitted in parts to allow for feedback and revisions prior to the submission of the final product. The final paper should demonstrate evidence of mastery of relevant criminological and criminal justice theory and research as well as research methods. There is no expectation that the paper will include a novel empirical component.

COURSE MEETINGS

This is a hybrid course that has required in-class sessions, individual student-Professor meetings, and online components. During the beginning of the semester, classes will meet more regularly and will focus on the formulation of a research topic. The middle of the semester will revolve primarily around individual meetings and online components.
This phase of the course will involve substantial independent work outside of class. Students will exchange ideas and papers through Blackboard and provide feedback. The instructor will oversee this process. Students will also be responsible for regular meetings with the instructor. Class will meet regularly during the end of the semester, when students will present summaries of their research papers to the class.

COURSE READINGS

There is no required text for the course. All course readings will be available on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A number of different graded requirements will be utilized to fulfill the course goals. Graded requirements include (1) action items (discussion board forums, peer reviews, and written assignment structured around the building of the research project); (2) a final research project; (3) a class presentation of the final research project; and (4) attendance/participation. See the “Course Grading” section below for specific allocation of points. These requirements will be discussed in depth throughout the semester.

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard technology will be integrated into this class. You can access main blackboard site at http://blackboard.neu.edu. You are responsible for checking this site regularly as course information will be added to the site. Blackboard training courses are offered for free through the University. See a representation from the “Help Desk” at the Info Commons in Snell Library.

COMMUNICATION

Students are expected to check Blackboard as well as their email on a regular basis. Important information such as assignments, class cancellations, and changes in course material may be relayed via Blackboard and email.

CLASS POLICIES

Extended Absences

In the rare instance where a student expects to miss class for an extended period of time (i.e., serious illness) or multiple classes regarding the same issue, he or she must contact me as soon as possible. Students must provide a documented reason for an extended absence in order to make any arrangements regarding missed work. All circumstances will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Laptops, Cell Phones, and Pagers

You are not permitted to use the internet in the classroom; laptops should only be used for taking notes. Please turn off your cell phones and pagers before coming to class. This includes text messaging! If I suspect you of using technology for purposes unrelated to the course, I reserve the right to disallow the use of technology in the classroom.
**Personal Responsibility and Extra Credit**

I do not “give out” grades – you earn them. When a grade is earned by you, I will not change it. If you need help, ask for it; do not wait until it is too late to seek help. *Absolutely no extra credit will be given or accepted.* Arrive to class on time, come prepared, respect others’ views, and turn in assignments on time.

**Missing Assignments**

I must be notified in advance if you will be missing a class session when an assignment is due. Acceptable “excuses” relate to serious emergencies such as a death in the family and serious illness. Documentation may be requested and I reserve the right to approve or deny any such requests. In addition, if you miss class on a day when an assignment is due, I must receive the assignment by email or hard-copy before the ending time of the class. Unexcused late assignments will be penalized 25% each day (including Saturday and Sunday), beginning immediately after the class ends (note that an assignment submitted 5 minutes after class ends will be considered late and penalized 25%). After four days, a grade of zero will be given for any assignment not handed in.

**CONTACTING ME**

If you need to contact me, use the email provided above. Please put “GRADUATE CAPSTONE” in the subject line of the email.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students enrolled in this course must adhere to Northeastern University’s policy on “Academic Honesty and Integrity.” Those of you who are unfamiliar with this policy are expected to read it online at: [http://www.neu.edu/osccr/academichonesty.html](http://www.neu.edu/osccr/academichonesty.html). Violations of the academic honesty and integrity policy will not be tolerated, and will be reported to university officials. I take this policy very seriously and will make every effort to ensure it is strictly followed. If you are caught cheating, you will receive a failing grade for the course – no exceptions. If you are in any way unclear about this policy, please come speak to me.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any student who may require special accommodations for this course should notify me as soon as possible. You may need to register with the university’s Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC can provide students with services such as note-takers and extended time for taking exams. The DRC is located in 20 Dodge Hall and can be reached at 617-373-2675.

**COURSE GRADING**

The final course grade (out of 1000 points) consists of 4 key components:
Class Attendance/Participation 110
Students are expected to attend every in-class meeting and every scheduled individual meeting with the professor. The attendance and participation grade is based on attendance and participation during these meetings.

Final Course Research Paper 150
Details regarding the final paper will be discussed throughout the semester.

Class Presentation 150
Details regarding the presentation of the final paper will be discussed throughout the semester.

Action Items 590
Action items work in conjunction toward the final paper and presentation. Action items consist of written/oral assignments, peer reviews, and discussion board forums. There are 5 written/oral assignments (70 points each) for a total of 350 points. There are 2 peer reviews (30 points each) for a total of 60 points. There are 6 discussion boards (30 points each) for a total of 180 points. Detailed expectations for each of the action items will be discussed in class. Below is a detailed list of the action items:

Action Item I (70 points)
- In class PPT presentation on 3 potential research topics
- Assigned: 9/8
- Due and presented: 9/15

Action Item II, Part I (30 points)
- Discussion Board I
- Choose a topic/question and link the topic/question to policy and practice
- Assigned: 9/15
- Initial posting due: 9/17
- Completed: 9/21

Action Item II, Part II (30 points)
- Discussion Board II
- Make the case for the import of the research topic and research question
- Assigned: 9/15
- Initial posting due: 9/17
- Completed: 9/21

Action Item III (70 points)
- Write a formal introduction to the course project
- Assigned: 9/29
- Due: 10/6
Action Item IV, Part I (30 points)
- Peer review of a classmate’s introduction
  - Assigned: 9/29
  - Due: 10/13

Action Item IV, Part II (30 points)
- Discussion Board III
- Exchange of ideas regarding the improvement of the introduction
  - Assigned: 9/29
  - Completed: 10/19

Action Item V (70 points)
- Annotated bibliography
  - Assigned: 9/29
  - Due: 10/20

Action Item VI (30 points)
- Discussion Board IV
- State general topic and specific research question; identify theoretical foundation for study; discuss
  - Assigned: 10/20
  - Initial posting due: 10/22
  - Completed: 10/26

Action Item VII (30 points)
- Discussion Board V
- State general topic and specific research question; identify structure of the review of the empirical literature; discuss
  - Initial posting due: 10/22
  - Completed: 10/26

Action Item VIII (70 points)
- Formal outline of literature review
  - Assigned: 10/27
  - Due: 11/3

Action Item IX (70 points)
- Formal outline of research design
  - Assigned: 10/27
  - Due: 11/3

Action Item X, Part I (30 points)
- Peer review of a classmate’s introduction
  - Assigned: 10/27
  - Due: 11/5
Action Item X, Part II (30 points)
- Discussion Board VI
- Discussion of research design outline
- Assigned: 10/27
- Due: 11/9

Note that absolutely no extra credit will be given or accepted in this course. Grades will be based strictly on the assignments above.

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100%-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92%-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89%-87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86%-83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79%-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76%-73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69%-67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66%-63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>62%-60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 8 – Class Meeting: “Getting Started”
Goals:
- Introduce the course
- Read and understand syllabus and course requirements
- Move toward the course project
Discussions:
- How to choose a research topic
- Brainstorming
Assignments:
- Action Item I (assigned)
Readings:

September 15 – Class Meeting: “Choosing a Research Topic”
Goals:
- Receive feedback on potential topics
- Progress toward the course project
Discussions:
- Accessing information
Assignments:
- Action Item I (presented)
- Action Item II, Part I: Discussion Board I (assigned)
- Action Item II, Part II: Discussion Board II (assigned)
Readings:

**September 22 – Online Component: “Identifying Solutions to a Societal Problem”**

Goals:
• Receive feedback on topic and research question
• Get topic and research question approved
• Make the case for why your topic is one of the most pressing issues facing criminal justice today
• Identify solutions to your societal problem

Assignments:
• Action Item II, Part I: Discussion Board I (completed)
  • Initial posting due by end of day 9/17
  • 3+ responses to classmates’ initial postings due by end of day 9/21
  • Final topic and question must be approved by end of day 9/21
• Action Item II, Part II: Discussion Board II (completed)
  • Initial posting of outline due by end of day 9/17
  • 3+ responses to classmates’ initial postings due by end of day 9/21

**September 29 – Class Meeting: “Framing the Literature Review”**

Goals:
• Define scope of course project
• Begin to frame the literature review

Discussions:
• Framing the literature review

Assignments:
• Action Item III (assigned)
• Action Item IV, Part I (assigned)
• Action Item IV, Part II: Discussion Board III (assigned)
• Action Item V (assigned)

Readings:

**October 6 – Online Component: “Peer Reviews of Introductions”**

Goals:
• Submit introduction
• Begin peer reviews of introductions

Assignments:
• Action Item III (submitted)
October 13 – No Class in Observance of Columbus Day
Assignments:
- Action Item IV, Part I (submitted)
- Action Item IV, Part II: Discussion Board III (begin discussion)

October 20 – Individual Meetings: “Structuring the Literature Review”
Goals:
- Report on review of research
- Discuss the framing of the literature review
Online component:
- Action Item VI: Discussion Board IV
  - “Theory”
  - State general topic and specific research question (~ 1 paragraph)
  - Identify theoretical foundation for study (~ 1–2 paragraphs)
  - Initial posting by end of day Wednesday 10/22
  - Feedback through 3+ responses to classmates by end of day Sunday 10/26
- Action Item VII: Discussion Board V
  - “Review of the empirical literature”
  - State general topic and specific research question (~ 1 paragraph)
  - Identify structure
    - 3–4 bullet points
    - Summarize findings under each bullet point
  - Initial posting by end of day Wednesday 10/22
  - Feedback through 3+ responses to classmates by end of day Sunday 10/26
Assignments:
- Action Item IV, Part II: Discussion Board III (completed)
- Action Item V (submitted)

October 27 – Class Meeting: “Choosing a Research Design”
Goals:
- Choose appropriate research design for course project
Discussions:
- Choosing a research design
- Group brainstorming
Assignments:
- Action Item VIII (assigned)
- Action Item IX (assigned)
- Action Item X, Part I (assigned)
- Action Item X, Part II: Discussion Board VI (assigned)
Readings:
November 3 – Online Component: “Finalizing the Research Design”

Goals:
- Distribute literature review outline for professor feedback
- Distribute research design outline for peer feedback with instructor guidance
- Finalize the research design for course project

Assignments:
- Action Item VIII (submitted)
- Action Item IX (submitted)
- Action Item X, Part I (submitted by end of day Wednesday 11/5)
- Action Item X, Part II: Discussion Board VI (begin)

November 10 – Class Meeting: “Writing the Conclusion Section”

Goals
- Write, edit, and finalize the course research paper
- Focus on discussion and implications of research

Discussions:
- How to conclude a research paper
- Formatting the class presentation

Assignments:
- Action Item X, Part II: Discussion Board VI (completed)

November 17: Class Meeting

Goals:
- Present research papers to the class

Assignments:
- Final Research Paper (submitted)

November 24: Class Meeting

Goals:
- Present research papers to the class

December 1: Class Meeting

Goals:
- Present research papers to the class