GRADUATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE
CRIM 7400 – 01
Spring 2016

Professor: Gregory M. Zimmerman, PhD
Office: Churchill Hall 417
Email: g.zimmerman@neu.edu
Class: Churchill Hall 200, M 5:30–8:00
Office Hours: M 2:00–4:00

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 assignments 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 the 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 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 submitting an assignment late. 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. 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. 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 1,000 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 180
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 560
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 4 discussion boards (60, 30, 30, and 30 points) for a total of 150 points. Detailed expectations for each of the action items will be discussed in class. Below is a detailed list of the action items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>9/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class PPT presentation on potential research topic and research questions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>II (DB I)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>10/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose a research topic and research question; make the case for the import of the research topic and research question</td>
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<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>10/12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV (DB II)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>10/19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify the theoretical foundation for the study</td>
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<tr>
<td>V (DB III)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>10/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the structure of the literature review</td>
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<tr>
<td>VI (DB IV)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>10/26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify a research methods strategy</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>11/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a formal introduction to the course project</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>11/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review of introductions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>11/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a formal research methods section</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Item</td>
<td>Points</td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>Completed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>11/23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer review of research methods sections</td>
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| XI          | 70     | 11/9     | 11/23     |
| Write the literature review outline |

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>Minimum Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>930–1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>900–929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>899–870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>869–830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>829–800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>799–770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>769–730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>729–700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>699–670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>669–630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>629–600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1, September 14 – No Class: Rosh Hashanah**

**Week 2, September 21 – 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:**
- President Obama address NAACP, calls for prison reform (from about minute 6 on):

**Supplemental Readings:**

**Week 3, September 28 – Class Meeting: “Choosing a Research Topic/Question”**

**Goals:**
- Receive feedback on potential topic and research questions
- Progress toward the course project

**Discussions:**
• Accessing information

Assignments:
• Action Item I (presented)
• Action Item II, Discussion Board I (assigned)

Readings:

**Week 4, October 5 – Class Meeting: “Planning the Literature Review”**

Goals:
• Define scope of course project
• Begin to frame the literature review
• Become familiar with research on your topic/question

Discussions:
• Framing the literature review
• Theorizing your hypothesis

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

Readings:

**Week 5, October 12 – Online Component: “Planning the Literature Review”**

Goals:
• Submit annotated bibliography
• Discuss the content and structure of the literature review

Assignments:
• Action Item III (completed)
• Action Item IV, Discussion Board II (continued)
• Action Item V, Discussion Board III (continued)

**Week 6, October 19 – Class Meeting: “Choosing a Research Design”**

Goals:
• Choose appropriate research design for course project

Discussions:
• Choosing a research design
• Group brainstorming

Assignments:
  • Action Item IV, Discussion Board II (completed)
  • Action Item V, Discussion Board III (completed)
  • Action Item VI, Discussion Board IV (assigned)

Readings:
  • Kleck, Gary, Jongyeon Tark, and Jon J. Bellows. (2006). What methods are most frequently used in research in criminology and criminal justice? *Journal of Criminal Justice* 34:147–152.

*Week 7, October 26 – Individual Meetings*

Goals:
  • Discuss the content and structure of the literature review
  • Discuss the research design strategy

Assignments:
  • Action Item VI, Discussion Board IV (completed)
  • Action Item VII (assigned)
  • Action Item VIII (assigned)

*Week 8, November 2 – Online Component: “Writing the Introduction”*

Goals:
  • Begin the composition of the final research paper

Assignments:
  • Action Item VII (completed)
  • Action Item VIII (continued)

*Week 9, November 9 – Class Meeting: “Formalizing the Structure of the Paper”*

Goals:
  • Begin writing the core parts of the research paper

Assignments:
  • Action Item VIII (completed)
  • Action Item IX (assigned)
  • Action Item X (assigned)
  • Action Item XI (assigned)

*Week 10, November 16 – Online Component: “Writing the Core of the Paper”*

Goals
  • Formalize the content and structure of the research methods section
  • Formalize the structure and content of the literature review section

Assignments:
  • Action Item XI (completed)
  • Action Item XII (completed)

*Week 11, November 23 – Class Meeting: “Writing the Conclusion Section”*

Goals
• Write, edit, and finalize the course research paper
• Focus on discussion section

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

Assignments:
• Action Item XI (completed)
• Action Item XII (completed)

Week 12, November 30: Class Meeting
Goals:
• Present research to the class

Week 13, December 7: Class Meeting
Goals:
• Present research to the class