

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Instructor: Ashley Hibbs
Class Meeting: Online

Term: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

E-mail: ashley.hibbs@unt.edu

Office hours: By appointment (virtual or in-person)

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow-up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated. Finally, please know I can only discuss over email if it was sent through your Eagle Connect email account (username@unt.edu).

Course Description

The examination of the problems and issues involved in forming and implementing criminal justice policy in the United States. This course represents the final capstone experience for the student and should generally be taken in the semester the student will graduate.

Prerequisite(s): senior standing and at least 33 hours of criminal justice, with 18 hours from the criminal justice core.

Course Objectives

Throughout the semester, we will see the criminal justice system is composed of piecemeal practices and policies, often made as knee-jerk reactions, which sound good (politically) but are not always supported by empirical evidence. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss the process of making criminal justice policy
2. Examine in detail the assumptions that underlie various criminal justice policies
3. Demonstrate the importance of studying the effectiveness of criminal justice policy from an evidence-based perspective
4. Develop critical thinking skills through the assessment and evaluation of course readings
5. Improve communication skills through written assignments and participation in class discussions

Materials

The assigned text listed below is required for all students enrolled in this course. Reading assignments are noted in the Course Calendar. All students are expected to read the assigned chapters prior to the date specified in the Course Calendar. The assigned readings will serve as a foundation for the discussion of the issues in class as well as test material.

Mays, G.L. & Ruddell, R. (2018, 3rd Edition). *Making sense of criminal justice: Policies and practices*. Oxford University Press.

**Additional materials in the form of articles and/or book chapters will supplement this course.

NOTE: If

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

a student chooses to purchase anything other than the current edition of the assigned course text, it is their responsibility to ensure access to and familiarity with the most up-to-date course materials

COURSE NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Office hours offer you an opportunity to ask for clarification or find support with understanding class material. Come visit me! I encourage you to connect with me and/or my GSA for support. Your success is our goal. UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, visit this [link from UNT Succeed](#). UNT offers [additional resources for online students](#) as well. Finally, a variety of resources and services are available to students in the Academic Support tab in Canvas. Please make sure to have your official UNT email forwarded to your preferred email address (if different) to receive important updates, changes, announcements, and generally, so I can reach you if necessary. The announcement board in Canvas, and email, will be used for primary communication to the class as a whole. I advise you check the announcements section frequently. Important: It is your responsibility to utilize a computer system that works and is compatible with the UNT online system/Canvas.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on several assignments. There are a total of 560 points that can be earned in this class.

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>% of Final Grade</i>
<i>Library Course Guide Activity</i>	<i>25 points</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>Reading Quizzes- 16 @ 10 points each</i>	<i>160 points</i>	<i>29%</i>
<i>Discussion Posts- 1 @ 25 points, 5 @ 50 points each</i>	<i>275 points</i>	<i>49%</i>
<i>Final Paper</i>	<i>100 points</i>	<i>18%</i>
<i>Total Points Possible</i>	<i>560 points</i>	<i>100%</i>

Grading Scale:

504 – 560 = A
448 - 503 = B
392 - 447 = C
336 - 391 = D
335 or fewer points = F

Library Course Guide Activity: Students will complete this activity as instructed on Canvas. Students must review the Library Course Guide and submit their responses through the Canvas submission by the due date and time in order to receive credit for the assignment. This assignment is worth 25 points.

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Reading Quizzes: Students will complete a reading quiz for each chapter for a total of 16 reading quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will be worth a total of 160 points (10 points each). Quizzes are posted within the weekly modules. They will become available the Monday morning of the week they are due and must be submitted by the following Sunday night at 11:59 PM Central Time (see the calendar for due dates). Quizzes will be available for 25 minutes once they are opened and must be completed within one sitting. They may consist of multiple choice, true/false, matching, or short answer questions. While course materials may be referenced during the quizzes, students should treat these quizzes as they would an in-class exam and prepare accordingly. There is not enough time to look up the answer to each question. Quiz grades will be available following completion of the quiz; correct responses to the questions will be posted after the availability period ends.

These quizzes are intended to be low-stakes assignments and are designed to assess your comprehension of the material covered in each chapter. As such, you will have 2 attempts for each quiz. There are no resets or third attempts permitted.

Discussion Posts: Online discussions are designed to emulate that of the traditional or face-to-face classroom environment. Students will complete 6 discussion posts. The first discussion is worth 25 possible points, and the remaining 5 discussions are worth 50 points each for a total of 275 possible points. For each discussion post, students will be required to 1) respond to the weekly discussion question and 2) make two substantive posts to classmates' posts in order to receive full credit for the assignment. This may include responses to two separate classmates as well as responses to a classmate who responded to your original post. The idea is for this to emulate a real classroom discussion and not just write posts for the sake of writing posts. These questions are designed to assess your comprehension and understanding of course materials, not a description of your personal opinion regarding criminal justice policy.

Discussion question responses should range from 250-300 words of original content (references etc. do not count towards the word count requirement). Participation posts must reflect critical thought and reflect substantive contribution to the class discussion (a minimum of 150 words per response). Rather, simply posting that you agree or disagree with another student's post or restating their post will not constitute a substantive response. These posts account for a substantive portion of the overall course grade and will not be treated as completion grades. Students should take their time in responding and crafting a carefully thought-out response. Students will be graded on grammar, so proofread submissions prior to posting.

Responses should be typed in a word document before cutting and pasting them into the text submission box to ensure they have a backup copy in the event of a technical issue. Students are strongly encouraged to complete their work as early as possible during the discussion week to avoid these types of issues.

Discussion posts must incorporate a minimum of 2 scholarly references with appropriate in-text citations as well as a complete reference page in APA format for any and all information obtained from outside references. Full credit for participation posts will also include reference to at least 1 academic reference in support of your position.

Students must respond to the discussion question in order to unlock that week's discussion and enable the ability to respond to others' posts. All discussion and participation posts must be completed by the due date and time. If you have technical difficulties in submitting your post, you must email the

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

instructor a copy of your post prior to the discussion due date to be eligible for partial credit. The instructor retains discretion to accept or evaluate any submission not turned in through the Discussion board in Canvas.

Final Paper: Each student will complete an independent research project that requires them to evaluate the pros and cons of a criminal justice policy of their choosing. Details on this project are posted on Canvas and I recommend you start working on this project early. This project is worth 100 points.

Extra Credit: If an opportunity for extra credit presents itself, it will be discussed in class and available to the entire class at the discretion of the instructor. There will be no individual opportunities for extra credit.

CLASS POLICIES

Make-Up Policy

Make-up exams/assignments are allowed in this class as long as you have an authorized absence according to university policies. I reserve the right to consider extreme circumstances and modify this rule. Students should notify me prior to missing an assignment, if possible. Those in athletics, those who are absent for religious holidays, and/or those involved in other school supported activities that require being absent from class will be allowed to make up assignments if proper procedures are followed in requesting an excused absence. I must have written documentation in advance that you will be away from class for the absence to be excused. While my goal is for every student to succeed, in certain circumstances it may be best for the student to withdraw and take the course at a point when they can give it more time and attention. Students should note that the last day to withdraw with a grade of "W" is November 6th, 2026

Authorized Absences

Absences are authorized only in cases of participation in school sponsored activities and/or religious holidays. For an excused absence due to a school-sponsored activity, students must be approved in advance by the department chair and academic dean. Within three days after the absence, students must obtain authorized absence cards from the Dean of Students for presentation to instructor. Students who wish to request an excused absence for religious holidays can do so and will be excused from class as long as they make a request within the required time frame set by the University (see the most recent undergraduate catalog). Notification must be in writing so that I may have it for my records. You must arrange to make up any work missed during the excused religious absence or school sponsored activity.

Student Behavior and University Policy:

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

To be successful at learning and understanding the material in this class, it is essential that you read and complete the assigned material and engage in thoughtful discussions online. Your active participation, along with your willingness to engage in thoughtful discussions will be taken into account at all times during the semester. Certain topics in criminal justice policy are controversial, thus discussion may become heated where there will be disagreements. The online classroom is a place to express ideas, opinions, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Students will respect the views and opinions of others at all times in the online environment. While I do not foresee any problems, if problems do arise, I will address them with the individual student.

General guidelines for how to communicate well in an online classroom.

- Remember that college communication is still professional communication. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check your response before hitting send or reply.
- Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
- Use standard, readable fonts, sizes, and colors and avoid writing in all caps.
- Use your instructor's title of "Dr." or "Professor," or if you don't know use "Mr." or "Ms." Do not use "Mrs." to address female instructors unless told otherwise by said instructor.
- Be mindful of tone in online communication as it lacks the nonverbal cues of face-to-face communication that provide clarity and context to conversations.
- Respect the personal identities of others based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.
- Respect the privacy of yourself, your instructor, and your peers. Keep in mind what you reveal and do not reveal, particularly if this information involves personal health and/or classroom performance, such as grades.
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. Though there may be a computer between you, there are people on the other side of the screen.
- Do not make assumptions about others' technological skills. Technological skills vary across a variety of factors, including experience, age, culture, etc.
- Read these [Core Rules of Netiquette](#) for additional tips about online communication.

Communicating via Email

- Check the syllabus before asking a question about the course and let the instructor know you checked the syllabus before asking. Instructors put a lot of time into making syllabi as comprehensive as possible for students.
- Use a descriptive subject line to get the instructor's attention. Instructors receive a lot of emails and a descriptive subject line helps them identify student inquiries more efficiently.
- Be concise and to the point.
- For a sample email, read this article, ["How to Email Your Professor."](#)

Discussion Board Communication

- Treat your posts like the professional communication that they are. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check a response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
- Read all the messages in a thread before replying so you do not repeat something one of your peers may have already said.
- Avoid replies such as "I agree" and instead explain why you agree or do not agree.

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

- Show your work by sharing resources and utilizing citations.
- When disagreeing, do not make personal attacks or use language that discriminates based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.

Academic Dishonesty/Integrity

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any CJUS 4901 I 5 unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

Office of Disability Accommodation

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](#). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Student Evaluation of Instruction

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right and have the discretion to change this syllabus. While every effort will be made to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, it is sometimes the case that the syllabus must be modified. In the case that the syllabus needs to be adjusted, I will announce such

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

adjustments to the class. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. It is the student's responsibility to check announcements/email so that any and all syllabus changes are documented. Failure to obtain syllabus changes because of failure to check and read announcements does not constitute a defense against missed assignments, test dates, and other applicable changes.

Miscellaneous

The material posted online is my personal intellectual property or that of the University of North Texas. You may not utilize the material for other than class purposes. Class recordings are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called [Eagle Alert](#) to quickly notify you with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates. Information regarding data privacy for Canvas can be found [at this link](#).

Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](#) for more resources.

F1 Visa Holder Regulation

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for F1 Visa holders. Full-time status for F1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students. Instructors teaching online courses should insert information into the syllabus to make F1 Visa students aware of this limitation and provide them with information about options to complete an on-campus experiential component in a course that is otherwise fully-online.

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

If a F-1 Visa holder intends to take more than 3 SCH of online courses in a term, they will need to document the on-campus experiential component of all courses that exceed the 3-hour limit. This on-campus experiential component can be satisfied in a number of ways including a face-to-face test, lab work, a required on-site lecture, mandatory library orientation, etc. Instructors should develop an option to assist students who request an on-campus experiential component to meet the federal regulation. Instructors should have students requesting this assistance to complete the [On-campus Component Reporting Form for Online Courses](#) which requires both the student and the instructor's signature. The instructor should make a copy for the student's departmental file and send a copy to the UNT International Student and Scholar Services (routing address on the form).

Academic Calendar

[NOTE: Read the assigned reading for each day prior to coming to class; additional readings may be added and these will be announced in class and on Canvas]

DATE	TOPIC, READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES
WEEK 1 8/17 - 8/23	Topic: Welcome & Overview Assignments: • Introduction Discussion — due 8/21 @ 11:59 PM • Library Course Guide Activity — due 8/23 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 2 8/24 - 8/30	Topic: The Politics & Policy Dichotomy Readings: Chapter 1 Assignments: • Discussion 1: Careers in Criminal Justice ◦ Main Post — due 8/28 @ 11:59 PM ◦ Responses — due 8/30 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 1 Reading Quiz — due 8/30 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 3 8/31 - 9/6	Topic: Crime Control vs. Due Process; Understanding Criminal Justice Policy Readings: Chapters 2–3 Assignments: • Discussion 2: Crime Control vs. Due Process ◦ Main Post — due 9/4 @ 11:59 PM ◦ Responses — due 9/6 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 2 Reading Quiz — due 9/6 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 3 Reading Quiz — due 9/6 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 4 9/7 - 9/13	Topic: The Search for a Guiding Philosophy of Policing Readings: Chapter 4 Assignments: • Chapter 4 Reading Quiz — due 9/13 @ 11:59 PM

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

WEEK 5 9/14 - 9/20	Topic: Police & the Use of Force Readings: Chapter 5 Assignments: Chapter 5 Reading Quiz — due 9/20 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 6 9/12 9/27	Topic: Gun Control Readings: Chapter 6 Assignments: - Discussion 3: Operation Ceasefire - Main Post — due 9/25 @ 11:59 PM - Responses — due 9/27 @ 11:59 PM - Chapter 6 Reading Quiz — due 9/27 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 7 9/28 - 10/4	Topic: Sentencing Readings: Chapter 7 Assignments: Chapter 7 Reading Quiz — due 10/4 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 8 10/5 - 10/11	Topic: Race, Ethnicity, & Justice Readings: Chapter 8 Assignments: Chapter 8 Reading Quiz — due 10/11 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 9 10/12 - 10/18	Topic: Gender & Crime Readings: Chapter 9 Assignments: - Discussion 4: COVID-19 & Domestic Violence - Main Post — due 10/16 @ 11:59 PM - Responses — due 10/18 @ 11:59 PM - Chapter 9 Reading Quiz — due 10/18 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 10 10/19 - 10/25	Topic: Wrongful Convictions Readings: Chapter 10 Assignments: Chapter 10 Reading Quiz — due 10/25 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 11 10/26 - 11/1	Topic: What Are the Alternatives to Incarceration? Readings: Chapter 11 Assignments: Chapter 11 Reading Quiz — due 11/1 @ 11:59 PM

CJUS 4901.401 CRIMINAL JUSTICE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

WEEK 12 11/2 - 11/8	Topic: Putting the Brakes on Correctional Populations Readings: Chapter 12 Assignments: • Discussion 5: Correctional Policy ◦ Main Post — due 11/6 @ 11:59 PM ◦ Responses — due 11/8 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 12 Reading Quiz — due 11/8 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 13 11/9 - 11/15	Topic: The Death Penalty: Dying a Slow Death; Responding to Youth Crime Readings: Chapters 13–14 Assignments: • Chapter 13 Reading Quiz — due 11/15 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 14 Reading Quiz — due 11/15 @ 11:59 PM
WEEK 14 11/16 - 11/23	Topic: Work on Your Paper Assignments: • Final Paper — due 11/22 @ 11:59 PM
	THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/23 - 11/29
WEEK 15/16 11/23 - 12/6	**This final module opens one week early to accommodate Thanksgiving Break while still keeping all deadlines on 12/6 @ 11:59 PM. Topic: Making Sense of Criminal Justice Readings: Chapters 15-16 Assignments: • Chapter 15 Reading Quiz — due 12/6 @ 11:59 PM • Chapter 16 Reading Quiz — due 12/6 @ 11:59 PM