# CJUS 3900.001 – Research Methods in Criminal Justice

Instructor: Francheska Brinkley, M.S. | Term: Fall 2025

Class meeting: Tues/Thurs 2:00–3:20 | Classroom: GAB 112

Instructor’s Contact Info E-mail (preferred): Francheska.Brinkley@unt.edu

Office hours: By appointment (email to arrange a meeting in Chilton Hall)

**Email Expectations**: When sending an email, please put the COURSE NUMBER (CJUS 3900) in the subject line. I can only respond to emails if they are sent through your UNT email account. You can expect to receive a response within 48 hours during the week and 72 hours on the weekend. If you have not received a response within that time, please email me back. **Before you send email with a question, make sure to review the syllabus. Most questions can be answered in this document.**

## Course Description

This course introduces students to the field of criminology, exploring nature and causes of crime, major criminological theories, victimization, and societal responses. Criminology can be defined as the study of the nature of crime, its causes, and the systemic practices that (re)produce patterns of harm. At its core, criminology attempts to understand what crime is and why it occurs. We will study the major theoretical traditions that have emerged over the past several centuries to offer insight into the crime problem. We will also evaluate each theory using extant research and identify policy implications. Students will examine both historical and contemporary approaches to crime and justice through a blend of lecture, discussion, applied projects, and reflective assessments.

## Course Structure

This course will emphasize application-based learning. Students will engage with material through readings, lectures, short applied writing assignments, and major projects. Instead of frequent high-stakes quizzes, students will demonstrate understanding through Insights, Resources & Applications (IRAs), in-class activities, and two major writing projects: a Midterm Music Theory Essay and a Final Movie Theory Infographic & Paper.

## Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Explain and evaluate major criminological theories.
2. Apply criminological theories to real-world cases and media examples.
3. Critically analyze scholarly and non-scholarly writing about crime.
4. Develop clear, well-supported written arguments about crime and justice.
5. Identify the obstacles faced in the policy-making process and analyze theory-inspired policy.

## Course Materials

**Required Text:**Siegel, L. (latest ed.). Criminology: The Core.  
Additional readings and resources will be provided via Canvas.

# Course Technology & Skills

Minimum Technology Requirements

• Computer

• Reliable internet access

• Speakers

• Microphone

• Plug-ins

• Microsoft Office Suite

• Canvas Technical Requirements (https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements)

Computer Skills & Digital Literacy

• Using Canvas

• Using email with attachments

• Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats (.doc, .pdf)

• Downloading and installing software

Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UIT Help Desk: UIT Student Help Desk site (http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Walk-In Availability: 8am-9pm

Telephone Availability:

• Sunday: noon-midnight

• Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight

• Friday: 8am-8pm

• Saturday: 9am-5pm

Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit Canvas Technical Help (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

## Course Requirements & Explanations

### ****Insights Resource & Application (IRAs) – 4 total****

IRAs are short, structured written assignments completed at the end of each module. Each IRA follows a three-part format:

* **Insights** – Identify and explain three key takeaways from the module’s chapters, lectures, or discussions.
* **Resource** – Select and summarize a recent (within one month) Associated Press News article related to crime or criminology.
* **Application** – Connect the article to 1–2 specific theories, concepts, or cases from the module, explaining its real-world impact on people, communities, or policy.

IRAs are designed to replace traditional quizzes. They are completed outside of class in lieu of meeting on that day and must be submitted to Canvas by 11:59pm. **Detailed instructions, formatting requirements, and the grading rubric are available on Canvas.**

### In-Class Activities – 8–10 random activities across the semester

In-class activities are short, unannounced assignments given at the end of a lecture. They will vary and may include:

* Exit slips summarizing key points from class
* Applying a theory to a short case scenario
* Quick myth/fact checks
* Short reflection or prediction exercises
* Mini policy proposals

Each activity is graded for completion and thoughtfulness. **Activities cannot be made up unless the student has an excused absence under UNT policy.**

### ****Midterm – Music Theory Project****

### Students will select a song that addresses crime, criminal justice, or related social issues. They will apply a criminological theory to analyze the song’s content, themes, and messaging. The project will require:

* A brief background on the song and artist
* A clear explanation of the selected theory
* Application of the theory to the song’s content
* Critical analysis of how accurately the song represents criminological concepts
* Integration of credible sources

Detailed assignment instructions are available on Canvas.  
**Due via Canvas on 10/9 at 11:59pm.**

**Final Project – Movie Theory Paper & Infographic**Students will select a film portraying crime and/or criminal justice and apply a criminological theory to analyze it. Students cannot use the same theory from their midterm. The project has two components:

1. Movie Theory Paper – Written analysis explaining and applying the selected theory to the film, supported by credible sources.
2. Infographic – A visually engaging, one-page summary of the film’s plot, key theory elements, and main findings from the paper, designed for a general audience.

Detailed instructions and optional class showcase information will be posted in Canvas.  
Due Date: Both components must be submitted for grading via Canvas, Infographic due 12/4 & Movie Theory Paper due 12/10 at 11:59pm.

### ****Attendance & Engagement Policy****

Attendance and active participation are essential for success in this course. Attendance is worth **60 points** toward your final grade. You may miss up to **two class meetings** without any deduction from your attendance score.

**In-Class Activities**  
In-class activities are graded **separately** from attendance and are worth **40 points** total. If you are absent on a day when an in-class activity is assigned, you will not receive credit for that activity unless you have an **authorized absence** under University of North Texas policy. This means you could maintain a perfect attendance score but still lose points for missed activity days.

In-class activities may include short written prompts, problem-solving exercises, group discussions, or other applied learning tasks. These activities are designed to reinforce course concepts, encourage peer engagement, and assess your ability to apply what you’ve learned. Some activities may involve **partner or small-group discussion** before submission.

If you have an authorized absence on an activity day, you must contact me within **48 hours** to request an alternative assignment.

**Grading Breakdown – Fall 2025**

| **Assignment** | **Points Possible** | **% of Final Grade** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quiz #1 (Ch. 1–3) | 50 | 9% |
| Quiz #2 (Ch. 4–6) | 50 | 9% |
| Quiz #3 (Ch. 7–9) | 50 | 9% |
| Quiz #4 (Ch. 10–14) | 50 | 9% |
| Research Question | 25 |  |
| Annotated Bibliography | 25 |  |
| Introduction and Literature Review | 50 |  |
| Methodology | 50 |  |
| Final Project Research Proposal | 175 | 32% |
| Attendance/In-Class Activities | 40 | 7% |
| **Total** | **550** | **100%** |

**Grading Scale**

**A:** 495 – 550 points

**B:** 440 – 494 points

**C:** 385 – 439 points

**D:** 330 – 384 points

**F:** 329 points or fewer

## Academic Course Schedule – Fall 2025

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topic, Assignments, Due Dates** |
| 08/19 | Course Introduction & Syllabus Review |
| 08/21 | Crime, Criminal Justice, and Scientific Inquiry – Ch. 1 Syllabus Quiz (Extra Credit) due 8/21 |
| 08/26 | Crime, Criminal Justice, and Scientific Inquiry – Ch. 1 |
| 08/28 | Foundations of Criminal Justice Research – Ch. 2 |
| 09/02 | Foundations of Criminal Justice Research – Ch. 2 |
| 09/04 | Ethics and Criminal Justice Research- Ch.3 |
| 09/09 | Ethics and Criminal Justice Research- Ch.3 |
| 09/11 | ***Quiz #1 over Ch. 1–3***  ***Research Question due on Canvas by 11:59 PM*** |
| 09/16 | General Issues in Research Design – Ch. 4 |
| 09/18 | General Issues in Research Design – Ch. 4 |
| 09/23 | Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement – Ch. 5 |
| 09/25 | Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement – Ch. 5 |
| 09/30 | Measuring Crime – Ch. 6 |
| 10/02 | ***Quiz #2 over Ch. 4–6***  ***Annotated Bibliography Due 11:59 PM*** |
| 10/07 | Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design – Ch. 7 |
| 10/09 | ***Introduction & Literature Review Due 11:59 PM*** |
| 10/14 | Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Design-Ch. 7 |
| 10/16 | Sampling- Ch. 8 |
| 10/21 | Sampling- Ch. 8 & Survey Research- Ch. 9 |
| 10/23 | ***Quiz #3 over Ch. 7–9*** |
| 10/28 | Qualitative Interviewing– Ch. 10 |
| 10/30 | Qualitative Interviewing– Ch. 10 |
| 11/04 | Field Observation-Ch.11 |
| 11/06 | Field Observation – Ch. 11 |
| 11/11 | Agency Records, Content Analysis, and Secondary Data – Ch. 12 |
| 11/13 | Evaluation Research and Problem Analysis – Ch. 13 |
| 11/18 | Interpreting Data – Ch. 14 |
| 11/20 | ***Methodology Due 11:59 PM*** |
| 11/25-27 | *No Class- Fall Break* |
| 12/02 | ***Quiz #4 Ch. 10-14*** |
| 12/04 | Final Class Meeting |
| 12/10 | ***Final & Complete Research Proposal Due 11:59 PM*** |

**Class Policies**

**Make-Up, Late Work, and Authorized Absence Policy**

Make-up assignments and late work will only be accepted when an absence or missed deadline qualifies as authorized under University of North Texas policy. Authorized absences include:

* Religious holy days
* Official university functions (including university-sponsored activities)
* Required military service
* Student pregnancy/parenting (Title IX)
* University closure
* Other documented extenuating circumstances approved by the Dean of Students

If you anticipate an authorized absence, notify me as soon as possible, preferably before the due date, and provide written documentation. Absences for school-sponsored activities require prior approval from the department chair and academic dean, along with official authorized absence documentation from the Dean of Students. **Please reach out to me first before starting this process**. Requests for religious holy day absences must follow the university’s prescribed time frame.

Late work is not accepted unless linked to an authorized absence. Students with excused absences will be given a reasonable period to complete missed work. If you are unsure whether your situation qualifies as an authorized absence, please consult UNT’s Student Attendance and Authorized Absences policy or contact the Dean of Students. The last day to withdraw with a “W” is November 7, 2025.

**Student Behavior and University Policy**

This course values the diversity of perspectives students bring. Please help maintain a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. Discussions should be civil and respectful, even when disagreements arise. Personal attacks are unacceptable.

To succeed in this course, you should complete assigned readings, participate actively, and engage in thoughtful discussion. Because some topics in criminal justice policy are controversial, debate is encouraged—provided it is respectful. If concerns arise, I will address them individually.

**Academic Dishonesty and Integrity**

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a “0” for that assignment or exam, and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Per the UNT Catalog:

* Cheating includes (but is not limited to):  
  a. Using unauthorized assistance during quizzes, tests, or exams  
  b. Using sources beyond those authorized when completing assignments  
  c. Acquiring exams or academic materials without permission  
  d. Submitting the same work for multiple classes without instructor approval  
  e. Any other act intended to provide an unfair academic advantage
* Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):  
  a. Using the work of another person—published or unpublished—without proper citation  
  b. Submitting work prepared by another person or a commercial service as your own

**AI Tools and Academic Integrity**

This course uses a transparent and ethical approach to generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, Claude, Copilot).

* You may not use AI to complete assignments that assess your individual understanding, such as IRAs, written essays, or in class activities unless you are specifically asked to do so.
* You may use AI for transformational purposes—brainstorming, outlining, drafting, or editing—on designated assignments, as a collaborative research and writing partner.
* All AI use must be clearly disclosed and properly cited in APA format.
* Transactional use—uploading a prompt or assignment and submitting the AI-generated response as your own—is strictly prohibited and will be treated as academic misconduct.

**Office of Disability Access (ODA)**

The University of North Texas provides reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify eligibility.

If you qualify, the ODA will issue a reasonable accommodation letter for you to provide to faculty. Letters should be delivered early in the semester to avoid delays. A new letter must be obtained for each semester. Faculty may request to discuss accommodation letters during office hours to protect student privacy.

Contact ODA at (940) 565-4323 or visit the ODA website for more information.

**Student Evaluation of Instruction**

At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to evaluate the course through UNT’s official Student Evaluation of Instruction survey. Your feedback is important and helps improve teaching and course design.

**Syllabus Changes**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. Students are responsible for reviewing these announcements.

**Intellectual Property and Class Recordings**

Course materials are my personal intellectual property or that of UNT and are provided for your use in this class only. Do not share them outside the course. Class recordings are for enrolled students’ use only and may not be distributed.

**Emergency Notification and Procedures**

UNT uses the **Eagle Alert** system to quickly notify you of critical information during an emergency. Please ensure your contact information is current at [my.unt.edu](https://my.unt.edu). In the event of a university closure, refer to Canvas for contingency plans.

**Retention of Student Records**

Student records for this course are maintained for at least one calendar year after course completion in a secure location. You have the right to view your individual records upon request.

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Title IX**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment, free from all forms of sexual misconduct. Resources are available for students experiencing harassment, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual assault.

Contact the Survivor Advocates at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or call the Dean of Students Office at (940) 565-2648 for assistance. Visit the Title IX Student Information page for more resources.