



**Crime and Justice in the United States**  
**CJUS 2100.400**  
Spring 2026

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**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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**GRADUATE ASSISTANT INFORMATION**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the societal responses to people and organizations that violate criminal codes; discusses the history, development, organization and philosophy of the justice process; and analyzes the complex inter-relationships between the major components of the criminal justice system (i.e., police, courts, and corrections).

**COURSE GOALS**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- 1) Identify the major foundations of crime and justice including the nature of law, behavioral aspects of crime, and measurement of crime.
- 2) Identify the major components of the criminal justice system including the police, courts, and corrections.
- 3) Use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.
- 4) Develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for crime.
- 5) Examine criminal justice institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures and cultures.
- 6) Analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural and global forces on criminal justice.
- 7) Identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures.
- 8) Employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social scientists use to investigate criminals and the criminal justice system.

**REQUIRED READING MATERIALS**

Rennison, C. M., & Dodge, M. (2024). *Introduction to Criminal Justice: Systems, Diversity, and Change* (5<sup>th</sup>). Sage Publications. ISBN: 9781071903742

## COURSE NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Please make sure to have your official UNT email forwarded to your preferred email address (if different) to receive important updates, changes, announcements, class cancellations (if applicable), and generally, so I can reach you if necessary.

**Before emailing me with a question, make sure to review the syllabus, schedule and welcome statement. Most questions are answered in these documents.**

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. This is especially critical during examination times. I would recommend that you take your exams on the UNT campus if possible. If that is not possible, I would recommend you avoid waiting until the last minute to take your exam in case problems arise. **Do not complete your assignments on mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets.**

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on 14 chapter quizzes, 14 video activities, 14 data activities, 5 discussion assignments, and 1 research project assignment. There are a total of 469 points that can be earned in this class. The dates for each quiz, discussion assignment, writing assignment, and exam are listed in the course schedule on canvas.

Chapter Quizzes	14 @ 15 points each
Video Activities	14 @ 3 points each
Data Activities	14 @ 3 points each
Discussion Assignments	5 @ 15 points each
Research Project Assignment	1 @ 100 points

### **Grading Scale:**

423 – 469 =	<b>A</b>
376 – 422 =	<b>B</b>
329 – 375 =	<b>C</b>
282 – 328 =	<b>D</b>
0 – 281 =	<b>F</b>

**Note:** Dates for when each assignment is available (and due) can be found on the course schedule in Canvas.

**Chapter Quizzes:** Each chapter quiz contains 15 multiple choice and true-false questions. Only 1 attempt is allowed for each.

**Video Activities:** Each video activity involves watching a video and answering a short number of questions (usually 3 to 4). 2 attempts are allowed. Your best attempt will be recorded as your grade.

**Data Activities:** Each data activity requires you to review data about crime and/or criminal justice outcomes and then answer a short number of questions (usually 3 to 4) about those data. 2 attempts are allowed. Your best attempt will be recorded for your grade.

**Research Project Assignment:** This assignment requires you to write and submit a paper between 500-1,000 words discussing wrongful convictions and capital punishment based on data you collect. Additional details and a rubric can be found in Canvas.

**Discussions:** Students will participate in assigned online discussions. Questions will be posted by your instructor that involve considering and responding to important crime and criminal justice topics. **Each discussion assignment will be eligible for a maximum of 15 points.**

There will be 1 “Introduce Yourself” discussion (ungraded) and 5 Unit discussion forums for a maximum of 75 possible points. You will be graded on your original content (level of critical thought/analysis, quality of factual support for your position) and quality of writing (spelling, punctuation, grammar). If any information that is not an original thought of yours is included in a discussion response, regardless of where it came from, that information needs to be cited using APA format. If you are unfamiliar with APA, please refer to the APA Writing Style Guide (located in the Modules section within the “Start Here” tab). Please proofread your work before submitting.

Each student will be required to participate in 5 discussions throughout the course. These discussions will first require you to **post** an answer to the questions posed by me. Be clear and detailed in answering the questions. These posts must be at least 250 words in length. **This portion of the assignment is referred to as “Post.”**

You are also required to *appropriately and professionally* **respond** to at least 2 other students’ posts for every discussion board (i.e. 1 post by you and 2 responses from you to your classmates). Your response to another student’s post must be at least 100 words in length, relate to the subject of the initial post and demonstrate evidence of critical thought. Consider: what makes sense about your classmate’s post? What flaws can you see in the post? A simple statement of agreement or disagreement with the initial post is insufficient. Furnish a thoughtful response and support it. Content, structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation will be taken into consideration when awarding the grade for your discussion entries.

Students are only permitted **one** attempt on discussion assignments. Students are required to submit their discussion post prior to viewing the post or replies of other students. Meaning, the post must be submitted before the responses. This standard method is to ensure all students are practicing academic honesty and not drawing their discussion post information from the work of other students. For this reason, **we only grade the first discussion post submitted by students, and students cannot delete a submission from our view.** If you submit a blank post or an incomplete post first, it will still be graded as your post submission regardless of subsequent posts. However, if you have any technical issues with your discussion submission, please email me or the Graduate Student Assistant ASAP. Do not wait until grades have been posted to notify us of technical issues.

*\*All citations, references and sources are to be made in APA format.*

*\*\*You must cite any sources you use when constructing your discussion board responses, whether it is the course textbook, a scholarly journal, a website, a television show, etc.*

### Rubric for Discussion Assignments

<b>Content</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Editing (Spelling/Grammar)</b>
<p><u>Excellent (4 pts)</u> All the required components of the post were adequately addressed with full explanations</p>	<p><u>Excellent (4 pts)</u> Student submitted 2+ substantive participation responses with full and supported explanations</p>	<p><u>Excellent (4 pts)</u> Discussion post exceeded required length, 2 participation responses were posted that also exceeded the required length</p>	<p><u>Excellent (3 pts)</u> If there were any spelling or grammar errors, they were insignificant</p>
<p><u>Good (3 pts)</u> A minor required component of the post was missing, or there was not good explanation for at least 1 of the required major components</p>	<p><u>Good (3 pts)</u> Student submitted 1-2 substantive participation responses with supported explanations</p>	<p><u>Good (3 pts)</u> Discussion post met required length, 2 participation responses were submitted – One response met the 100-word count requirement, one did not</p>	<p><u>Good (2 pts)</u> There were a few spelling or grammar errors that were noticeable but did not detract from the discussion post/response</p>
<p><u>Fair (2 pts)</u> Important required components of the post were missing or there were a few components not fully explained</p>	<p><u>Fair (2 pts)</u> Student submitted 1-2 substantive participation responses. Additional explanation or support was needed</p>	<p><u>Fair (2 pts)</u> Discussion post was at or right below required length, 2 responses were submitted, but neither met the 100-word count requirement or one response was submitted that met the 100-word count requirement</p>	<p><u>Fair (1 pt)</u> There were a few spelling or grammar errors that were noticeable and detracted somewhat from the discussion post/response</p>
<p><u>Poor (1 pt)</u> Not all of the required components of the post were addressed, nor were they fully explained</p>	<p><u>Poor (1 pt)</u> Student submitted 0-1 substantive participation responses</p>	<p><u>Poor (1 pt)</u> Discussion post was at or below the required length, 2 responses were submitted: One response was posted that did not meet the 100-word count requirement</p>	<p><u>Poor (0-1 pts)</u> There were a number of spelling and grammar mistakes that detracted from the discussion post/response</p>
<p><u>Failing (0 pts)</u> The content of the response was inadequate with limited coverage of the required elements and very little (if any) explanation of the required components</p>	<p><u>Failing (0 pts)</u> There were no substantive participation posts/responses submitted</p>	<p><u>Failing (0 pts)</u> Discussion post was at or below the required length and there were no substantive participation responses</p>	<p><u>Failing (0 pts)</u> There were a great number of spelling and grammar mistakes that detracted greatly from the reading of the post, such that it was difficult to read</p>

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Make-Up Policy**

There will be no opportunities to make up any missed coursework with the exception of authorized absences according to university policies prescribing authorized absences in certain situations. 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.

### **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.

### **Academic Dishonesty/Integrity**

All students are required to conduct themselves with utmost honesty and integrity in all aspects related to this course. Any act of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and may result in failing the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion—the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for course credit.

#### *Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)*

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools (e.g., Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.) is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the [Student Academic Integrity policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003).

### **Grade Appeals**

Please keep all your graded work. You cannot, under any circumstance, dispute a grade on an exam or assignment if you cannot provide the original copy. Should you have any discrepancy with a grade you receive, you must submit a written complaint and meet with me within one week of receiving the grade. Bring the original copy of the exam or assignment to this meeting. Written complaints must address specific comments and/or grading criteria. Filing an appeal does not guarantee that your grade will be changed. **Grades are not verbally negotiable.**

## **SPOT Participation**

The SPOT evaluation is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class.

## **Student Behavior and University Policy**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>

## **Participation and Online Behavior**

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 online discussions. Your active participation, along with your willingness to engage in thoughtful discussions regarding the course material will be taken into account at all times during the semester.

An online classroom, at least during times of online discussion, is a place to express ideas, opinions, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Students are expected to respect the views and opinions of others at all times. Each student brings unique insight and perspectives, and that can make for a very interesting and lively discussion forum, but we all must be appropriate and respectful of others. Please review the undergraduate catalog concerning conduct which adversely affects the university community.

## **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 adjustments to the class. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. Students are responsible for checking 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.

## **Office of Disability Accommodation**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

**See the next page for the course schedule.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE SPRING 2026

**Note:** Most assignments (video/data activities, discussions, quizzes) will open at 8:00a.m. on the first day (Monday) of each week and close at 11:59p.m. the following Sunday. Discussion assignments are open for longer periods of time to facilitate thoughtful interactions. The research project is due April 12. Please read this schedule carefully to make sure you are aware of all due dates. Please also note that the final exam week is shorter than others and ends on the Thursday of that week.

### **Week One: 1/12 – 1/18**

- Assignments Due: Please complete the “meet your instructor/introduce yourself” discussion.
- Note: All the material due in Week 2 will open on 1/12. You are welcome to start on that material now, but I wanted to give you two weeks to complete this first set of readings and assignments so that you have plenty of time to familiarize yourself with the course.

### **Week Two: 1/19 – 1/25**

- Topic: Foundations: Introduction to Crime and the Criminal Justice System
- Reading: Chapter 1
- Assignments Due: Chapter 1 Video Activity, Chapter 1 Data Activity, & Chapter 1 Quiz
- Note: Part 1 Discussion will open and posts and responses will be due by 11:59 p.m. on 2/8.

### **Week Three: 1/26 – 2/1**

- Topic: Foundations: The Nature and Extent of Crime
- Reading: Chapter 2
- Assignments Due: Chapter 2 Video Activity, Chapter 2 Data Activity, & Chapter 2 Quiz

### **Week Four: 2/2 – 2/8**

- Topic: Foundations: Criminal Justice and the Law
- Reading: Chapter 3
- Assignments Due: Chapter 3 Video Activity, Chapter 3 Data Activity, & Chapter 3 Quiz
  - Part 1 Discussion Assignment is also due.

### **Week Five: 2/9 – 2/15**

- Topic: Law Enforcement: The History of Policing
- Reading: Chapter 4
- Assignments Due: Chapter 4 Video Activity, Chapter 4 Data Activity, & Chapter 4 Quiz
- Note: Part 2 Discussion will open and posts and responses will be due by 11:59p.m. on 3/1.

### **Week Six: 2/16 – 2/22**

- Topic: Law Enforcement: On the Streets: Organization, Responsibilities, and Challenges
- Reading: Chapter 5
- Assignments Due: Chapter 5 Video Activity, Chapter 5 Data Activity, & Chapter 5 Quiz

**Week Seven: 2/23 – 3/1**

- Topic: Law Enforcement: Police and the Rule of Law
- Reading: Chapter 6
- Assignments Due: Chapter 6 Video Activity, Chapter 6 Data Activity, & Chapter 6 Quiz
  - Part 2 Discussion Assignment is also due.

**Week Eight: 3/2 – 3/8**

- Topic: Courts: The Courts and Judiciary
- Reading: Chapter 7
- Assignments Due: Chapter 7 Video Activity, Chapter 7 Data Activity, & Chapter 7 Quiz
- Note: Part 3 Discussion will open and posts and responses will be due by 11:59p.m. on 3/29.

**Week Nine: 3/9 – 3/15**

- **Spring Break—No content**

**Week Ten: 3/16 – 3/22**

- Topic: Courts: The Prosecution, Defense, and Pretrial Activities
- Reading: Chapter 8
- Assignments Due: Chapter 8 Video Activity, Chapter 8 Data Activity, & Chapter 8 Quiz

**Week Eleven: 3/23 – 3/29**

- Topic: Courts: The Criminal Trial and Sentencing
- Reading: Chapter 9
- Assignments Due: Chapter 9 Video Activity, Chapter 9 Data Activity, & Chapter 9 Quiz
  - Part 3 Discussion Assignment is also due.

**Week Twelve: 3/30 – 4/5**

- Topic: Corrections: Correctional Responses in the Community
- Reading: Chapter 10
- Assignments Due: Chapter 10 Video Activity, Chapter 10 Data Activity, & Chapter 10 Quiz
- Note: Part 4 Discussion will open and posts and responses will be due by 11:59p.m. on 4/19.

**Week Thirteen: 4/6 – 4/12**

- Topic: Corrections: Institutional Corrections
- Readings: Chapter 11
- Assignments Due: Chapter 11 Video Activity, Chapter 11 Data Activity, & Chapter 11 Quiz
  - Research Project Assignment is also due.

**Week Fourteen: 4/13 – 4/19**

- Topic: Corrections: Prison Life and Life After Prison
- Reading: Chapter 12
- Assignments Due: Chapter 12 Video Activity, Chapter 12 Data Activity, & Chapter 12 Quiz
  - Part 4 Discussion Assignment is also due.

**Week Fifteen: 4/20 – 4/26**

- Topic: Beyond the Basics: The Juvenile Justice System
- Reading: Chapter 13
- Assignments Due: Chapter 13 Video Activity, Chapter 13 Data Activity, & Chapter 13 Quiz
- Note: Part 5 Discussion will open and posts and responses will be due by 11:59p.m. on 5/7.

**Week Sixteen AND Seventeen: 4/27 – 5/7**

- Topic: Beyond the Basics: Exploring Specialized and Topical Issues
- Reading: Chapter 14
- Assignments Due: Chapter 14 Video Activity, Chapter 14 Data Activity, & Chapter 14 Quiz
  - Part 5 Discussion Assignment is also due.
- Note: These assignments are due by **11:59 on 5/7, which is Thursday** of week 17.