Punishment, Discipline, and Social Policy

Professor Jody Sundt

Contact Information

Office: Chilton Hall
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Chat: MS Teams

Class Meetings

Chilton Hall 274
2:00-4:50 PM

Course Description

The United States is frequently described as exceptional and with respect to the use of punishment this is an apt description. The US was home to the first penitentiaries, invented the idea of probation, and created the first juvenile reformatories. More recently, the US built the world's largest prison system and incarcerates more people per capita than any other nation. The system of mass community supervision and punishment is larger still. An estimated one in 59 adults were under community supervision in 2019. And, close to 14 million people pass through US jails each year. Although the number of individuals incarcerated or serving a sentence in the community are high, it undercounts the total amount of punishment imposed by the courts. People servicing criminal sentences often experience multiple forms of punishment simultaneously, especially those who are punished in the community, where sentencing almost always require the payment of fines and fees and a host of other sanctions. Finally, punishment often extends beyond the official end of criminal sentence in the form of civil restrictions.

This course explores the use of punishment in the US and examines the unique form and function of punishment in our society. We will consider why and how the US developed an exceptional system of punishment and the implications of mass incarceration and mass supervision. Why do we punish? How does punishment function in the United States? What are the causes of mass incarceration and mass supervision? What are the consequences of punishment?

We will consider these and related questions by examining the great American prison experiment. We will look at the social context that led to the prison build-up and the policy choices that created the US correctional system. We will read key works of scholarship and popular writing that focuses our attention on features punishment—race and racism, political power, social change, violence, drugs, gender, and culture. We will also consider the experience of punishment and its far-reaching effects.

Course Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:
• Evaluate the strength of various explanations for the nature, size, and scope of the US punishment system.
• Identify policies that directly contribute to the size and scope of the US system of punishment.
• Apply theoretical models to make predictions about how changes in policy will effect the use of punishment.

In addition, you will:
• Develop greater self-awareness of your own beliefs, values, and assumptions about punishment.
• Improve your presentation skills.
• Engage in independent research and learning.

Expectations

What You Can Expect from Me
My job as your instructor is to help you discover the content and create opportunities for you to learn. I cannot learn for you, but I can be your partner on this journey. You can also expect me to:

• Maintain a positive learning environment for all students.
• Challenge you to achieve new heights of understanding.
• Support and encourage your efforts to learn.
• Create meaningful learning experiences with real-life applicability.
• Treat all students fairly and with dignity and respect.
• Provide you with meaningful feedback on your progress
• Acknowledge the limits of my knowledge and the possibility of being wrong.

What I Expect of You
Your job as a student is to learn and to be a contributing member of the class. I expect you to:

• Take responsibility for your learning.
• Treat everyone in the class with dignity and respect.
• Work together to cultivate intellectual humility, a willingness to admit the limits of knowledge, and the possibility of being wrong.
• Welcome clumsy conversations and be forgiving of mistakes.
• Do your own work.
• Ask for help when you need it.

Required Texts

Biographical information about additional reading assignments is included on Canvas.

**Course Requirements**

Your grade in the course is based on 3 types of work: IRAs, participation, and exams.

**Insights, Resource, Application (IRA) (30%)**

For each reading assignment, you will complete a writing assignment that includes three components: new perception or understanding (insights), a resource you find that amplifies the reading’s theme or information (resource), and an example from your personal or professional experience that relates to the reading (application).

Additional information about how to complete the IRAs is provide on Canvas. You should print a copy of your IRA and bring it to class with you each week. After class, the IRAs will be collected and graded.

**Participation (20%)**

Participation is graded every other week. In addition to contributing to the class discussions, you will share your resource from the IRA assignment four times over the semester. During the days that you share your resource, you should prepare to lead a discussion for 10 minutes explaining why you selected the resource, how it expands on the week’s readings, and the work’s significance. You should also allow time for questions and dialogue.

**Exams (Midterm and Final) (50%)**

You will complete two exams—a midterm and a final—worth 25% of the final grade each. The exams will test your knowledge of course materials and your ability to critically analyze the causes and consequences of US systems of punishment.

**Grading Scale**

The following grading scale will be used to determine a course letter grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>73-70</td>
<td>&gt;69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course grades are final and will only be changed in cases where an error has been made. Standard rounding rules will apply for assigning a letter grade. For example, a numeric average of 79.5 will be rounded to 80 and assigned a B-, whereas a numeric average of 79.4 will be rounded to 79 and assigned a C+. 
## Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING ASSIGNMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Aug. 26</td>
<td>Why Do We Punish?</td>
<td>• none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Sept. 2</td>
<td>A History of the Present</td>
<td>• Garland, Chpt 1-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>The New Culture of Crime Control</td>
<td>• Garland, Chpt. 5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Sept. 16</td>
<td>Policy, Crime, Politics and Social Change</td>
<td>• Travis, Western, &amp; Redburn (2014), Chpt. 3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Sept. 23</td>
<td>Punishment and Inequality</td>
<td>• Alexander, Chpt. 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Sept. 30</td>
<td>The “new Jim Crow”</td>
<td>• Alexander, Chpt. 4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>The War on Drugs, Sentence Lengths, and other Explanations</td>
<td>• Pfaff, Chapt. 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Oct. 14</td>
<td>Local Prosecutors and System Hydraulics</td>
<td>• Pfaff, Chapt. 5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Oct. 21</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>• None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Oct. 28</td>
<td>Jail Violence and Despair</td>
<td>• Venters, Chpt. 1-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Nov. 4</td>
<td>Can Jails be Reformed?</td>
<td>• Venters, Chpt. 6-conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Nov. 11</td>
<td>Reentry and Parole</td>
<td>• Western, Chpt. 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Nov. 18</td>
<td>Collateral Consequences and Cycles of Desistance</td>
<td>• Western, Chpt. 7-11</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Week 14 | Nov. 25 | Thanksgiving Holiday | • None
Week 15 | Dec. 2 | Dignity, Social Control, and Punishment | • Tonry, 2018
| | | | • Garland, 2020
Week 16 | Dec. 9 | Final Exam 1:30-3:30 PM | • None

Course Policies

Technical Problems
If you are having problems with an assignment, email me or post on our class discussion board. I will reply to messages as soon as possible and not more than 24 hours after receiving your message.

If you are having problems with your computer, software, or with the Canvas website you may find answers at University Information Technology Help Desk. You may also call the UITS at 940-565-2324 or reach them by live chat.

Face Coverings
UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions.

Attendance
Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

Course Materials for Remote Instruction
Remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. Students will need access to a webcam and microphone to participate in fully remote portions of the class. Additional required classroom materials for remote learning
include: Zoom, a computer, and internet access. Information on how to be successful in a remote learning environment can be found at https://online.unt.edu/learn

Copyright Restriction
Materials in this course, including lectures, notes, handouts, exams, and similar materials created by the instructor, are protected by US copyright law. Materials are used in an educational context for personal use and should not be reproduced, distributed, or sold in print or digitally outside the course without permission. Students who are involved in the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material may be in violation of Code of Student Conduct.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Emergency Notification & Procedures
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students 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). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.