

Judicial and Legal Systems
CJUS 3210.400
Spring 2026

Instructor Information

Name: Jordan Russell, M.S.

E-mail: Jordan.Russell@unt.edu

Teaching Assistant Information

Name: Ashlyn Gierling

E-mail: Ashlyn.Gierling@unt.edu

***For questions or other concerns regarding this course, please e-mail Ms. Ashlyn Gierling first. She will determine if she can address the question/concern or if she should send it to me for a response. Also, please carefully read the syllabus as it can answer many questions.

Course Description

The course will examine the courts, legal and judicial processes and judicial behavior. The history, philosophy and traditions underlying the American justice system as played out in the criminal courts will also be examined. Special attention will be given to the interaction of judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys and jurors. The impact of significant court decisions on the operation of the justice system will also be addressed.

Course Objectives

After completing the course students will:

- Recognize the functions and responsibilities of the participants in the criminal justice process
- Identify the structure of the criminal justice system, including the various levels of the judiciary and the respective role of each
- Describe the ways in which the judicial process influences, and is influenced by, various components of the larger society
- Explain the basic day-to-day functionality of the criminal justice system

Students will successfully demonstrate the attainment of these objectives through quizzes, exams, and written assignments

Required Text

Neubauer, D.W. and Fradella, H.F. (2019). *America's Courts and the Criminal Justice System* (13th ed.) Cengage/Wadsworth Publishing. ISBN: 9781337557894.

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.

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, avoid waiting until the last minute to take your exam in case problems arise. **Do not take your exams on mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets.**

Course Requirements

This course is made up of a series of assignments and assessments to assist you in achieving the course learning objectives. Each week you will work on various combinations of readings, discussions, quizzes, and exams. Chapter modules will become available students on the week corresponding to the course calendar. Students can expect their grades and feedback to be released to them within 1 week. There is a total of 600 points that can be earned in this class. The grading policy along with other class requirements is presented below.

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points Possible</i>
<i>Chapter Quizzes (15)</i>	<i>150 points</i>
<i>Discussion Posts (3)</i>	<i>150 points</i>
<i>Exams (3)</i>	<i>300 points</i>
<i>Total Points Possible</i>	<i>600 points</i>

Grading Scale

A= 540 - 600 points

B= 480 - 539 points

C= 420 - 479 points

D= 360 - 419 points

F= 359 and below

Please note that grades will be calculated based on points earned in the course, not a percentage. I reserve the right to resolve borderline grades, but only if students have completed *all* the assignments in the course.

Exams: Each exam contains 50 multiple choice and ordering style questions to be completed in 90 minutes. Dates for each exam can be found on the course schedule in Canvas.

Weekly Quizzes: Each chapter quiz contains 10 multiple choice questions to be completed in 20 minutes. Dates for when each is available can be found in the course calendar at the end of this syllabus.

Discussions: Each student will be required to participate in 3 discussions throughout the course, with each discussion assignment worth 50 points (for a total of 150 points). Discussion posts should include your response to the post, and a response to a classmate's post. Initial responses of the Canvas discussions should be a minimum of 250 words. ***Students must reply to at least one other student's posts for full point potential*** (responding appropriately and meaningfully). The discussion assignments will be posted on Canvas and available a few days before they are noted on the syllabus schedule.

Discussion due dates are listed in the course calendar below.

Your discussions will be graded on depth of explanation, utilization of sources, connection to course materials, specific efforts to back up your arguments with logical points and sources, grammar and spelling, and adhering to the assignment. ***A detailed rubric for the discussions is provided at the end of the syllabus and on Canvas.***

In order to receive full credit, you must post an original response and respond to at least one other students' post. ***Note that you will NOT be able to see any other students' posts until you have first posted a thread yourself.***

In line with the UNT Honor Code, all work you submit must be your own. Using Generative AI tools without attribution or relying on them to complete assignments violates academic integrity and will be addressed according to our policy. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification.

APA citation guide: <https://guides.library.unt.edu/citations-style-guides/apa>

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.

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.**

Disabled Student Policy

Any student in this class may request learning assistance by submitting a written statement that

describes the nature of your impairment and any specific accommodations you may need. Should you need assistance please contact the Dean of Students' Office at <http://www.dos.unt.edu/index.html> or by calling (940) 565-2648.

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 will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student 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 www.unt.edu/csrr

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 crime and justice in the United States 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 varying ideas, opinions, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Students will respect the views and opinions of others at all times *or their status in the course will be examined*. In sum, simply be appropriate during online interactions. Each student brings diverse insight and perspectives, and that can make for a very interesting and lively discussion forum, but just please 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. 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.

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) (<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) (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

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 Accommodation (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.

Students can access resources and information regarding disability accommodations in the Academic Support tab in Blackboard Learn. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

UNT Compliance with F-1 Visa Students Taking Online Courses

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his

or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Most assignments (quizzes and exams) open at 8:00 a.m. on the first day (Monday) of each week and close at 11:59 the following Sunday. Week 16 and the final exam have a different schedule. Please see the end of this document for the open and close dates for week 16 and the final exam.

Week One: 1/12– 1/18

Topic: Structure: Law, Crime, Courts, and Controversy

Reading: Chapter 1

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 1; Discussion 1 will open and the post and response will be due by 2/15

Week Two: 1/19 – 1/25

Topic: Structure: Federal Courts

Reading: Chapter 2

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 2

Week Three: 1/26 – 2/1

Topic: Structure: State Courts

Reading: Chapter 3

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 3

Week Four: 2/2 – 2/8

Topic: Structure: Juvenile Courts

Reading: Chapter 4

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 4

Week Five: 2/9 – 2/15

No readings for this week. Please spend the week preparing for and completing Exam 1

Assignments: Complete Exam 1; complete Discussion 1 post and response

Week Six: 2/16– 2/22

Topic: People in the Courts: The Dynamics of Courthouse Justice

Reading: Chapter 5

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 5; Discussion 2 will open and the post and response will be due by 3/29

Week Seven: 2/23 – 3/1

Topic: People in the Courts: Prosecutors

Reading: Chapter 6

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 6

Week Eight: 3/2 – 3/8

Topic: People in the Courts: Defense Attorneys

Reading: Chapter 7

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 7

Week Nine: Spring Break – No Assignments

Week Ten: 3/16 – 3/22

Topic: People in the Courts: Judges; Defendants, Victims, and Witnesses

Reading: Chapter 8 and Chapter 9

Assignments: Complete the quizzes for Chapter 8 and Chapter 9

Week Eleven: 3/23 – 3/29

No readings for this week. Please spend the week preparing for and completing Exam 2

Assignments: Complete Exam 2; complete Discussion 2 post and response

Week Twelve: 3/30 – 4/5

Topic: Processing in the Courts: From Arrest and Bail Through Arraignment

Readings: Chapter 10

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 10; Discussion 3 will open and the post and response will be due by 4/30

Week Thirteen: 4/6 – 4/12

Topic: Processing in the Courts: Disclosing and Suppressing Evidence

Readings: Chapter 11

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 11

Week Fourteen: 4/13 – 4/19

Topic: Processing in the Courts: Negotiated Justice and the Plea of Guilty

Readings: Chapter 12

Assignments: Complete the quiz for Chapter 12

Week Fifteen: 4/20 – 4/26

Topic: Processing in the Courts: Trials and Juries; Sentencing

Readings: Chapter 13 and Chapter 14

Assignments: Complete the quizzes for Chapters 13 and 14

Week Sixteen: 4/27 – 4/30 (THURSDAY)

Topic: Processing in the Courts: Appellate and Habeas Corpus Review

Readings: Chapter 15

Assignments: Complete Chapter 15 quiz and Discussion 3 post and response

FINALS WEEK: 5/4 – 5/7 (THURSDAY)

*The final exam will be made available on **Monday, May 4th** at 8:00 a.m. and will be due no later than 11:59 pm on **Thursday, May 7th**. Please note that May 7th is a **THURSDAY**.

The last day to drop the course with a W is April 10th.

Discussion Post Rubric

Criteria	Inadequate 4 pts	Developing 6 pts	Accomplished 8 pts	Exemplary 10 pts
Ideas & Argument	Ideas expressed lack an understanding of the discussion topic. Comments are irrelevant, off-topic, and/or confusing to follow. Viewpoint, if given, is not supported with evidence or examples.	Ideas expressed in discussion posts show a minimal understanding of the discussion topic. Comments are general in nature and/or occasionally may not be relevant. Rehashes or summarizes ideas with limited analysis, original thought, and/or supported viewpoints.	Ideas expressed in discussion posts are mostly substantive and relevant to topic; some original thought. Demonstrates logical thinking, reasoning, and/or analysis for most part. Viewpoint is supported with evidence and/or examples.	Ideas expressed in discussion posts exceed expectations in original thought, substantial depth, and are relevant to topic. Viewpoint shows strong logical thinking, reasoning, and analysis with evidence and examples. Construction of new meaning and insights are evident.
Connection to Course Materials	No connections are made to readings or other course materials (lectures, media, resources, etc.), and/or if made, are not clearly stated and are largely personal opinions.	Minimal direct connections are made to readings and/or other course materials (lectures, media, resources, etc.). Connections are largely inferred and somewhat unclear at times.	Some direct connections are made to readings and/or other course materials (lectures, media, resources, etc.) and are clearly stated for the most part.	Strong, direct connections are made to readings and/or other course materials (lectures, media, resources, etc.) and are clearly stated.
Contribution to Learning Community	Negligible contribution to the learning community. Rarely engages with students and generally ignores others' posts and/or has a negative effect through misrepresenting content in other posts, inappropriate comments made, and/or attempts to dominate the discussion.	Somewhat contributes to the learning community but the focus is generally on own posts. Occasionally interacts with others' postings but little attempt to involve other students in the discussion. Short statements such as "I agree with..."	Contributes to the learning community. Often attempts to direct group discussion to present relevant viewpoints and meaningful reflection by others. Interacts respectfully with students.	Effectively contributes to the learning community. Frequently initiates dialogue and motivates group discussion by providing feedback to students' postings, asking follow-up questions, and through thoughtful, reflective comments. Respectfully encourages a variety of viewpoints and invites contributions from others.
Adherence to Instructions and Clarity	Does not provide any citations. Initial post does not meet minimum 250-word count.	Some significant errors in APA citations. Initial post does not meet minimum 250-word count.	Some minor errors in APA citations. Initial post meets minimum 250-word count.	Proper use of APA citations. Initial post meets minimum 250-word count.

Writing Quality	Posts show a below average/poor writing style that lacks standard English, and/or is difficult for readers to follow Contains frequent errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling. Does not provide any citations. Initial post does not meet minimum 250-word count.	Posts show an average and/or casual writing style using standard English that is generally clear but contains some errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling.	Discussion posts show above average writing style that is clear using standard English with minor errors in grammar, punctuation, usage, and/or spelling.	Discussion posts are well written and clearly articulated using standard English, characterized by elements of a strong writing style with correct grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling.
Required Response	Deduct 10 points	Deduct 3 points	No points deducted	No points deducted
	Required response post is missing/inadequate.	All required postings completed; however, response post only agrees/disagrees and does not provide additional insight.	All required postings by deadline; an adequate response post is given that provides some additional insight.	All required postings by deadline; response is extremely thoughtful and provides additional insight.