

What is Justice? - CJUS 4600.001 - Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Todd Gearman, MFS

Office Location: Chilton Hall 265

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:45 – 11:45 and Wednesday, 9:45 – 10:45; Other Times by Appointment

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Class Information

Class Location: LIFE A106

Class Day: Mon/Wed/Fri

Class Hours: 11:15 – 12:05

Course Description

Study the ethical meaning of justice in the United States. Problems confronting police, the courts and the juvenile and correctional systems are addressed.

Course Structure

This class will be driven primarily by discussion, with applied application of criminal justice concepts using the assigned readings, scenario-based examples, and material presented during lecture. The course will be composed of several themed units as outlined in the course calendar.

Each unit will be assessed through a weekly quiz. Four short response papers will evaluate students' ability to apply course concepts to criminal justice issues and scenarios. A final project paper will require a cumulative analysis of a course-related topic using course materials and independent research.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Identify and apply ethical frameworks to issues in policing, courts, and corrections.
2. Demonstrate understanding of course readings, concepts, and terminology through assigned assessments.
3. Analyze how institutional culture influences individual decision-making and professional behavior.
4. Evaluate ethical dilemmas in criminal justice practice and defend positions using course concepts and evidence.
5. Develop a formal analytical argument using ethical theory and supporting evidence.
6. Critically reflect on personal values and the impact of institutional environments on ethical behavior.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for [F-1 Visa \(DOC\)](#) holders. Full-time status for F-1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students.

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy emphasizes applied learning that connects theory to real-world practice. I promote critical thinking and active engagement with complex issues through analysis, discussion, and scenario-based instruction. I also establish clear expectations for student preparation and participation to support these learning objectives. I maintain an accessible and responsive classroom environment that encourages respectful dialogue, diverse perspectives, and timely academic support when needed. My overall goal is to develop students' ability to apply ethical and analytical reasoning beyond the classroom into professional practice.

General Policies

Communication Expectations

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. Please use your official unt.edu email account for all email communications with me and include the CJUS course number in the subject line of the email. I respond to student emails as promptly as possible, typically within 48 hours during the business week. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated

Coursewide announcements will primarily be shared through Canvas Announcements and may include important updates, reminders, and course changes. It is **your responsibility** to check and read any messages sent through Canvas.

ADA Policy

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>).

Academic Success Resources

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out [mental health services](https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies) (<https://clear.unt.edu/student-support-services-policies>), visit unt.edu/success, and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.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.

How to Succeed in this Course

This course is conducted in person and relies heavily on active participation, discussion, and engagement with course materials presented through lecture, readings, and applied exercises. Regular attendance, preparation, and consistent participation are important components of success in the course. Students are expected to engage thoughtfully with course content, complete assigned readings, and contribute to class discussions and activities.

I encourage you to take advantage of office hours and communicate with me whenever questions or challenges arise. Office hours are not only for students who are struggling. They are an opportunity to discuss course concepts, clarify assignments, develop ideas, and strengthen your understanding of the material. Many students who regularly attend office hours find that the additional discussion and guidance helps improve both their confidence and performance in the course. My goal is to support your academic success and help you develop the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for professional practice.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

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 belonging. 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.

Required/Recommended Materials

- Pollock, J.M. (2022). Ethical Dilemmas and Decisions in Criminal Justice. Cengage.
 - Paperback ISBN-13: 9780357512913
 - eBook ISBN: 9798214343365R365, 9798214343365R180, 9798214343365

- Browning, C.R. (2017). Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland. Harper.
 - Paperback ISBN-13: 9780062303028
 - eBook ISBN: 9780062303035

Note: In addition to the required text, journal articles, documentaries, and other sources of reference **may** be used to further enhance students' learning and will be made available in class or on Canvas.

Course Technology & Skills

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and other required equipment or software such as a webcam, microphone, Adobe Photoshop, etc. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

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) (<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) (<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>)

Course Requirements

This course uses a combination of weekly reading quizzes, in-class ethical scenario assignments, and an applied ethics paper to assess student learning. These assignments are designed to promote consistent engagement with course material, reinforce understanding of key concepts, and develop the ability to apply ethical frameworks to real-world criminal justice situations. Together, they support progression from foundational knowledge to applied analysis and reflective ethical reasoning.

1. Weekly Quizzes (120 points total)

There will be a total of fourteen (14) weekly reading quizzes administered through Canvas, with the twelve (12) highest scores counting toward your final grade for a total of **120 points (40% of the final grade)**. Therefore, your two lowest quiz scores, including any zeros, will be dropped automatically at the end of the semester.

Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple-choice and true/false questions covering assigned readings, lecture material, and related course content. Quizzes are open-note and open-text, and students may consult assigned readings and course materials while completing them. Once opened, each quiz must be completed within 45 minutes.

Each quiz will be available for a 7-day submission window, and due dates are listed in the course calendar. Students are responsible for monitoring quiz availability and completing quizzes before the submission window closes. Quizzes not completed before the deadline will receive a zero and generally cannot be made up except as permitted under university policy and the course late work policy. ***Quiz due dates are listed in the course calendar below***

2. In-Class Ethical Scenario Assignments (80 points total)

There will be a total of four (4) in-class ethical scenario assignments worth **80 points (26.7% of the final grade)**, with each assignment worth 20 points. These assignments will be administered at unannounced times during the semester and completed in class, individually, and submitted before leaving.

Each assignment will present an ethical scenario drawn from criminal justice practice. Students will respond in a short written paragraph (no more than half a page) identifying the central ethical issue, taking a clear position, and briefly explaining their reasoning. These assignments are designed both to reinforce consistent attendance and to provide practice applying ethical frameworks to realistic professional situations.

Responses will be graded on the identification of the ethical issue, clarity of position, and quality of reasoning. A focused, well-supported paragraph will score higher than a longer response that does not clearly engage the prompt. ***A rubric for the assignment is provided in Canvas.***

Because these assignments are completed in class and unannounced, they cannot be made up. Students who are absent when a scenario is distributed will receive a score of zero for that assignment.

3. Ordinary Men: Applied Ethics Paper (100 points total)

Total Points: 100 points (33.3% of final grade)

Format: Outline, bibliography, and final research paper (includes required reflection section) in APA format.

Sources: Must include Browning (Ordinary Men) and course materials (minimum two citations required)

Length: Minimum 3 and Maximum 5 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12pt, 1-inch margins

Due Dates: Listed in course calendar below and in Canvas.

Outline: October 2, 2026, by 11:59 p.m. (Submitted in Canvas)

Final Paper: December 2, 2026, by 11:59 p.m. (Submitted in Canvas)

Description

This assignment is the central analytical project of the course. Using Browning's Ordinary Men and ethical frameworks from the course materials, students will analyze how institutional culture and obedience shape moral decision making in criminal justice contexts. The assignment is completed in two stages, beginning with a structured outline and culminating in a final research paper that includes applied analysis and a required reflection component.

Stage One: Outline and Annotated Bibliography (10 points total)

The outline requires a thesis statement, structured Roman numeral outline with supporting evidence, and APA references. It is designed to ensure early engagement with course materials and establish a clear analytical plan for the final paper.

Stage Two: Final Paper (90 points total)

The final paper integrates ethical frameworks from the assigned course material with Browning's historical analysis. The objective is **NOT** to summarize Ordinary Men, but to apply ethical theory to explain decision making within Battalion 101 and reflect on its implications for contemporary criminal justice practice.

The paper must include three sections:

Section 1: Analysis of at least two ethical dilemmas faced by members of Battalion 101 using appropriate course material frameworks (approx. 1–1.5 pages)

Section 2: Analysis of institutional and organizational conditions contributing to moral collapse, using at least one additional course material framework (approx. 1 page)

Section 3: First-person reflection connecting Browning's findings to a contemporary criminal justice context and addressing personal ethical commitments (approx. 1 page)

Detailed instructions, including grading criteria and rubric, are provided in the Canvas module for this assignment.

Be sure to review the rubric to maximize your score on this assignment. The assignment is due on **Wednesday, December 2, 2026, by 11:59PM**. You are to submit it through the Turnitin.com portal on Canvas.

Schedule

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. The calendar is subject to change in line with the [Campus Closures Policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006).

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

Weeks 1-4: Part I

Part I – Ethics and Ethical Dilemmas in the Criminal Justice System				
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
1	08/17	Course Introduction and Syllabus Review	Text: Chapter 1	10/02
			Ordinary Men: Applied Ethics Paper	12/02
	08/19	Morality, Ethics, and Human Behavior	Ordinary Men: Preface & Ch. 1-2	
	08/21	Morality, Ethics, and Human Behavior	Week 1 Quiz	08/28
2	08/24	Determining Moral Behavior	Text: Chapter 2	
	08/26	Determining Moral Behavior		
	08/28	Determining Moral Behavior	Week 2 Quiz	09/04
3	08/31	Justice and Law	Text: Chapter 3	
	09/02	Justice and Law	Ordinary Men: Ch. 3-5	
	09/04	Justice and Law	Week 3 Quiz	09/11
4	09/07	No Class	Labor Day	
	09/09	Becoming an Ethical Professional	Text: Chapter 4	
	09/11	Becoming an Ethical Professional	Week 4 Quiz	09/18

Weeks 5-7: Part II

Part II – The Police				
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
5	09/14	The Police Role in Society	Text: Chapter 5	
	09/16	The Police Role in Society	Ordinary Men: Ch. 6-9	
	09/18	The Police Role in Society	Week 5 Quiz	09/25
6	09/21	Police Discretion and Dilemmas	Text: Chapter 6	
	09/23	Police Discretion and Dilemmas		

	09/25	Police Discretion and Dilemmas	Week 6 Quiz	10/02
7	09/28	Police Corruption and Responses	Text: Chapter 7	
	09/30	Police Corruption and Responses	Ordinary Men: Ch. 10-13	
	10/02	Police Corruption and Responses	Ordinary Men: Applied Ethics Paper - Outline Due	10/02
			Week 7 Quiz	10/09

Weeks 8-10: Part III

Part III – The Courts and Legal Professionals				
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
8	10/05	Law and Legal Professionals	Text: Chapter 8	
	10/07	Law and Legal Professionals		
	10/09	Law and Legal Professionals	Week 8 Quiz	10/16
9	10/12	Discretion and Dilemmas in the Legal Profession	Text: Chapter 9	
	10/14	Discretion and Dilemmas in the Legal Profession		
	10/16	Discretion and Dilemmas in the Legal Profession	Week 9 Quiz	10/23
10	10/19	Ethical Misconduct in the Courts and Responses	Text: Chapter 10	
	10/21	Ethical Misconduct in the Courts and Responses	Ordinary Men: Ch. 14-16	
	10/23	Ethical Misconduct in the Courts and Responses	Week 10 Quiz	10/30

Weeks 11-13: Part IV

Part IV - Corrections				
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
11	10/26	The Ethics of Punishment and Corrections	Text: Chapter 11	
	10/28	The Ethics of Punishment and Corrections		
	10/30	The Ethics of Punishment and Corrections	Week 11 Quiz	11/06
12	11/02	Discretion and Dilemmas in Corrections	Text: Chapter 12	
	11/04	Discretion and Dilemmas in Corrections		
	11/06	Discretion and Dilemmas in Corrections	Week 12 Quiz	11/13
13	11/09	Correctional Professionals: Misconduct and Responses	Text: Chapter 13	

	11/11	Correctional Professionals: Misconduct and Responses	Ordinary Men: Ch. 17-18 & Afterword	
	11/13	Correctional Professionals: Misconduct and Responses	Week 13 Quiz	11/20

Weeks 14-16: Conclusion

Conclusion				
Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
14	11/16	Making Ethical Choices	Text: Chapter 14	
	11/18	Making Ethical Choices	Week 14 Quiz	11/30
	11/20	Making Ethical Choices		
15	11/23	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
	11/25	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
	11/27	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
16	11/30	Course Review	Course Evaluation	
	12/02	Pre Finals	Ordinary Men: Applied Ethics Paper Due	12/02
	12/04	No Class	Reading Day	
12/07-12/11		FINAL EXAM WEEK		

Assessing Your Work

This course uses a variety of assignments and assessments designed to support the course learning objectives and evaluate your understanding of course material. Throughout the semester, students will complete weekly quizzes, in-class activities, short response papers, and a final project paper. These assessments are intended to encourage consistent engagement with assigned readings, class discussion, and applied analysis of criminal justice issues.

Grades and feedback will generally be made available within 7 business days, although larger written assignments may require additional grading time. Students are encouraged to regularly review feedback and monitor their progress throughout the semester. There is a total of **300** points that can be earned in this class. The grading policy along with other class requirements is presented below.

Assignment	Details	Points Possible	% of Grade
Ordinary Men: Applied Ethics Paper	Outline (10 pts) + Final Paper (90 pts)	100	33.3%
Reading Quizzes	14 administered, 2 dropped, 12 x 10 pts	120	40%
Ethical Scenario Assignments	4 x 20 pts	80	26.7%
Total		300	100%

Grading Scale

A = 270-300

B = 240-269

C = 210-239

D = 180-209

F = Below 180 points

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. To read more about the policy, please visit: [Academic Integrity Policy \(PDF\)](#).

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of [guidelines for your academic success](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

Generative AI Use

In this course, the use of GenAI tools is limited as directed by the instructor. Any additional use requires explicit permission, proper citation, and authentic student work.

Throughout the semester, you will or may use specific Generative AI (GenAI) tools for certain assignments, with guidance on responsible use. These assignments help build ethical resilience and GenAI literacy, preparing you for careers in a GenAI oriented workforce.

I use GenAI to enhance materials, streamline tasks, generate prompts, create scenarios, draft syllabi, build study guides, and analyze performance. I will always disclose how I use GenAI, and I expect the same from you.

In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, unauthorized use of GenAI tools is prohibited. Using GenAI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with GenAI undermines the learning process and violates UNT academic integrity policy. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification

Late Work

Late work and make-up assignments are generally not accepted except in cases of authorized university absences or documented extreme circumstances approved by the instructor. Authorized absences are those recognized under university policy. Students are responsible for following university procedures for requesting an excused absence and should provide written documentation in advance whenever possible.

If a serious illness or emergency prevents completion of a required assignment or exam, documentation must be provided within 3 calendar days. The instructor reserves the right to evaluate exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Any approved make-up work must be completed within 3 days of returning from the authorized absence. For assignments or exams with extended availability windows, the authorized absence must substantially prevent access to the full submission period in order to qualify for a make-up opportunity.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit offered for this course. Any change to this policy would apply to the entire class and not to individual students. Students should focus on completing assigned coursework and maximizing performance on required assessments.

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and active participation are important components of success in this course and are required. Because much of the course relies on discussion, applied exercises, and in-class engagement, students are expected to attend class consistently, arrive prepared, and participate thoughtfully in course activities.

At four unannounced times during the semester, students will complete required in-class assignments designed to assess attendance, participation, and engagement with course material. These assignments must be completed individually and submitted before leaving class. Because these activities are designed for in-class participation and are unannounced, they generally cannot be made up. Students who are absent when an in-class assignment is administered will receive a zero unless the absence qualifies under university policy.

I understand that many students balance academic responsibilities with work, family, and other personal obligations. If circumstances arise that may affect your attendance or participation, I encourage you to communicate with me as early as possible so we can discuss available options and support your success in the course.

Syllabus Change Policy

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 it must be modified. In the case that it 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 all changes are documented. Failure to obtain syllabus changes because of failure to check and read announcements/email does not constitute a defense against a missed Reading, test date, or other applicable changes.