

**CRMJ 4860: Social Inequality, Crime, Criminal Justice, and the Law**  
**T/Th: 1:20-2:35**  
**A&S, Room 210**  
**University of Wyoming**  
**Spring, 2017**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Thomas (“Tom”) J. Mowen  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Criminal Justice  
**OFFICE:** Arts and Sciences Building, room 222  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays 9:30am-10:30am  
Wednesdays 11:00am-noon  
And by Appointment  
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## **Course Description**

Our society is an unequal society. Institutional dynamics and barriers perpetuate inequality in our system of justice across racial, ethnic, gender, sex, and socioeconomic status boundaries. These same dynamics also impact trends in crime across the United States. As a result, this course provides an in-depth assessment of social inequality and its impact on crime, criminal justice, and the law. Particular emphasis is given to the individual and interactive effects of race/ethnicity, class, and gender/sex inequality. Critical theoretical perspectives that promote social justice will be the primary analytical focus.

**Prerequisites:** 9 credit hours of CRMJ related coursework. Exceptions can be made with prior approval from the instructor.

## **Course Objectives**

This course will provide students with a critical perspective on inequality within the criminal justice system, law, and crime. The focus of the course centers upon the causes and consequences of social inequality within the context of the criminal justice system in the U.S. Theories of inequality, structural and institutional dimensions of social inequality, and contemporary and current events dealing with inequality in criminal justice-related arenas will comprise the core of the course. Objectives include:

- To provide students with a critical understanding of the historical development and contemporary trends of inequality in the criminal justice system.
- To expose students to the major problems and issues that influence how our system of justice and law creates, transforms, and perpetuates inequality.
- To familiarize students with challenges faced by actors within the criminal justice and legal system as those challenges relate to social inequality.
- To provide students with an understanding of how external social pressures influence inequality in crime and trends in crime at both micro- and macro-levels.

## Course Materials

I try to limit the cost of expenses to students. While I am asking that two books (1 and 2 below) be purchased, you do not need to purchase the newest editions. Both *Crime and the American Dream*, and *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor get Prison* can be purchased for under ten dollars as previous editions. Book 3 is recommended, but not required (you will not be tested on material from this book that is not covered in class). However, please do note the importance of point 4, below. A significant portion of the material we cover in class will come from peer-reviewed research articles, which are free to you as students.

1. Messner, Steven F, and Richard Rosenfeld. 2012. *Crime and the American Dream, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub. Co. ISBN: 1111346968. (REQUIRED)
2. Jeffrey Reiman and Paul Leighton. 2012. *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison: Ideology, Class and Criminal Justice, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Routledge. ISBN: 0205137725 (REQUIRED)
3. Gregg Barak, Paul Leighton, and Jeanne Flavin. 2010. *Class, Race, Gender and Crime: The Social Realities of Justice in America, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Boulder: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers. ISBN: 0742599701. (NOT required)
4. Additional handouts, articles, and readings (listed in the Course Schedule) are provided through the WyoCourses website and are required. In compliance with the university's copyright agreements, stable links are provided to students as necessary.

## Expectation of Students

An important part of the learning process is interacting with your peers and your instructor. For this reason, you will be expected to participate in classroom activities and small group discussions. You are expected to attend each class having engaged with the material. In addition, because the subject matter for this course can be extremely sensitive, the following rules for classroom participation are extremely important.

- Everyone has the right to their own opinion, and as such, nobody will be criticized for voicing their opinion.
- There will be no derogatory comments made toward any member of this class.
- There will be no derogatory language used to describe any group of people in our society.

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:** No form of cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, and related activities will result in a zero for the assignment and possibly the course. Academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to the University guidelines. In addition, grade appeals will be handled according to these same guidelines. These guidelines can be found in the University Regulations. For a listing of additional responsibilities and rights of students (and faculty) in the College of Arts and

Sciences please see:

<http://www.uwyo.edu/as/files/current/students%20and%20teachers%20working%20together.pdf>

I take academic dishonesty very seriously and will use a zero tolerance policy. Students engaging in any form of academic dishonesty may have further disciplinary proceedings at my discretion within the policies set forth by UW including, but not limited to, referral to the Department Head or Dean of the School. See: <http://www.uwyo.edu/as/student-appeals/academic-dishonesty.html>

**Communication:** Email is the best way to contact me. I do ask that some level of etiquette is observed. For example, please don't email me with, "When that thing do?" or "r they dbl space or no" or "How long it is?" (all of which are examples of emails I have recently received). Instead, please take a few minutes to draft an appropriate email with a salutation and explanation of your question/comment/purpose of the email. Concurrent with UW regulations, I will only communicate with correspondence from your official uwyo.edu email address and I will not discuss grades via email or phone.

**Meetings:** I am always happy to meet with students. I am available during office hours (outside of unexpected events/meetings in which I will make an announcement and arrange additional office hours). My time is divided among many responsibilities, but students are always a priority. I realize students have other classes, work, families, and duties outside of the university, and will do my best to accommodate meetings outside of my office hours.

**Attendance and Absence:** While I do not take formal attendance, you will not be able to make up any class activity, quiz, or assignment without a university recognized absence or documented medical emergency. In order to be excused from an examination, a valid University excuse or doctor's excuse must be obtained. University excuses can be obtained from the Office of Student Life. The Office of Student Life (OSL) will provide the excuse, provided the students' absence meets the criteria for an authorized absence. For further information on obtaining an excused absence, contact the OSL or visit their website at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/dos/absences/>. Doctor's excuses must be obtained from your attending physician. Be advised that student health does not provide excused absences. These excuses must be for the exam date and must state that you were unable to attend the class period that day. Doctor's appointments do not constitute an excused absence. Excuses need to be presented to the instructor by the class period following the excused absence to be accepted.

**Make-up Examinations and Assignments:** Make-up examinations are only provided with a university excused absence (see above), and must be completed within three days of the excused absence. Likewise, the term paper and discussion papers have specific due dates (see course schedule), and are due prior to the start of class on the due date. Extensions are given under only extremely rare cases and must be accompanied by an official university excuse indicating that the student could not attend class the day the assignment was due.

**Assignments:** Are due by the start of class on the due date. All late assignments will receive a 10 percent deduction (of the total assignment value) for each day they are late. Assignments

must be submitted via WyoCourses (see section below). Please note, the onus of responsibility for ensuring assignments have been successfully submitted via WyoCourses falls upon the student. Emailed submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances. Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with assignment guidelines posted on WyoCourses.

**WyoCourses:** WyoCourses provides the opportunity to have all of the course materials in one place that is accessible to everyone. Grades, assignment guidelines, course readings not found in the textbook (and there are many), and announcements will be posted to this site. In addition, assignments submitted to WyoCourses are also graded via WyoCourses. As a result, students are able to view their grade and my comments through the use of the online system (called “SpeedGrader”). Students unfamiliar with WyoCourses can find answers via this link: [http://www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses/student\\_support/index.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/wyocourses/student_support/index.html). As part of the requirements for this class, you are expected to check and use WyoCourses regularly. Make sure to check your UW email as this is the address that will be used for any posted announcements.

## Course Assessment and Grading

**PRESENTATION AND TERM PAPER:** Students are tasked with presenting on a topic to the class (details are below), but this paragraph IS VERY IMPORTANT! This class should be interactive, which involves learning from, and engaging with, your peers. For that reason, attending presentations are very important. Even as a professor, I continue to learn things from students every semester (seriously). To encourage you to attend presentations, if you attend 8 presentation days, you do not need to complete a term paper. You must attend at least 8 presentation days – there are no exceptions to this requirement whatsoever. If you do not attend at least 8 presentation days, you will be required to submit a term paper. Details for the term paper are included as an attached rubric. Again if you attend 8 presentation days, you do not need to write a term paper. This may seem odd, but remember, the goal of this class is to critically explore social inequality within crime, criminal justice, and the law. Attending presentations will expose you to more ideas and ways of thinking about these issues than writing a term paper (you will still complete written assignments – see below). But remember, if you do not attend at least 8 presentation days, you will need to write a term paper.

**PRESENTATION: What, Why, and How?** One of the major themes of this course is critical analysis. For the presentation, you will be paired up with another student and will complete this as a duo (groups of three are possible with approval from the professor, but not recommended). For this presentation, you are tasked with investigating an inequality-related issue in the criminal justice system (the “What?”). You must then explain the causes and/or explanations for this inequality (the “Why?”). Finally, you must then explore two ways to reduce and/or solve this inequality (the “How?”).

- *What* is the problem?
- *Why* does the problem exist?
- *How* can we solve this problem?

You MUST base this presentation within peer-reviewed, academic literature. As a result, you are required to use at least five peer-reviewed, academic sources from criminology, sociology, or criminal justice journals outside of the articles used in class. Students must make themselves

familiar with the complete details and requirements of the assignment, which can be found on the course website.

**TERM PAPER:** Please see attached rubric. The term paper is only required for students who do not attend at least 8 presentation days.

**DISCUSSION PAPERS AND DISCUSSION.** There are three short papers (see schedule for due dates). For each discussion paper, I will provide a series of questions/prompts. Students will choose one of the questions/prompts, and write a paper in response.

- I expect these discussion papers to be time intensive and to comprise a significant effort by each student. For these reasons, I have provided a rubric of the expectations for these papers. Students must make themselves familiar with the complete details and requirements of the assignment, which can be found on the course website.
- On the three days discussion papers are due, we will spend all class period discussing the discussion papers. Students are tasked with contributing to this discussion (again, see additional guidelines/rubric)

**NOTE:** I reserve the right to change the assessments, readings, and assignments in order to achieve the goals of the course. For example, if students are not coming to class prepared, I may elect to have quizzes. Likewise, if class discussions are lacking, we may have exams. If we need to spend more time on a particular topic, I may elect to assign additional readings. Should this occur, I will announce these changes in class and in writing. The grading procedure (below) will be updated accordingly.

### Grading

Assignment	Points	% of Grade	Total Points	Letter	Percentage
Discussion Paper 1	50	17%	270-300	A	90%-100%
Discussion Paper 2	50	17%	261-269	B+	87%-89.9%
Discussion Paper 3	50	17%	240-260	B	80%-86.9%
Presentation	100	33%	231-239	C+	77%-79.9%
Term Paper	50	17%	210-230	C	70%-76.9%
Total	300	100%	201-209	D+	67%-69.9%
			180-200	D	60%-66.9%
			179 or fewer	F	59.9%-

*Note: I will not discuss grades via email.*

### ADA, Holidays, and Course Schedule

**ADA Statement:** It is University of Wyoming policy to accommodate students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities. If you have a physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in the Student Educational Opportunity offices, Room 330 Knight Hall, and provide UDSS with documentation of your disability.

**Course Schedule:** The schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change, and likely will to accommodate class discussions, presentations, other events. In order to stay current with announcements regarding the schedule, you will need to attend class; as this is an online class, this means regularly checking into WyoCourses and your .uwyo email address. Changes to the course schedule or syllabus will be communicated to the class, and major changes to the syllabus or course schedule will be communicated in writing.

**Religious Holidays:** It is the policy of the University to make every reasonable effort allowing students to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. In such cases, it is the obligation of the student to notify the instructor within first two weeks of the term of the dates of religious holidays on which he or she will be absent. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve the student of responsibility for completing required work missed. Following the necessary notification, the student should consult with the instructor to determine what appropriate alternative opportunity will be provided, allowing the student to fully complete his or her academic responsibilities.

## Anticipated Court Schedule\*

Week	Date	Topic	Assigned Readings
1	23-Jan	Introduction to the Course Why do we care about inequality? / Presentation groups	- -
2	31-Jan	Racial Inequalities: Race and Crime Racial Inequalities: Minority Threat	Robinson, 2000 Kane et al., 2013
3	7-Feb	Class Inequalities: Social Class and Crime Class Inequalities: <i>Crime and the American Dream</i>	Dunaway et al., 2000 Book (First Half)
4	14-Feb	Class Inequalities: <i>Crime and the American Dream</i> <b>FIRST DISCUSSION PAPER DUE ON FEBRUARY 16</b>	Book (Second Half)
5	21-Feb	Sex/Gender Inequalities: Consequences and... Sex/Gender Inequalities: ...causes	Carr et al., 2008 Reckdenwald & Parker, 2008
6	28-Feb	Juvenile Inequalities: It starts young... Presentations 1 and 2	Hirschfield, 2008 -
7	7-Mar	Juvenile Inequalities: ...and continues Presentations 3 and 4	Mowen & Brent, 2016 -
8	14-Mar	<b>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK!!!!</b>	-
9	21-Mar	Juvenile Inequalities: Unequal Outcomes Presentations 5 and 6	Chappell et al., 2013 -
10	28-Mar	<b>SECOND DISCUSSION PAPER DUE ON MARCH 28</b> Presentations 7 and 8	-
11	4-Apr	Punishment Inequalities Presentations 9 and 10	Western, 2007 -
12	11-Apr	<i>The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison</i> Presentations 11 and 12	Book (First Half) -
13	18-Apr	<i>The Rich get Richer and the Poor Get Prison</i> Presentations 13 and 14	Book (Second Half) -
14	25-Apr	<b>THIRD DISCUSSION PAPER DUE on APRIL 25th</b> Presentations 15 and 16	-
15	2-May	Presentations 17 and 18 The Future of Inequality	- Mears et al., 2016

*\*Reminder: This is a general course schedule, and will be adjusted as needed to accommodate class discussions and guest presentations. Any significant (and highly unlikely) changes to examination dates or due dates for assignments will be communicated in advance in writing.*