

Comprehensive Exams

CRIM 5306-600

Asynchronous, Online

3 Credits

Fall 2026

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides direct examination of major concepts and issues in criminological theory, criminal justice, research methods and data analysis, and law and policy in criminal justice. Students must enroll in this course during the semester they plan to take comprehensive exams. At the end of the course, students will take three section exams that each represent a major section (or combined sections) of the master's program. Students must receive a passing grade of each section exam to pass this course and be eligible for graduation (if enrolled in the comprehensive exam track).

The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to test the graduate students' mastery over a specific subject area. Four subject areas will be tested:

- 1) Criminological Theory,
- 2) Research Methods/Statistics (combined),
- 3) Critical Issues in Criminal Justice/Law & Policy (combined).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will provide students the opportunity to prepare for the comprehensive exam that they will take at the end of this course. Specifically, students will engage in self-guided studying to:

1. Understand criminological theories of crime.
2. Recognize current issues in the criminal justice system.
3. Comprehend the steps involved in developing a rigorous research design.
4. Conduct a descriptive and inferential analysis of secondary data.
5. Develop an understanding of the history and development of legal issues in policing, courts, corrections, and juvenile justice.

PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The comprehensive exam is an essay exam which evaluates and measures a student's competency and mastery of the primary concepts they were expected to learn through their course work in the Master of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice ("MSCCJ") program at Texas A&M University- San Antonio. Through the administering of the MSCCJ Comprehensive Exam, graduate faculty in the Department of Criminology & Political Science are verifying that students grasp the key elements of the academic program, and have earned the title of "master" in their field.

COMPONENTS THE MSCCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The MSCCJ Comprehensive Exam consists of three essay questions focusing on each of the five required Core Courses that all MSCCJ students must take during their degree program. These questions are developed and graded each term by graduate faculty in the department who specialize and teach these courses. Grading faculty will prepare a reading list for those preparing for the exam. Students are encouraged to meet with each listed faculty member to discuss their expectations and guidance.

The required courses are as follows:

- **CRIM 5301.** Advanced Criminological Theory: This course explores classic and contemporary theoretical perspectives on the etiology of crime and empirical support for those perspectives. Theory development and criteria for judging criminological theories are discussed. Correlates of crime and crime typologies are also examined.
- **CRIM 5302.** Critical Issues in Criminal Justice: This course provides a critical analysis of current issues in the criminal justice system, such as mass incarceration, the death penalty, wrongful convictions, inequality and punishment, and police use of force. Current debates and controversies in criminal justice will be discussed.
- **CRIM 5303.** Law and Policy in Criminal Justice: This course provides an examination of current legal issues in criminal justice, liability of criminal justice practitioners, and corrections law relating to conditions of confinement and prisoners' rights. The policy making process in criminal justice and current criminal justice policy debates and developments will also be discussed.
- **CRIM 5304.** Research Design and Methods: This course provides an overview of research design and methods for conducting research in criminology and criminal justice. Topics may include experimental research, survey research, program evaluation research, use of secondary data sets, content analysis, field research, ethical issues in research, and impact of research findings on public policy. The ability to critically analyze the limitations of research methods will be emphasized.
- **CRIM 5305.** Data Analysis: This course provides an overview of statistical techniques used in criminology and criminal justice. The ability to

understand statistical techniques and concepts and interpret results will be emphasized.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE MSCCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

The exam consists of three comprehensive essay questions based on each of the core required classes in the MSCCJ program. Each term new questions will be generated by the assigned graduate faculty for each course and the same faculty will grade the questions that they developed.

For Fall 2026, the Comprehensive Examination will be administered on November 5, 2026, and November 6, 2026, on the main campus of Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students must be present in person on campus to sit for the exams. The dates will be announced in the next few weeks.

On Day 1, students will complete the Criminological Theory AND a *combined* Law & Policy and Critical Issues portions of the comprehensive exam. There will be two exam sessions on Day 1: a morning session from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, and an afternoon session from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Students will have two hours to complete each essay question. Responses will be collected at the end of each exam period by the proctor.

On Day 2, students will complete the *combined* Research Methods & Data Analysis portion of the comprehensive exam. There will only be one session on Day 2 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Students will have three hours to complete their exam, and responses will again be collected at the end of the exam period by the proctor or, if online, the system will force end completion and submit a response.

Schedule of events for Day 1 of the Comprehensive Exams

Activity	Start	End	Format	Comments
Question 1	9:00 am	11:00 am	In-person (computer access to Blackboard required)	Core Required Course
Break	11:00 am	1:00 pm		
Question 2	1:00 pm	3:00 pm	In-person (computer access to Blackboard required)	Core Required Courses To clarify, students will have questions that span the content of both of these topic areas IN A SINGLE QUESTION.

Schedule of events for Day 2 of the Comprehensive Exams

Activity	Start	End	Format	Comments
Question 3	10:00 am	1:00 pm	In-person (computer access to Blackboard required)	Core Required Course

GRADING OF THE MSCCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Each exam section is evaluated using a rubric that is specific to each exam. Exams are scored on a 0 to 100 scale. Students must score an 80% or higher on each section of the exam. Students must pass all required sections. Any section not passed must be retaken during the next scheduled comprehensive exam period.

Students will be permitted to sit for any failed sections a second time, but they must pass on the second attempt to earn their degree.

EXAMS LENGTH, TIME, & FORMAT (SUGGESTED MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS)

The quality and comprehensiveness of your answers matter more than simply meeting the minimum word count. Focus on delivering thorough, well-supported responses, as the substance of your work is more important than the length. While these guidelines are recommended to help you structure your work effectively, they are NOT MANDATORY.

Following APA (American Psychological Association) format with proper citations is REQUIRED to maintain academic standards. Please use APA citation in text and in the reference section.

At the exam location, you will be able to access a statistical analysis program, Blackboard, and Microsoft Word. You will be able to view and answer the selected essay questions on the course link for Essays and Quizzes on that day after the Testing Center opens these password protected files. You will submit your answers through Blackboard.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS DATES:

For Fall 2026, the exams will be administered on November 5, 2026, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and on November 6, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM on the main campus of Texas A&M University-San Antonio. The exam locations will be announced in the first few weeks of the semester.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS POOL OF QUESTIONS GUIDE:

By the end of the second or third week of the semester, you will be provided with three to four sample questions and/or datasets as a study guide for each of the four separate sections of the exams. From these questions, the graduate faculty will pick ONE question for you to answer for that section of your comprehensive exams. You will answer that one question during the in-person comprehensive exams scheduled on campus.

You are allowed to bring one copy of your note sheets to the exam. The page is limited to only one PREFORMATTED 8.5 x 11 inches copy paper. This sheet will be made available on Blackboard at the beginning of the semester. One side will consist of important terms to remember, and the other side will be used for key citations that you need for each exam. You will be permitted to have the citation, and a brief sentence summarizing it. Any notes not meeting these listed criteria will be confiscated by the proctor assigned to that portion of the exams.

We suggest that you use this note sheet include citations and a one-sentence summary of your sources, as this will provide you with a better memory tool to answer the questions. You may use generative AI to help you simplify and outline your notes, but you must otherwise abide by the generative AI policy for the course, detailed below. Because of this, you will need to submit your notes to the grading faculty for review NO LATER THAN two weeks before the exams take place (October 23). Once approved, note sheets will be printed by department faculty and brought to the exam for those students sitting for the exam.

Study Materials for Research Method and Data Analysis:

For the Research Method and Data Analysis portion of the exams, you will be given several datasets and will be instructed to design a study around 2 variables within those datasets. The instructor handling the Research Method/Data Analysis portion of the exams will inform you 2 weeks before the exam exactly which dataset to use and which variables to analyze. During the comprehensive exams for that portion of the exams, you will write up the results based on your analysis.

Study Materials for Theory, Law & Policy, and Critical Issues:

For the other components of the exams – Theory, Law & Policy, and Critical Issues – you may or may not be provided with reading lists for the questions. You will prepare a study guide on your own and bullet points of important ideas for each of these questions throughout the semester to enable you to prepare for the in-person exams on November 5-6, 2025.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:

Comprehensive Exam will not allow any late submissions.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:

The syllabus is subject to change with reasonable advanced notice as course needs arise. It will and can change based on the instructors' judgment or the evaluation of the class progress throughout the semester. When a change is made in the schedule, you will be notified via Blackboard Announcement tab.

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University Email Policy and Course Communications:

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the [website](#) or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodation with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center:

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

Appointments available MATH Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed

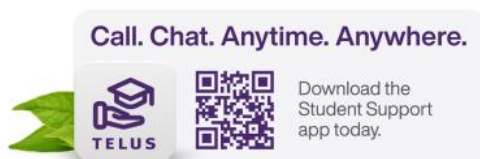
	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

Counseling/Mental Health Resources:

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. *Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.*

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness:

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>. More information on emergency response may be found at: [Emergency Operations Plan](#) and the

[Emergency Action Plan](https://safezoneapp.com/). Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance:

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC):

The WLDCC provides support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. The WLDCC offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the WLDCC in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an "Online Appointment." Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an "eTutoring" appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#). The WLDCC can also be reached by emailing wldcc@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs:

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

Military Affairs:

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with

any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule:

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such

discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students:

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. Hours of operation is Monday-Thursday 3:30pm-9:00pm. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities:

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic

misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or visit the resources available in the [OSRR website](#).

Important Fall 2026 Dates

Dates	Event
August 20	Tuition and Fee Payments deadline
August 24	First Day of Class
September 9	Census Date
October 5-16	Midterm grading period
November 13	Last day to drop with an automatic withdrawal
November 25	Study Day – No classes
November 26-28	Thanksgiving Holiday
November 30	Last day to withdraw from the university
December 4	Last Day of Classes
December 5-11	Final Exams
December 15	Commencement

The complete [Academic Calendar](#) as available on our website.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

Option 1: No Use of Generative AI Permitted CRIM 5306

CRIM 5306 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.