

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
College of Arts and Sciences
Texas A&M University-San Antonio
Phone: 508-331-5109 (Cell)

CRIM 5303 – Law and Policy in Criminal Justice
Fall 2026

Instructor: Philip D. McCormack, Ph.D.

Email: pmccormack@tamusa.edu

Phone: 508-331-5109

Office Hours: Online by appointment

Course Description:

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.

Restrictions: Undergraduate level students may not enroll.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course will discuss various legal developments and critical issues in policing, courts, corrections, and juvenile justice. At various points and at the end of the semester, the students are expected to accomplish the following:

1. Develop an understanding of the history and development of legal issues in policing, courts, corrections, and juvenile justice;
2. Familiarize themselves with the contemporary legal cases and laws relating to issues in n policing, courts, corrections, and juvenile justice;
3. Discuss the laws and procedure applying to offenders in contact with the police, including privacy expectations involving surveillance technology, law on interrogations, exclusionary rule, and racial profiling;
4. Identify the Constitutional rights of the offender in courts as decided by the United States Supreme Court in relevant cases;
5. Explain and distinguish the legal rights of inmates incarcerated in various prisons and detention facilities, with specific focus on inmate litigation, due process, and collateral consequences;
6. Analyze the nature and extent of legal rights of juvenile offenders in modern U.S.;
7. Utilize and develop critical thinking in analyzing various legal issues in criminal justice.

Note: The instructor is not solely responsible for assuring students meet these outcomes. It requires effort and input from the students as well. Students are solely responsible for managing their enrollment status in a course and must withdraw on their own. Therefore, not showing up for class does not automatically constitute a withdrawal.

Required Text:

Otu, N. (2024). *Criminal Justice Policy Issues* (2nd Ed.) Cognella.

Course Requirements and Grading Components:

Discussion Posts: The Blackboard discussions involve responding to questions related to the week's readings. Online discussion forums are used to inspire thought and interaction between classmates. It is a critical part of the online course experience. It is the place where you will not only respond to questions posed by the instructor, but where you may post questions concerning the material presented. It is also the place where you are to ask for and provide help and encouragement to your classmates. You are required to respond to one of your classmate's posts. Your online participation will be evaluated on a quantity and quality basis. Your comments should advance the discussion, add value, and be relevant. Comments such as "I agree" and "ditto" are not considered value-added participation. Therefore, when you agree or disagree with a comment, please state and support your agreement or disagreement.

Reaction Papers: You will be asked to read an article and to write a paper recording your response or reaction to the class material for the week. There are three reaction papers. The reaction paper should be a minimum of 500 words (1 page single spaced or 2 pages double spaced) and a maximum of 1,000 words (2 pages, single spaced or 4 pages, double spaced). In these reports—often referred to as response or reaction papers—I will expect you to do two things: summarize the material and detail your reaction to it. Please see guidelines on writing a reaction paper below.

Policy Memorandum: A policy memo is a document that provides analysis and/or recommendations for a particular audience regarding a particular situation or problem. A well-written policy memo reflects attention to purpose; it is well organized; and it has a clear, concise style. The length of your policy memo assignment is a minimum of 750 words and a maximum of 1,500 words. Do not exceed this length limit! Please see guidelines on writing a policy memorandum on Blackboard.

Peer Review of Policy Memorandum: The peer review process is an important part of the research and publishing process. As a peer reviewer, you will provide constructive feedback on your classmate's policy memorandum using a rubric and a detailed analysis of the paper's arguments and supporting evidence. The written feedback on your classmate's policy memorandum should be substantive, with a view of improving your classmate's work. Please see guidelines on writing a peer review on Blackboard.

Grade Scheme

Discussion Board Posts	20%
Reaction Papers	30%
Policy Memorandum (Draft)	10%
Peer Review	10%
Policy Memorandum (Final)	30%

Grade Distribution:

90 - 100% = A
80 - 89% = B
70 - 79% = C
61 - 69% = D
60% or below = F

Additional Class Policies

Check Blackboard every day for any cancellations, updates, assignment links, etc.

All students must treat other students and the instructor with respect at all times. This requirement means no name-calling, threats, insults, general bigotry, or rudeness. Any of this can result in removal from the class. The instructor reserves the right to bring issues to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities if they deem it necessary.

There should be no expectation of extra credit of any kind in this class. If the instructor decides to grant extra credit, this opportunity will be available to the entire class, not particular students. If extra credit is offered at a time when a student is not available (such as a surprise bonus question on a test the student misses), the student will have missed the opportunity for said extra credit.

Final grades are indeed final, and the instructor will **not** negotiate final grades for assignments or the course. The grading scale is quite clear and allows the student to easily track their progress towards their desired grade as the semester goes along. The end of the semester is **not** the time to start worrying about one's grades, especially if a student is involved in athletics or scholarships. All students should work from the start of the semester to ensure that they achieve the grades they want. If you believe there is a genuine error with your grade, please raise the issue professionally and respectfully, and the instructor will be glad to look into it to make sure that everything is correct. Discussing grades via a virtual meeting is the most efficient way to handle this kind of issue.

This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course and is for planning purposes only. It is tentative and subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. However, every effort will be made to keep changes to a minimum. In short; The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Weeks are from Monday through Sunday at 11:59 PM except for Finals Week.

Week	Start Date	Readings(s)	Assignment(s) (Due Sunday 11:59pm)
1	8/24-8/30	Introduction	Reading 1.1 Introduction Post
2	8/31-9/6	Law Enforcement Liability	Reading 2.1; 2.2; 2.9
3	9/7-9/13	Law Enforcement Transparency	Reading 2.3 Discussion Board Post #1
4	9/14-9/20	Law Enforcement and the Community	Reading 2.4; 2.10 Discussion Board Post #2
5	9/21-9/27	Law Enforcement Subculture	Reading 2.7 Reaction Paper #1
6	9/28-10/4	Courts and its Actors	Reading 3.1 Discussion Board Post #3
7	10/5-10/11	Courts and Personal Protection from Crime	Reading 3.2 Reaction Paper #2
8	10/12-10/18	Courts and Relative Fairness	Reading 3.3
9	10/19-10/25	Mid-semester Review	Policy Memorandum (Draft)
10	10/26-11/1	Courts and Capital Punishment	Reading 3.4 Discussion Board Post #4
11	11/2-11/8	Corrections and the War on Drugs	Reading 4.1 Peer Review
12	11/9-11/15	Corrections and Mass Incarceration	Reading 4.2
13	11/16-11/22	Corrections and the Border	Reading 4.3 Reaction Paper #3
14	11/23-11/29	Corrections and Culture	Reading 4.4 Discussion Board Post #5
15	11/30-12/4	Review	
Policy Memorandum (Final) DUE 12/10 11:59pm			

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

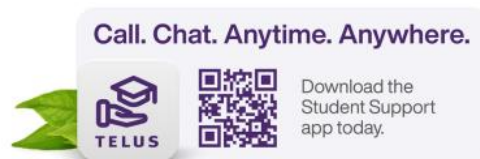
	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

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](#). 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 & Fee Payments deadline
August 24	First day of class
September 7	Labor Day Holiday – No Classes / University Closed
September 9	Census Date – Students not paid in full or enrolled in a payment plan by 4:59 pm may be dropped for non-payment
October 5 – October 16	Midterm grading period
November 13	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
November 25	Study Day – No classes
November 26-November 28	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Classes / University Closed
November 30	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
December 4	Last day of classes
December 5 – December 11	Final exams
December 15	Commencement

The complete [academic calendar](#) is available online

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

CJ 5303 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.