



**Comprehensive Exams**

CRIM 5306 600 | 3 Credits | Spring 2025

Faculty Graders:

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Dr. Claire Braaten ( <a href="mailto:claire.braaten@tamusa.edu">claire.braaten@tamusa.edu</a> ) Office: CAB349-C Phone: (210) 784-2210 Portion: Advanced Criminological Theory	Dr. Durant Frantzen ( <a href="mailto:dfrantze@tamusa.edu">dfrantze@tamusa.edu</a> ) Office: CAB Room 348 Phone: (210) 784-2205 Portion: Critical Issues in Criminal Justice

Classroom: Asynchronous Online  
 Meeting Time: Asynchronous Online

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course provides an overview 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. Throughout the course, students will take four section exams that each represent a major section 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 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, and 3) Critical Issues in Criminal Justice; and 4) Law and Policy.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

This course will help prepare students for the comprehensive exam that they will take at the end of this course. Specifically, students will:

1. Understand criminological theories of crime.
2. Recognize current issues in the criminal justice system.
3. Comprehend the steps involved in creating research.
4. 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 in the Master of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice ("MSCCJ") at Texas A&M University- San Antonio and academically housed in the Department of Criminology and Political Science. Through the administering of the MSCCJ Comprehensive Exam, graduate faculty are verifying that students grasp the key elements of the academic program.

## **COMPONENTS THE MSCCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

The MSCCJ Comprehensive Exam consists of four (4) essay questions focusing on each of the four required Core Courses (Research Methods/Data Analysis, Advanced Theory, Critical Issues in CJ, and Law and Policy) that all MSCCJ students must take during their degree program (CRIJ 5304 and 5305 will be combined into one comprehensive question). These questions are developed and graded each term by graduate faculty in the department who specialize and teach the courses. These faculty members will also 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 four (4) 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 Spring 2025, the Comprehensive Examination will be administered on April 4, 2025 from 9 am- 5 pm at the Central Academic Building Room 209 (Testing Center) in the main campus of Texas A&M University-San Antonio.

The examination will be conducted in two (2) sessions: a morning session 9:00 to 12:15am and an afternoon session 1:30 to 4:45 pm. Students will have one (1) hour and 15 minutes to complete each essay question. Responses will be collected at the end of each exam period by the proctor or, if online, the system will force end completion and submission of a response.

<b>Activity (Faculty Proctored)</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Overview of Exam Day and Process	9:00 am	9:30 am	Group Meeting with exam students	This is to discuss the activities of the day and answer any questions
<b>Question 1 CRIM 5301- Advanced Theory</b>	9:30 am	10:45 am	In person (Blackboard)	Core Required Class
Break	10:45 am	11:00 am		
<b>Question 2 CRIM 5303-Law &amp; Policy</b>	11:00 am	12:15 pm	In person (Blackboard)	Core Required Class
Lunch Break	12:30 am	1:30 pm		
<b>Question 3 CRIM 5304 (Research Methods) and 5305 (Data Analysis) (combined question)</b>	1:30 pm	2:45 pm	In person (Blackboard)	Core Required Class
Break	2:45 pm	3:00 pm		
<b>Question 4 CRIM 5302-Critical Issues in CJ</b>	3:00 pm	4:15 pm	In person (Blackboard)	Core Required Class
Wrap-up and Next Steps	4:15 pm	4:45 pm	Group Meeting with all exam students	This is to discuss grading process, notification to students, and next steps

## GRADING OF THE MSCCJ COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Each exam question is scored by a graduate faculty member who has offered each course in the preceding two (2) years based on the letter grading criteria below. This will occur within three (3) weeks of the occurrence of the exam. A rubric will be provided to give you a better understanding of what is expected in the Comps Exams.

F = Failed  
P = Passed  
P/E = Pass Exceeds

Results of these exams are expected to be completed within three (3) weeks of their occurrence. **For an exam to be “passed” it needs 3 out of 4 questions to be “passed” by grading graduate faculty.** If a student does not “pass” the exam, they will have one more attempt allowed. This second attempt will occur at the next scheduled MSCCJ Comprehensive Exam.

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

It is recommended that each section of your exam be at least 1,250 words, double-spaced, which generally amounts to about 5 pages. This word count is suggested for the content between the Introduction and Conclusion, not including references and the cover page. Ideally, your entire exam should total around 5,000 words, equating to approximately 20 double-spaced pages across all four sections **However, 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 Blackboard and Microsoft Word. You will be able to view and answer the 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 Spring 2025, the exams will be administered on April 4, 2025 from 9 am- 5 pm at the Central Academic Building Room 209 (Testing Center) in the main campus of Texas A&M University-San Antonio.

### **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS POOL OF QUESTIONS GUIDE:**

At the start of the semester, you will be provided with questions and/or datasets as a study guide for each of the four separate sections of the exams.

**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 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 April 4, 2025.** From these four 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 paper of your notes/outline during the exams. The page is limited to only one 8.5 x 11 inches copy paper (you can use both sides of this sheet). Any notes exceeding both sides of this one copy paper will be confiscated by the proctor assigned to that portion of the exams.

#### **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 be changed based on the instructor's judgment or the evaluation of the class progress throughout the semester. When Change is made in the schedule, you will be notified via Black Board Announcement tab.

#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Section Exam 1  
Section Exam 2  
Section Exam 3  
Section Exam 4

#### **IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

**Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities.** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for individuals with disabilities. Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodation of their disability. If you have a disability that may require accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu).

**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 is an appointment based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu) or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

**Counseling Resources.** As a college student, there may be times when personal stress interferes with your academic performance and/or negatively impacts your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM, Monday – Friday. After-hours crisis support is available by calling 210-784-1331 (select option “2”). Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (as the law allows), and are not part of a student’s academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit [www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling](http://www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling)

**Emergency Preparedness.** JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio’s mass notification. 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 and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>  
More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>

**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 the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend 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.

**Meeting Basic Needs.** If you face challenges securing food, housing or other basic needs, you are not alone, and A&M- San Antonio can help during this time of crisis. We invite you to learn about the many resources available to support you by visiting the [Dean of Student’s website](#) or by reaching out via [dos@tamusa.edu](mailto:dos@tamusa.edu). Additionally, it is not unusual for students to encounter temporary illness or injuries that may interfere with your academic success. Students may request temporary illness/disability assistance by reaching out to the [Dean of Student’s Office](#) (210) 784-1354. If you are comfortable doing so, please notify the professor of any issues so that they may provide additional resources.

**Military Affairs.** Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and in special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots’ Casa in-person room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu), or (210)784-1397.

**Religious Observances.** Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity 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 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, equality of 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, diversity, pluralism, and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should 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, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members trained to support survivors 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 university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers) 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 misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

**Students' Rights and Responsibilities.** The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for the student freedom and responsibility to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the [A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct](#).

### ***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 procedure 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, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, gender identity, or gender expression 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 the 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, University Catalog and students must comply with them and the laws of the land.
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 an environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.
6. 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, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center.** The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. 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. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://bit.ly/WLDCCenter>.

### **No Use of Generative AI Permitted**

*CRIM 5323 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.*

*The complete academic calendar is available online: <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>*



## How Students Can Register for the Comprehensive Exams

1. Login to Blackboard at [www.tamusa.blackboard.com](http://www.tamusa.blackboard.com) and go to this specific course (CRIM 5306\_600).
2. Click on Tools on the left menu bar
3. Scroll down and click on RegisterBlast
4. Click on link for the specific class and exam (CRIM5306\_Braaten\_ComprehensiveExamsSpring2025)
5. Click the Select a Date For Your Exam field to choose an available testing date from the calendar (April 4, 2025).
6. Click the Choose a Time field to select an available testing time (9:00-5:00pm).
7. Name and email will auto populate and cannot be edited
8. Enter additional information needed – phone number and student ID
9. Read the Exam Guideline Acknowledgement in the scroll box.
10. Check the box under the scroll box, to acknowledge the guidelines.
11. Click Add to Cart.
12. If you have completed all necessary registrations, click Complete Registration.
13. Once the exam registration is complete click Complete Registration, the confirmation will appear on the screen, a copy can be printed (not required).
14. Upon a successful transaction an immediate email confirmation receipt will be sent. It is encouraged to have a copy of this at the time of testing.

### *Short Instructions:*

**Blackboard > Specific Course (CRIM 5306\_600) > Tools > RegisterBlast > Fill out info and submit cart**

### **Getting Assistance with RegisterBlast**

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Testing Center at: (210)-784-1366 or through email at [testing.center@tamusa.edu](mailto:testing.center@tamusa.edu).