

Criminal Justice System – CCJ/PSC 274 **Summer 2025 – Online**

Instructor: Dr. Jill K. Doerner

Email: jdoerner@uri.edu

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to familiarize you with the structure and the functioning of the American criminal justice system. We will explore three main issues. The first is the conflict between our desires for safety, on the one hand, and freedom, on the other. The second issue is the systematic nature of American criminal justice, that is, the degree to which the various agencies are interrelated and operate together to achieve common goals. As will be seen, the conflict between safety and liberty has significant implication for the degree to which criminal justice agencies form a system. Finally, a third issue is the extent to which the system operates to provide equal protection for all or to privilege some while disadvantaging others.

Course Outcomes

- By the end of this course, you should be able to:
 - Discuss the historical development of the criminal justice system, including the police, the courts, and the correctional system.
 - Explain the state of the current criminal justice system in the United States.
 - Describe the problems and practices of the police.
 - Analyze the workings of the courts and the agents of the court, as well as the workings and influence of the correctional system in our society.
 - Identify the differences in how the criminal justice system treats males and females, as well as minorities.

Instructor

I started at URI in 2008 and am currently an Associate Professor of Sociology in the [Department of Sociology & Anthropology](#) and an Affiliate in the [Criminology & Criminal Justice \(CCJ\) Department](#). I previously served as the Director of CCJ from 2016-2020. I have a M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Bowling Green State University and a B.S.B.A. in International Business & Economics from Ohio Northern University. I'm originally from Ohio and have a six-year-old daughter.

My research focuses primarily on gender, racial/ethnic, and age differences in the sentencing process within the adult criminal justice system, as well as consequences of incarceration for the aging prisoner population. I have also done research exploring how experiential learning and other teaching methods can impact students' attitudes and learning outcomes, particularly about issues of inequality and social justice. In addition to this course, I teach courses in Sociology/CCJ focusing on general sociology, the juvenile justice system, gender and crime, and policy issues in criminal justice. I also teach courses in the Honors Program and serve as a Summer Orientation Advisor for Criminology & Criminal Justice majors.

Required Text

[*Criminal Justice: The Essentials*](#)

~ Lab, Williams, Holcomb, Burek, King, and Buerger. (2021/22). 6th Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

* This book is available from the [URI Bookstore](#) in either print or eBook format, or you can buy the [eBook](#) direct from the publisher.

Other course materials will be available in Brightspace

Technology Requirements

Since this is a fully online course, it is important that you have access to a computer with reliable, high-speed Internet access and appropriate software/system to support the Brightspace learning platform. This will especially be the case when taking the exams for this course. You will also need access to Microsoft Office, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Reader. These programs are all free – you will need to log-in using your URI single sign-on (SSO) to utilize the Microsoft license that URI provides for free to students.

Brightspace Training

If you have not used Brightspace before, or need a refresher, I would highly recommend enrolling in this training course. On the main homepage of Brightspace, click on 'Discover', and then you will see the 'Students Getting Started in Brightspace' course.

Course Requirements

This course is divided into five lessons, one for each week of the course. These are listed below in the Course Schedule/Outline and can be found in the menu on the left side of the Brightspace page for our course (Lesson 1, Lesson 2, etc.). Each lesson/week includes PowerPoint slides outlining material I would cover if taking this class in person, some additional reading to supplement the text, one or more comments, which I consider important supplements to the text, a video link (which will be the basis for the group discussion for the week), and links to an assignment and test. Each lesson is timed to open after the conclusion of the previous one, however you can access some of the materials earlier via links here in the syllabus.

In Brightspace, I have also included some recommended readings, videos, and podcasts, which I think you might find interesting/helpful. Links can be found within each lesson.

Each week's material will open the Saturday prior to the week they are to be completed. For example, Lesson 1 material will open on Saturday, June 21st at 6 a.m. and needs to be completed June 23rd – June 27th (see below). Each lesson/week concludes with a test to be done on the last day of each week (Fridays – exception is July 4th – see below).

Pre-Course Survey/Practice Test

So that I may get a better sense of who is in the class, I ask that you complete a short pre-course survey before 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, June 26th. It will only take a few minutes of your time. It will also give you practice in taking tests in Brightspace as they will be in the same format. You can find it in the Quizzes tool and also linked on the Content page.

**Brightspace will not let me create an ungraded assignment in Quizzes. Therefore, this does have points attached to it – please do not pay attention to your score (if displayed), as it does not count toward your course grade.*

Reading

The pages in the text to be read in conjunction with each lesson are specified in the Course Schedule/Outline below. Any additional readings will be linked on the Content page for each lesson and are listed in the weekly schedule.

**There is a substantial amount of reading assigned each week, as this 5-week course does cover most of what would be included in a 14-week course taught during the regular semester. Also, because it is asynchronous, it requires a great deal of commitment and drive on your part to learn the material. You will need to create a schedule for yourself to stay on top of things.*

**If you need to access articles from the NYTimes, URI has a site license, and you can register: <https://uri.libguides.com/newspapers>*

PowerPoint Slides

These slides present modified outlines of the lectures I give when teaching the course in a face-to-face classroom. For the most part, they run parallel to the text, emphasizing what I consider the most important points. Some of the information in the slides, however, is not in the text. Make sure to pay particular attention to updated statistics that are included in the slides, as well as click on hyperlinks to articles, data resources, and the like.

To do well on the tests, you should study these slides both before and after you read the text. It might also be helpful to print these slides out and add in your own notes as you read.

Current Event Articles

To assess your comprehension of the reading, you will be responsible for finding a current event article that corresponds with the topic covered in each week's lesson. Current means within the last year, but an article from the last six months would be preferable. You will be required to complete **five** of these for the course, each worth 10 points. They will be due each week by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday.

For each current event article, you will be required to turn in a one-page document in which you discuss how the current event ties in with the key concepts that were covered in that week's/lesson's reading. You will also need to provide me with a link to the current event article. Please don't simply summarize the article.

You may complete **one additional current event article** to receive up to 10 extra points toward your final course grade. This only applies if you have completed the required five articles. Your additional article should connect with either Chapter 6 on Community Corrections or Chapter 7 on Juvenile Justice in your textbook. PowerPoint slides for those chapters can be found in the 'If You Want to Learn More' module, which can be found at the bottom of the left side menu in Brightspace. Extra credit current event articles must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, July 25th.

**I expect that all work you complete/hand in to me is your own original work. Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. This includes knowing how to paraphrase, summarize, cite (using APA citation style), and reference the work of others properly. Using AI writing software, like ChatGPT, is not permitted in this class.*

Videos and Discussions

Each lesson includes a video on that aspect of the course. You are required to watch each one and to participate in an online discussion about it. The discussion will open at 6 a.m. each Saturday (starting June 21st) and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on Thursday each week.

Your initial posting should present your own view of the video – what you learned from it, what you found interesting, how it connected with the week's reading, aspects of it that you disagree with, questions that it raises for you, etc. This needs to be completed by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m. each week. Thereafter you should read what others have posted and comment on their opinions, thoughts, and questions.

Expect to post at least 3-5 times per week, in addition to your original post. However, it isn't just about quantity, but also quality. Do not wait until the last minute to post, as this will cost you points. Posting at the last minute does not help to move the discussion along.

The discussions will be graded as follows:

5 points: frequent contributions that often move the discussion along by posing new questions, challenging others, answering their questions, and/or presenting new information

3 points: frequent contributions that occasionally move the discussion along as above but that usually are just expressions of opinion and/or agreement/disagreement with the opinions of others

1 point: an occasional contribution that just expresses a personal opinion and/or agreement/disagreement with others and does not move the discussion along.

Tests

There will be 5 tests. The dates and times are given in the Course Outline below.

Each test will consist of 10 to 20 multiple choice questions and one or two essay-type questions. The questions will be drawn from the reading, PowerPoints, and required videos. **The test will become available to you at 6 a.m. on the day it is to be administered (Friday, with the exception of July 4th – see below) and will remain open until 11:59 p.m. that day. You will have 45 minutes from the time you open the test to complete it. The test will automatically be submitted at the end of 45 minutes (regardless of whether you are mid-answer).**

While taking the test you may use the text and any other material that I, or your classmates, have put online. However, do not think that you can do well on the tests without having mastered the material beforehand. You will not have time to look up all the answers and even if you did, you would not find them as the tests are designed to measure comprehension and application of the material, not simply memorization.

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Grades

Grades will be based on a total of 300 points, distributed among various components of the course.

- ~ Current Event Articles (10 points each) x 5 articles = 50 points
- ~ Discussions (5 points each x 4) x 5 discussions = 100 points
- ~ Tests (30 points each) x 5 tests = 150 points

Grading Scale

A	278-300 (93)	B-	239-247 (80)	D+	194-208 (65)
A-	269-277 (90)	C+	230-238 (77)	D	179-193 (60)
B+	260-268 (87)	C	218-229 (73)	F	178 and below
B	248-259 (83)	C-	209-217 (70)		

Other Important Information

Academic Honesty

The Community Standards of Behavior section in your [student handbook](#) outlines the University Policies and Regulations regarding honesty in all interactions and academic work. Please make sure you are familiar with these as students who violate these policies will be severely penalized.

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Students with Disabilities

Any student with a certified disability that is likely to affect their performance on any or all of the assignments should contact me to arrange for accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability, Access, and Inclusion located at 302 Memorial Union. You can also call – 401-874-2098 or email – dai@uri.edu

Code of Conduct and Anti-Bias Statement

All of you are bound by [URI's Code of Conduct](#). We may encounter concepts that challenge us and perhaps make us uncomfortable or upset, but we must maintain a learning environment that does not infringe on student rights.

URI respects the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the [URI Bias Response Team](#). There you will also find people and resources to help.

Class Materials

I hold the copyright for the materials I have created (such as lectures, class slides, notes, and/or assignments). Anything I post or share with you is for your use only and should not be shared with anyone outside our class.

Netiquette for Online Discussions

In written communication with me or your classmates, consider carefully what you write. Re-read email and discussion content before sending or posting. One benefit of this type of communication is more opportunity for reasoned thought, more ability to go in-depth, and more time to think through an issue before posting a comment. However, one negative of this type of communication is the possibility of miscommunication. Be aware of this and compose your comments in a positive, supportive, and constructive manner.

Course Assistance and Communication

Do not hesitate to get in touch with me if you are not doing as well as you would like in the course, or if you have questions about anything. I'm very good about answering email and we can work to find a time to Zoom, if needed.

~A note about emails: Please send proper emails. Make sure to put **CCJ/PSC 274** in the subject line and to include your full name in the text. Also, use proper capitalization and punctuation, and address me in an appropriate fashion.

Student Resources

Any student who faces challenges with basic needs, securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in this course or others is urged to contact the [Dean of Students Office](#) for support.

[Counseling Center](#) – 217 Roosevelt Hall, 401-874-2288

If you are experiencing stress, mental health, family, or personal issues, please reach out.

[Health Services](#) – Potter Building, 6 Butterfield Road, 401-874-2246, health@uri.edu

[Student First Fund](#) – was established to provide additional emergency support to URI students with demonstrated financial need. Eligible applicants must: 1) be in good academic standing (2.0 cumulative GPA), 2) have applied for financial aid, 3) have exhausted all financial aid options (e.g., subsidized and unsubsidized loans), 4) have sought employment, and 5) cannot be enrolled at another College/University at the time of application.

[Rhody Outpost](#) – Dining Services Warehouse, 10 Tootell Road – [Hours](#)

This food pantry serves all URI students who are food and/or housing insecure, and struggle to make ends meet. All you need is your student ID. The pantry is stocked with canned goods, pasta, pasta sauce, mac and cheese, peanut butter and jelly, toiletries, household items, cleaning supplies, and much more. They also offer eggs, yogurt, milk, bread, chicken (Halal), salmon and fresh vegetables. Also, URI students can visit [St. Peter's by the Sea Friday community market](#). Email barbara_sweeney@uri.edu to request an accommodation around scheduled hours.

Course Schedule/Outline

Lesson 1 – Week 1 – June 23rd – June 27th ***Crime and the Criminal Justice System***

Read:

Crime, Criminal Justice, and Policy
~ Lab et al., Chapter 1 (pg. 1-22)

The Media, Moral Panics and the Politics of Crime
~ Chiricos

Watch:

[Michelle Alexander: Locked Out of the American Dream](#)

PowerPoints:

Crime, Criminal Justice, and Policy (Chapter 1)

Handout:

Process Model

Comments:

Legal and Factual Guilt
Why We Have Legal Technicalities

Required Video and Discussion:

[13th](#) (2016)

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, June 21st @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, June 26th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (6/24) at 11:59 p.m.

Current Event Article:

Chapter 1 – Due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday (6/26)

Test 1:

Available Friday, June 27th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 2 – Week 2 – June 30th – July 3rd (*Note the short week)
Criminal Justice and the Law

Read:

Issues of Law

~ Lab et al., Chapter 2 (pg. 23-51)

What Is a Legal System?

~ Friedman

Law: Formal and Informal

~ Friedman

[United States v. Jones](#) (2012)

PowerPoints:

Issues of Law (Chapter 2)

Handouts:

The Carroll Doctrine

The Exclusionary Rule

Comments:

Felony Murder Doctrine

Choice of Evils Defense

Guilty but Mentally Ill

Required Video and Discussion:

[Resnick Lecture on Andrea Yates and the Insanity Plea](#)

Closed Captioning is not available for this video

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, June 28th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 3rd @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/1) at 11:59 p.m.

Current Event Article:

Chapter 2 – Due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday (7/3)

Test 2:

Available [Thursday, July 3rd](#) @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 3 – Week 3 – July 7th – July 11th **The Police**

Read:

Policing and Law Enforcement
~ Lab et al., Chapter 3 (pg. 52-81)

[What Defunding the Police Actually Looks Like](#)

[One in Five: Disparities in Crime and Policing](#)

[Three Ways Police Can Use Body Cameras to Build Community Trust](#)

PowerPoints:

Policing and Law Enforcement (Chapter 3)

Comments:

Styles of Policing
Deception in Interrogation
Problem-Oriented Policing

Required Video and Discussion:

[Policing the Police 2020](#)

- ~ Discussion opens on Saturday, July 5th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 10th @ 11:59 p.m.
- ~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/8) at 11:59 p.m.

Current Event Article:

Chapter 3 – Due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday (7/10)

Test 3:

Available Friday, July 11th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 4 – Week 4 – July 14th – July 18th **The Court System**

Read:

The Court System
~ Lab et al., Chapter 4 (pg. 82-117)

[State Courts Seek to Address Racial Disparities in Their Operations](#)

[Campaign Funds for Judges Warp Criminal Justice, Study Finds](#)

[Black Defendants Get Longer Sentences from Republican-Appointed Judges, Study Finds](#)

PowerPoints:

The Court System (Chapter 4)

Comments:

Prosecutorial Discretion & Selective Prosecution

Nolo Contendere

Peremptory Challenges & Racial Discrimination in Jury Selection

Required Video and Discussion:

[The Plea](#)

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, July 12th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 17th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/15) at 11:59 p.m.

Current Event Article:

Chapter 4 – Due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday (7/17)

Test 4:

Available Friday, July 18th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Lesson 5 – Week 5 – July 21st – July 25th

Institutional Corrections

Read:

Institutional Corrections

~ Lab et al., Chapter 5 (pg. 118-152)

[Ending 50 Years of Mass Incarceration: Urgent Reform Needed to Protect Future Generations](#)

[Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2025](#)

[Incarcerated LGBTQ+ Adults and Youth](#)

PowerPoints:

Institutional Corrections (Chapter 5)

Comments:

Racial Differences in Incarceration Rates: Individual or Institutional Discrimination?

Required Video and Discussion:

[Prison State](#)

~ Discussion opens on Saturday, July 19th @ 6 a.m. and closes on Thursday, July 24th @ 11:59 p.m.

~ Your initial post needs to be completed by Tuesday (7/22) at 11:59 p.m.

Current Event Article:

Chapter 5 – Due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday (7/24)

Test 5:

Available Friday, July 25th @ 6 a.m. and locks @ 11:59 p.m.

Click [here](#) for important Summer Session dates/deadlines:
~ *Friday, July 4th is the last day to drop this course*

University of Rhode Island Land Acknowledgement Statement

The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit.

[This video](#), a Newscast produced by the 5 Cent Cigar, explores the history of the URI campus and its complex and often contentious history of building on Indigenous land.