**REVISED 6-30-15**

**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY**

*This proposal form is intended for departments proposing a course for inclusion in the Northern Michigan University General Education Program. Courses in a component satisfy both the Critical Thinking and the component learning outcomes. Departments should complete this form and submit it electronically through the General Education SHARE site.*

**Course Name and Number**: Introduction to Criminal Justice /CJ 110

**Home Department:** Criminal Justice

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information**: Dr. Harrington, 227-1616/micharri@nmu.edu

**Expected frequency of Offering of the course** (e.g. every semester, every fall): Every Semester

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? Yes

*Courses that have not yet been approved by CUP must be submitted to CUP prior to review by GEC. Note that GEC is able to review courses that are in the process of approval; however, inclusion in the General Education Program is dependent upon Senate and Academic Affairs approval of the course into the overall curriculum.*

**Overview of course** (please attach a current syllabus as well): *Please limit the overview to two pages (not including the syllabus)*

1. **Overview of the course content**: This introductory course examines the development, structure and function of the criminal justice system in the United States, a major and highly influential component of our civil society. It guides students in understanding the challenging struggle to find a satisfying balance between freedom and security. The classes focuses on the crime picture in America and the three traditional elements of the criminal justice system: police, courts, and corrections. Students first study the various types of crimes, historical trends and patterns and the current situation. Following this, each of these three components is examined in detail noting their historical origins, European influences, failures, reform movements and successes.

Students will then analyze the need for these institutions of control and justice, their development and their processes. The course also questions the viability of our freedoms in a world that has grown increasingly more dangerous. Students are asked to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the American justice system as it struggles to adapt to an increasingly multicultural society and to a society in which the rights of a few can threaten the safety of many. Numerous contemporary topics are thoughtfully examined including but not limited to gun violence, the ethics of the various forms of social control including punishment, the viability of rehabilitation programs, drug abuse versus drug legalization, domestic violence, police abuse of power, and terrorism and the Patriot Act. Students will study the effectiveness of various crime control programs including their unintended consequences on society via short (3 pages) writing assignments and a corresponding class discussion.

Students will be required to complete four exams, ten quizzes and four written assignments. These measures will be used to assess student performance.

1. **Explain why this course satisfies the Component specified and significantly addresses both learning outcomes**: This course examines the problem of crime, a constant in in all societies. The main focus is on the institutions developed to specifically control crime in a free, open and diverse society. The class includes a requirement to understand and assess the use of specific policies for crime control and order maintenance. Students not only need to be familiar with the need for, historical origins and current structure and practices of these agencies, but also their impact (intended and unintended) upon society. This will be accomplished by a mix of lecture, exams, quizzes, written assignments and class discussions.

Since this is an introductory/foundational class for students unfamiliar with the development and current structure of the American criminal justice system, there is a major focus on key concepts, terminology, legal cases and historical events. However, an important objective of this course is to also begin to develop and help refine students’ critical thinking skills. Building upon the above-stated objectives, students will also be asked to analyze the value and effectiveness of a wide range of criminal justice policies and their intended and unintended consequences upon society. For example, students will first focus on understanding the history, use and recent developments with regard to capital punishment in the US. Moving beyond this basic understanding, students will assess the efficacy of this policy with respect to deterring criminals or exacting retribution by the state against offenders. This will be the focus of class discussions and assessed to a limited extent in the exams and quizzes, but to a great extent in the written assignments. They will examine the arguments for and against the policy, assess their merits of both viewpoints, and consider how to strengthen a point of view by using empirical evidence.

**C**. **Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.)** Course is offered at the 100 level. It is designed to provide interested students with a sound knowledge of the history and role of the criminal justice system and the state of crime in the United States to present day. All Americans at one time or another will be affected by criminal justice policies, or interact with a component of the criminal justice system whether as a juror, witness to a crime, party to a civil or criminal action, or as a crime victim. Furthermore, it is a common topic for the daily news, and political debates on gun control, capital punishment, state security versus privacy, drug legalization, etc. Finally, it is also a very popular subject for television and movies. Oftentimes popular culture representations incorrectly shape public knowledge and opinion of the state of crime and the operations of the criminal justice, sometimes leading to gross misconceptions. This course will appeal to students seeking a basic knowledge of how our criminal justice system operates and the nature of crime and criminal behavior, and for students considering a career within the field.

**D**. **Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.**) The course is currently required for criminal justice majors and minors. The course enrollment is capped at 70 students per section.

**E. Provide any other information that may be relevant to the review of the course by GEC**. The course is taught by all members of the Criminal Justice faculty.

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | 1. **Written Papers**. Students will complete four written papers (one about every three weeks) on contemporary issues in criminal justice analyzing their benefits and liabilities. This requirement will constitute 20% of the class grade. The goal is to assess a student’s ability to understand the nature and purpose of key policies and programs used in the criminal justice system, examine their efficacy in attaining their stated goals in the context of our constitutional rights and express their argument in writing. *The department expects a 75% or higher student proficiency upon completion of the course. This will equate to a grade of “C” and is consistent with the average grade for all department courses combined using written assignments.*   The *Evidence Dimension* will be first assessed in terms of the quality, thoroughness and accuracy of the arguments presented, grammar and spelling, and adherence to proper format for a paper. Students will be expected to examine the topic in a manner far beyond the superficial. Students will be required to rely on empirical evidence (3-4 citations per paper) rather than just personal opinion in constructing their arguments.  Second, this dimension will be assessed via the students’ selection and use of references in preparing the written papers. To accomplish this, the course will address the subject of sources used in research papers. The distinctions between published peer-reviewed empirical studies, non-peer reviewed work, reports from government and private organizations, news media stories, and editorials will be examined. The faculty will spend time in class discussing the formal process of social scientific research. The goal is to help the students become discerning consumers of information familiar with the quality differences between the different sources of information, their strengths and weaknesses, and their appropriate use. It should provide them with the basic skills to critically analyze the validity of research findings and arguments based on those findings.   1. **Exams and Quizzes**. Students will take four exams each covering a four week segment of the course. The exams will constitute 60% of the class grade. Students will take ten short essay quizzes each based on readings and notes constituting 20% of the class grade. Quizzes will be given about every week and a half.   The *Evidence Dimension* will be assessed in the exams and quizzes via multiple choice and short essay questions that will focus on the key concepts, terms and theories integral to the functioning and development of the American criminal justice system. Theses assessments will be given at regular intervals as noted above with a summative evaluation at the conclusion of the semester. *The department expects an average grade of about 80% or a B- as this is consistent with the average grade for exams and quizzes in all department courses combined.* |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with existing understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | 1. **Written Papers**. Students will complete four written papers with references (one about every three weeks) on contemporary issues in criminal justice analyzing their benefits and liabilities. This requirement will constitute 20% of the class grade. The goal is to assess a student’s ability to understand the nature and purpose of key policies and programs used in the criminal justice system, examine their efficacy in attaining their stated goals in the context of our constitutional rights and express their argument in writing. Students will be required to rely on empirical evidence rather than personal opinion. *The department expects a 75% or higher student proficiency upon completion of the course. This will equate to a grade of “C” and is consistent with the average grade for all department courses combined using written assignments*   The *Integrate Dimension* will be assessed in terms of the ability of the students to logically and accurately understand and apply key concepts and themes such as individual rights in the context of public safety in a written argument based on empirical data. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | 1. **Exams and Quizzes**. Students will take four exams each covering a four week segment of the course. The exams will constitute 60% of the class grade. Students will take ten short essay quizzes each based on readings and notes constituting 20% of the class grade. Quizzes will be given about every week and a half. *The department expects an average grade of about 80% or a B- as this is consistent with the average grade for exams and quizzes in all department courses combined.*   The *Evaluate Dimension* will be assessed in the exams and quizzes via multiple choice and short essay questions that will focus on the key concepts, terms and theories integral to the functioning and development of the American criminal justice system. Assessments will be given at regular intervals as noted above with a summative evaluation at the conclusion of the semester. |
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**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY**

*Attainment of the PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this learning outcome. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Analysis of society** | Analysis of social issues, structures and processes or events | **Written Papers**. Students will complete four written papers (one about every three weeks) on contemporary social issues affecting criminal justice analyzing their benefits and liabilities. For example, students will prepare one paper on the expanding movement in the country toward marijuana legalization as a medical and recreational drug. Students will examine the history of marijuana criminalization in the mid-20th Century and the political and social movements that contributed to its continuing decriminalization and legalization. They will then analyze the benefits and liabilities from this policy for the criminal justice system and the greater society in the context of increased personal freedoms, crime rates and public health.  This requirement will constitute 20% of the class grade. The goal is to assess a student’s ability to understand the nature and purpose of key policies, laws and programs used in the criminal justice system to address social problems while still respecting individual and community rights. Students will examine their efficacy in attaining their stated goals in the context of our constitutional rights and express their argument in writing. Students will be required to rely on empirical evidence to support their viewpoints. *The department expects a 75% or higher student proficiency upon completion of the course. This will equate to a grade of “C” and is consistent with the average grade for all department courses combined using written assignments.*  The *Analysis of Society Dimension* will be assessed in terms of the ability of the student to logically and accurately examine an issue in depth and express their views in a sound written argument. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | **Written Papers**. Students will complete four written papers (one about every three weeks) on contemporary issues in criminal justice such as the ethics of mass police surveillance or capital punishment. This requirement will constitute 20% of the class grade. The goal is to assess a student’s ability to understand the nature and rationale of key policies and programs used in the criminal justice system to address social problems while still respecting individual and collective rights. For example, in one paper students will examine the history and use of capital punishment in the USA. A key question is whether it is ethical to have a policy that takes the lives of convicted felons in a society with a criminal justice system that seeks to defend life. Furthermore, is it acceptable for the state to have a policy of retribution in its justice system?  Students will examine their efficacy of capital punishment in attaining state goals of justice in the context of our constitutional and human rights. Students will be required to rely on empirical evidence to support their views. *The department expects a 75% or higher student proficiency upon completion of the course. This will equate to a grade of “C” and is consistent with the average grade for all department courses combined using written assignments.*  The *Ethical Issues Dimension* will be assessed in terms of the ability of the student to logically and accurately examine an issue in depth including its rationale and the ethical issues that stem from the policy or program. |
|  | Explore themes in the development of human society | **Exams and Quizzes**. Students will take four exams each covering a four week segment of the course. The exams will constitute 60% of the class grade. Students will take ten short essay quizzes each based on readings and notes for a constituting 20% of the class grade. Quizzes will be given about every week and a half. *The department expects an average grade of about 80% or a B- as this is consistent with the average grade for exams and quizzes in all department courses combined.*  The *Development and Context of Society Dimension* will be assessed using the exams and quizzes via multiple choice and short essay questions that will focus on the functioning and development of the American criminal justice system including its laws as our society has become larger, more diverse and complex. For example, exams and quizzes in the second quarter of the semester will examine the reasons why societies developed formal methods of policing; how they were structured and later reformed or modified as norms, values and needs changed in society. In a later section of the course students may be assessed on exam and quizzes on the passage of anti-terror legislation that enhances public safety yet also reduces personal freedoms.  Assessments will be given at regular intervals as noted above with a summative evaluation at the conclusion of the semester. |
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