

Criminal Justice Program Assessment Plan 2013-2014

Coordinator: Daniel Renfrow, PhD

I. Executive Summary

The Social Science faculty, responding to proposals from Prof. Renfrow, voted to modify the existing Crime & Society minor in significant ways this year. First, they changed the name of the program to Criminal Justice. Second, they approved the development of new 300-level courses in Criminal Justice (CRIM 301) and Corrections (CRIM 302). In response to President de Witt's call for new initiatives, the Social Science faculty also proposed a new major in Criminal Justice. This proposal included the development of several new courses: special topics (CRIM 285/385), independent study (CRIM 399), and senior research seminar (CRIM 401). The full faculty approved all of these changes. We are currently awaiting NYS approval for the major.

Students have responded well to these program changes. Since we implemented these changes, nine students declared a minor in Criminal Justice. CRIM courses taught by Prof. Renfrow and Adjunct Instructor Brewer during the 2013-2014 academic year drew healthy enrollments. Enrollments for the Fall 2014 look promising.

Fall 2013		Spring 2014		Fall 2014	
CRIM 215	30	CRIM 290	1	CRIM 115	10
CRIM 390	1	CRIM 301	14	CRIM 302	18
CRIM 399	1	CRIM 399	3		

Two students graduated in 2014 with a minor in Crime & Society, bringing the total to three students during the two years the original minor was in effect.

The following report presents our initial steps toward developing and implementing an assessment plan. Our modest goals for this year include specifying program goals and student learning outcomes and developing a data collection strategy for future assessment. We conclude with a list of action items we hope to accomplish in the 2014-2015 academic year.

II. Criminal Justice Program Descriptions

The Criminal Justice major provides students with an overview of the origins of law, the causes of crime, the structure and functioning of criminal justice institutions, and issues relating to social control. Core courses critically examine the social, cultural, and individual-level factors which impact crime rates and the formal social control mechanisms (e.g., the police, the courts, and the penal system) charged with reducing these rates. These courses explore the various ways that the criminal justice system relates to other institutions in society. Breadth requirements allow students to explore themes of deviance, justice, law, and punishment across the social sciences (e.g., international studies, political science, psychology, and sociology). The criminal justice major is appropriate for students interested in preparing for a career in policing, corrections, law, youth services, or related fields.

This Criminal Justice minor critically examines the social, cultural, and individual-level factors which impact crime rates and the formal social control mechanisms (e.g., the police, the courts, and the penal system) charged with reducing these rates.

III. Program Goals

We designed the Criminal Justice program with several broad goals in mind. We aspire to:

1. Provide students with knowledge of the historical and philosophical traditions that provide the foundation for the U.S. criminal justice system
2. Provide students with knowledge about criminological theories explaining the types and rates of criminal conduct which exist in society
3. Provide students with an interdisciplinary approach to the criminal justice system such that they understand how the work of criminal justice institutions intersects with that of other important social institutions.
4. Provide students with an understanding of how the criminal justice system operates at local, state, and federal levels
5. Provide students with analytical and methodological skills to critically evaluate all parts of the criminal justice system and to extend our knowledge of them.
6. Prepare students for future careers in criminal justice and allied fields

IV. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Criminal Justice program, students should demonstrate proficiency in the following:

1. Using a criminological vocabulary for the study of law, criminality, and punishment in written and oral work
2. Applying and critically evaluating criminological theories and concepts in written and oral work
3. Discussing the social and psychological correlates of various crime and their implications for social control
4. Detailing how individuals move through the criminal justice system
5. Approaching criminology as a social science by identifying important research questions, effective (yet practical) strategies for answering them, and acknowledging the ways traditional research methods (and assumptions embedded within them) can promote (hinder) social justice

6. Articulating the ways crime definitions and social control policy reflect and (un)intentionally reproduce inequalities associated with race, class, gender, and other social statuses
7. Critically consuming crime data, media reports, and politicians' claims about crime and the (in)effectiveness of social control policies
8. Writing and presenting ideas effectively

V. Evaluating the Program

The Criminal Justice program is in its infancy. Currently we do not have enough data for assessment. As we look to the future, we aim to assess foundational courses (CRIM 115, CRIM 301, CRIM 302, and CRIM 401) individually and the program overall. Our long-term strategy will be to collect syllabi for each course to identify which courses address the program goals and produce the desired student learning outcomes. We expect it may take several semesters before all of these courses (e.g., CRIM 401) have been designed and taught.

Program goals should be met in most courses in the program. Below we identify where we expect program goals to be explicitly met in required courses:

Course	PG 1	PG 2	PG 3	PG 4	PG 5	PG 6
CRIM 115	X	X			X	X
CRIM 290			X	X		X
CRIM 301	X	X	X	X		X
CRIM 302	X		X	X		X
CRIM 401	X	X			X	X
MATH 151					X	
PSY 235			X			
SOC 294					X	
Breadth Requirement (e.g., PSY 235, POL 155)			X			X

As the Criminal Justice program acquires majors, we will utilize portfolios (in lieu of comprehensive examinations), senior theses, exit interviews, and 5-year follow up interviews to assess the program. We expect the portfolios will include seminar papers, a resume and cover letter, and internship reflections. These documents will permit us to identify when and where program goals are successfully met and where there is room for improvement. The thesis will

permit us to assess students' mastery, application, and critique of theory and methods; their ability to work independently; and writing and presentation skills. Exit interviews and 5-year follow up interviews will permit us to determine how graduate/professional programs and employers are receiving our graduates and how alumni are progressing in their chosen careers.

Our short-term strategy for the 2014-2015 academic year will focus on CRIM 115, CRIM 301, and CRIM 302 to assess whether these courses are addressing program goals and producing the desired student learning outcomes. This assessment requires that we begin to collect syllabi and add additional items to regular course evaluations.

VI. Action Plan for Criminal Justice Program

Prof. Renfrow will be on sabbatical leave during the Fall 2014 semester, but we will continue to make efforts toward implementing our assessment plan in his absence. We will work on the following tasks throughout the 2014-2015 academic year:

1. Collecting syllabi from the required courses as each is implemented in order to assess where program goals and student learning outcomes are being met (and not met)
2. Developing assessment items specific to our program goals to add to course evaluations
3. Requiring students enrolled in CRIM courses to set up online portfolios
4. Working with Eric Vaughn to develop new internship opportunities
5. Articulating program-specific goals for internship experiences and requirements for students
6. Mentoring adjunct faculty on Wells policies and standard practices
7. Identifying ways for the program to connect with other programs, new initiatives, and the general education requirements
8. Advocating for a tenure track position for our growing program