Ethical Issues In Criminal Justice (CRIJ 3310.001)

Term: *Spring 2026*   **Course Dates:** Jan 12, 2026 - May 1, 2026

Professor: Richard C. Helfers, PhD   **Course Times:** Monday and Wednesday from 2:30-3:55pm

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday from 9am-11am AND by appointment

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use:

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, AI is encouraged during the course, and appropriate acknowledgement is expected.

Example 1: I encourage you to explore using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, for all assignments and assessments. Any such use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, following the guidelines established by the APA Guide, including the specific version of the tool used. The submitted work should include the exact prompt you used to generate the content and the AI's complete response as an appendix. Because AI-generate content is not necessarily accurate or appropriate, you must assess the validity and applicability of any submitted AI output. You will not earn full credit if inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate information is found in your work. APA Style Citation Information

b. Example 2: You can use AI programs (ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) in this course. These programs can be powerful tools for learning and other productive pursuits, including completing assignments in less time, helping you generate new ideas, or serving as a personalized learning tool. However, your ethical responsibilities as a student remain the same. You must follow UT Tyler's Honor Code and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. This applies to all uncited or improperly cited content, whether created by a human or in collaboration with an AI tool. If you use an AI tool to develop content for an assignment, you must cite the tool's contribution to your work.

c. Example 3: Students can use AI platforms to help prepare for assignments and projects. You can use AI tools to revise and edit your work (e.g., identify flaws in reasoning, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, or correct citations). When submitting work, students must identify any writing, text, or media generated by AI. In this course, sections of assignments generated by AI should appear in a different colored font, and the relationship between those sections and student contributions should be discussed in a cover letter that accompanies the assignment when submitted.

Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to expose you to the complex problems criminal justice students and practitioners confront in the criminal justice system. You will become familiar with the considerations that determine ethical thought and how it pertains to decision making in the criminal justice system. You will be able to intellectually discuss the role of the police, the law, and corrections within the context of ethical dilemmas. This is especially relevant for you today as you prepare yourself for a career in the criminal justice system or as a student of the criminal justice system.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Justify reasons moral and ethical actions and decisions are essential to criminal justice professionals and organizations.

- Compare and contrast deontological ethical systems, teleological ethical systems, and ethics of virtue.

- Summarize the ethical issues criminal justice practitioners (in law enforcement, the legal profession, and corrections) confront.

- Synthesize the complexity of solving moral dilemmas for the criminal justice professional.

- Demonstrate proficiency with the APA documentation style, 7th ed.

Overall "Big Question" we will be focused on all semester: How can the criminal justice system achieve an acceptable standard of justice in the United States? (This is a question that transcends this course and relates to all of the courses I teach; and can be used for you to be an objective and critical thinker in all criminal justice courses).

Main concepts/questions: I will keep the Ethical Issues in Criminal Justice course content revolving around (1) What are the ethical dilemmas in the criminal justice system and how does it relate to the overall big course question? (2) What must the police, court personnel, and corrections employees continuously consider when striving towards ethical decision making? And, (3) What are the challenges criminal justice practitioners are confronted with daily that impinge their ability to achieve ethical decisions?

Required Textbooks and Readings

- **Primary Textbook:** Roberson, C., & Mire, S. (2019). *Ethics for Criminal Justice Professionals*. Taylor & Francis. (This book is FREE to you. The library has the book and it is linked to our Canvas course).

- **Additional Readings:** Throughout the semester, you will encounter insightful readings assigned and posted on Canvas. Often, I will post news articles that are related to our course. **You are expected to read** these

and be prepared for class discussion. I will post announcements when the articles surface so make sure your Canvas and patriots email are aligned that you receive an email when I post an announcement (see #5 in the "Tips for Success in this Course" section of this syllabus.

- Total Estimated costs of required course materials: $0.00

Recommended Resources:

- APA. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3217-8

- Use the Purdue Owl as a resource because it is free and easy to use: (Use this first before you contact me for help) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

Course Structure

This is an in-person, face-to-face course that you are expected to attend. Attendance will be tracked throughout the semester. There will be a myriad of learning activities throughout the semester, such as lecture, small group activities, presentations, discussion boards, written assignments, along with the quality of your class participation (yes you are expected to be present and engage in the discussions). Your learning is dependent upon your preparation, full participation, and attendance.

Tips for Success in this Course

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** I get it—students usually juggle a lot, and I know you've got commitments beyond this class. Still, doing your best often means carving out enough dedicated time for coursework. Try scheduling specific blocks of time and ensure you have enough room to finish assignments, allowing extra space for any tech issues that might pop up.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to Canvas regularly---every day if you can so you can view announcements and other course related content.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous class content. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with me as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind early in the semester.
5. **Use Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily. (Canvas Notification Guide)
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me and your classmates for support.

Graded Course Requirements Information

Getting Started Module Assignments

Prior to starting on the course content materials, there will be two important tasks for you to complete in the Getting Started module. First you will want to read all the material in the getting started module, along with the syllabus (Oh yeah, you should be doing that already since this IS the syllabus!). The first thing to do is to post a picture of yourself on the padlet. Make it a close up pic so everyone can recognize who you are—I use the padlet to associate names and faces. My goal is to learn everyone's name in the course so I can address you by name in the class. Just use your phone, laptop, tablet, or whatever device you use to access the course---take a pic and list your name (first and last name). Second, take the Comprehension Quiz---keep taking it until you earn 100%. Both of these activities are counted in your final grade.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken in this course. You must be present and sign in by accessing the QR code. If you show up after the QR code has been removed from the front of the class, you will not get credit for your attendance. Therefore, you must be on time to class. The class begins at 2:30pm and you are expected to be in the classroom by that time. When you enter the classroom late, you are disrespectful to everyone that is present. I understand you may not be able to make every class session. I do not need to know that you will not be in class—life happens and if you miss a class that is OK. You will get one "free pass" during the semester. If you want to learn, you should dedicate yourself to being in class every session.

Now in the event you are unable to be in class due to an approved university excuse (such as attending a conference sponsored by/or representing the university where you are presenting research or engaging in a university approved/sponsored organization) then this is an excused absence per university policy and will not be counted toward a "missed class" event. Once again, life happens so if you are sick or unable to make it to class, I understand that life happens and you do not need to notify me about your absence.

Discussion Boards

There are a couple of post-class reflections via discussion boards (Weeks 4 and 12). These will help me review your thoughts, your writing, ability to paraphrase and incorporate reading knowledge into your argument, and APA intext and reference compliance. These are due on the Friday (at 11:59pm) on the week each is assigned. Make sure you complete at least a 250-word initial post and reply to at least two other students. You are also **required to paraphrase** the readings using APA and provide an APA compliant reference. All your postings in each and every discussion board requires at least one intext paraphrased citation (this means all your initial postings and all of your replies to other students' postings). The initial post is due by Wednesday of the week they are due and the replies by Friday.

Quality of Class Participation

You are expected to be in the classroom every day we have class. Why is this important? Learning is socially constructed and you learn more from others---and the only way to do that is to be in class. You are also expected to participate through asking questions and engaging in class discussions.

I will periodically post news articles as a class Announcement. You are expected to read the articles prior to class and be prepared to discuss the article as it relates to course concepts during an upcoming class session. Therefore, make sure you have your announcement from Canvas linked to your email so you learn about announcements shortly after they are posted.

Examinations

There will be three examinations during this semester. Make sure you are in attendance for the exams.

QEP Assignment

For this assignment you will be selecting a "real world problem"---a real criminal justice related incident that occurred in an area of the system you are most interested in working (corrections, law, policing, etc.). Then you will craft a short paper where you will define the problem, evaluate multiple solutions, propose a solution, and implement the potential solution. You will use the knowledge gained from course concepts you have learned this semester and apply them to this QEP assignment. You will also incorporate peer-reviewed sources into your paper. If you are not sure a source is peer-reviewed, then please contact me. Here are the minimum requirements:

1. Include a title page in APA format.
2. Write no more than six (6) pages (excluding title and references pages)---double spaced, using Times New Roman with 12 pt font.
3. Incorporate at least four peer-reviewed sources in your paper, formatted in the APA, 7th ed format for both your intext citations and references.
4. Use headings in the body of your narrative for each section.
5. Include a references page.

There are a few scaffolding assignments that build upon each other that are due throughout the semester (three total scaffolding assignments). These culminate in the final QEP Assignment: Topic/incident you will use is due on Feb 18, reference due on Mar 18, draft on Mar 25, and then the final paper due on Apr 17.

Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

Unfortunately, illnesses, deaths in the family, or other traumatic events are part of life. Such events are unwelcomed and because I understand how "life interferes with life," if you contact me within 24 hours of the event **and** provide documentation, I will be happy to extend an assignment deadline for you.

The general rule is I will not accept any late assignments. Please pay particular attention to the due dates for each assignment.

Attendance Policy:

You are expected to attend every class session. Attendance will be taken and will account for part of your overall grade. There will be important information being discussed in class that you will need to ensure your success in this course. So, unless you are ill or have a family situation that precludes your attendance (or have an otherwise approved University absence), you are expected to be in class. It is important you read the reading assignments prior to class and arrive ready to discuss the material. Again, I recognize extenuating circumstances arise that can make it difficult to attend each and every class session. In other words, life happens!

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Getting Started Module Activities	5%
Attendance	10%
Discussion Boards	20%
Quality of Class Participation	5%
Examinations	40%
QEP Assignment: Topic (Summary of the incident)	2.5%
QEP Assignment: Reference Page	2.5%
QEP Assignment: Draft	5%
QEP Assignment: Final Paper	10%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

➔ **A** - (90% or higher)
➔ **B** - (80 - 89%)
➔ **C** - (70 - 79%)
➔ **D** - (60 - 69%)
➔ **F** - (Below 60%)

University Policies & Student Resources:

University policies and student resources are available on the University website and in Canvas under "Syllabus". Below are also links to the University Policies and Student Resources:

- University Policies
- Student Resources

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

This is a tentative course schedule

Week 1   January 12-16
         "What is Ethics?"
         Reference material: Chapter 1
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class discussion
         Padlet Posting due by Mon, Jan 12 by 11:59pm
         Getting Started Comprehension Quiz due by Mon, Jan 12 by 11:59pm

Week 2   January 19-23
         "Historical Development of Ethical Reasoning"
         Reference material: Chapter 2

         No Class on Monday, Jan 19 due to the MLK, Jr. Holiday—University is closed

Week 3   January 26-30
         "Understanding Ethics"
         Reference material: Chapter 3
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities

         *****January 26 is Census Day*

Week 4   February 2-6
         "Ethical Schools"
         Reference material: Chapter 4
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
         Discussion Board 1 is due, Wednesday initial post-Feb 4, replies by Friday-Feb 6 by 5pm

Week 5   February 9-13
         "Unethical Themes in Criminal Justice"
         Reference material: Chapter 5
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
         Exam 1 on Feb 9 over Chapters 1-4

Week 6   February 16-20
         "Abuse of Authority and Power"
         Reference Material: Chapter 6
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
         Topic/incident for your QEP Assignment is due on Feb 18

Week 7   February 23-27
         "Lying and Deception"
         Reference material: Chapter 7
         Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities

Week 8   March 2-6
                "Prejudice and Discrimination"
                Reference material: Chapter 8
                Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
                Exam 2 on Mar 4 over Chapters 5-8

March 9-13—Spring Break, thus—NO CLASSES!!

Week 9   March 16-20
                "Ethics and the Present Criminal Justice System"
                Reference material: Chapter 9
                Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
                              Guest Lecturer
                References for QEP Assignment due on Mar 18

Week 10   March 23-27
                "Ethics and Criminal Prosecutions"
                Reference material: Chapter 10
                Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
                Draft of QEP Assignment due on Mar 25

Week 11   March 30-April 3
                "The Ethics and the Police"
                Reference material: Chapter 11
                Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities

*****Last day to Withdraw from one or more classes is March 30*

Week 12   April 6-10
                "Ethical Applications"
                Reference Material: Guest Speaker on Monday and Documentary on Wednesday
                Learning Activities: Lecture, Documentary and Class Activities
                Wednesday watch a documentary and then engage in a Discussion Board
                Discussion Board 2 is due, Wednesday initial post-April 8, replies by Friday-April 10 by 5pm

Week 13   April 13-17
                "Ethics and Corrections"
                Reference material: Chapter 12
                Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities
                QEP Assignment due by Friday, April 17 by 11:59pm

Week 14   April 20-24
               "Ethical Issues Involving Victims' Services"
               Reference material: Chapter 13
               Learning Activities: Lecture and Class Activities

Week 15   April 27-May 1
               "Final Exam"
               Final Exam per the University Final Exam Schedule: Wed, April 29 from 2:45-4:45pm

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.