



Criminal Justice Capstone Seminar (CRIJ 5355.060)

Term: *Spring 2026*

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-11:00am AND by appointment

Course Dates: January 12, 2025 - May 2, 2026

Course Times: online with periodic synchronous sessions to enhance student engagement with me, your professor

Classroom: n/a

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-generated 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

This course provides a capstone experience for students to address an important policy and administrative issue within a criminal justice agency. Students will use concepts from their coursework and experiences to develop specific recommendations for design, implementation, and evaluation of this project task.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- Integrate graduate-level knowledge in the context of an applied field project.
- Apply research methods to move from a research problem to identifying and gathering necessary, sufficient, and appropriate data (“quantitative literacy”).
- Demonstrate advanced written and oral communication skills (“information literacy”) including report writing competencies, for a variety of audiences.

Required Textbooks and Readings

- **Primary Textbook:** Polonsky, M. J., & Waller, D.S. (2018). *Designing and Managing a Research Project*. (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-5443-1646-8
- Total Estimated costs of required course materials: \$62.22

Recommended Resources (Optional):

- You can purchase this---American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3217-8
- Or like FREE better? Then use the Purdue Owl instead of the APA Manual—it is free and easy to navigate. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/index.html

Course Structure

This course is primarily an asynchronous online course. **HOWEVER, there are three live-sessions via ZOOM that are mandatory and thus you are expected to attend.** Explain the structure of the course in this section, including elements of how the work outside and inside the class should be balanced. This does not require you to be in a specific location to participate; however, you must have access to a full-screen computer or tablet for each live session. (If you use a tablet for the live session, you must be comfortable typing responses on it.) The online nature of this class will push you to take an active role in the learning process. You will do this by engaging and

collaborating with other students and the instructor on a regular basis both, in live sessions, as well as through other activities.

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 several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts.
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 the instructor as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
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. I encourage you to ask me questions or the need for clarification. No concern of yours is too small. Ask early and often!

Graded Course Requirements Information

Scope of Work Memo:

This will be your first assignment that requires you to think about and prepare a memo about your project. Thus, you will need to think about the nature of your paper. Will the paper primarily be a policy-oriented paper, or a process/organizational change or reform paper? Will the paper primarily focus on planning, implementation, or evaluation of a program or a policy? Will you be working with an actual agency on a problem – in which case you will need to have a department head, key leader, or your own supervisor as a contact – or will the paper be more theoretical and academic in nature? Thus, you will need to refine your topic and turn in a “scope of work memo” describing the topic and strategies for researching this topic. This is only a plan, at this point. The memo must be uploaded in Canvas no later than **11:59pm on January 25, 2026.**

Progress Assignments:

There will be two minor progress assignments that you are required to complete and submit for a grade. The first will be a list of at least ten of your references that is due at the end of the fourth week. This will be the sources you will complete the reading reviews on (see below) during weeks five and six. This reference list must be uploaded in Canvas no later than **11:59pm on February 8, 2026.**

The second progress assignment is you are required to submit is a description where you articulate your data collection and data analysis strategies that you will be using in your paper. This assignment must also be uploaded in Canvas and is due no later than **11:59pm on March 15, 2026**.

Reading Reviews:

There will be two reading reviews. The first is due by the end of the fifth week and the second by the end of the sixth week of the semester. These reviews are designed to demonstrate to me you are making significant progress on your project. In each assignment you will document and summarize material from at least five sources (articles, books, government documents, interviews, reports, etc.). You must format your review by first referencing your source in APA format (just as you would in the Reference section of your final report—thus, they must be in alphabetical order). After you referenced your first source, then you should follow it with a full page summary. Then you move onto your second source and do the same—until you have at least five completed. **The first review is due no later than 11:59pm on February 15, 2026 and the second is due no later than 11:59pm on February 22, 2026.** These are uploaded in Canvas in Module 3--for the appropriate assignment. These summaries, as well as a copy of the article (or other source) will be submitted to the instructor.

Synchronous Online Session Assignments

There will be periodic synchronous online assignments to enhance the discussion among all of us and to engage in the learning environment. This will elevate your learning and help you maximize your knowledge. The assignments will be discussion boards related to the learning in the course with a focus on the synchronous online session. The days we meet will be determine during the first week of the semester. During the Module 3 each of you will meet with me to discuss your progress (this must occur prior to the literature review being due at the end of Week 8 on 19---there is not a discussion board after our individual meetings.

Literature Review:

Your literature review for your final report will be due by the end of the eighth week of the semester. This assignment is intended to reinforce an in-depth understanding of the readings. It is not a summary of the readings. Each student must explore theoretical and practical concepts in the readings to identify the strengths, limitations, and benefits. Students must identify how the approach/model/theory/framework may apply to practical situations. The assignment is intended to continue the development of critical and analytical thinking and writing. The literature review must present a thesis (an argument or viewpoint) about a particular practice, theory, or set of theories. The thesis statement must be included in the first paragraph and must take one of these forms:

1. This paper will examine the effect of the absence of clarity about goal priorities. This paper will show that when goal priorities of the organization are not clear and understood by all executives and senior managers, the organization will not be successful.
2. This paper will show that no matter how much officials talk about the importance of performance measurement, criminal justice administrators will not be able to successfully adopt and implement the practice.

The paper should demonstrate that the student can relate the content to other concepts presented in the class. It is important to demonstrate the ability to write clear, simple, organized prose that is easily understood by any reader.

Although you may include more sources in the final paper, the literature review assignment will ask the student to provide a thorough review of relevant literature and a “complete” reference section in APA

format and to create a coherent background in support of your project objectives. The review must conclude with a research question(s) and hypotheses.

The literature review is due no later than 11:59pm on March 8, 2026. The assignment portal is located in Module 3.

Oral Presentation:

This assessment will require you to prepare a high-quality oral presentation on your research. You will be required to discuss your topic, findings, recommendations and any next steps that should be pursued. You will record this via flip and your recording can be no longer than 10 minutes.

This recording must be uploaded in Canvas and is due not later than **11:59pm on April 26, 2026.**

Final Report:

The final report is due at the end of the fifteenth week of the semester. This report integrates and extends prior documents to provide a comprehensive report. You may submit a first draft to me and a representative of a criminal justice agency that you have coordinated your project.

The final paper must include:

- Executive summary
- Scope of work memo
- Literature review
- Methods
- Results/Findings
- Discussion
- Limitations
- Next steps

The Final Report will be graded on these Criteria:

1. The project itself will consist of a substantial project that offers an intellectual contribution to the field and/or a practical contribution to the organization or jurisdiction under which the project is undertaken.
2. The project will be well-researched, with a relatively large number of high-quality published resources being cited in the paper.
3. Students must demonstrate a capstone level of proficiency in Critical Thinking. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (the AACU), "Critical Thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion." On the Value Rubric for Critical Thinking created by the AACU, grading will be focused on the student's ability to "select and use information to investigate a point of view or conclusion" (the use of evidence). A "capstone" level of proficiency would be demonstrated by showing that "information is taken from sources with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly."
4. Students must demonstrate a capstone level of proficiency in Quantitative Literacy. According to the AACU, Quantitative Literacy is "a habit of mind, competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong Quantitative Literacy skills possess the ability to reason and

solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate.” On the Value Rubric for Quantitative Literacy created by the AACU, grading will be focused on the student’s “ability to make and evaluate important assumptions in estimation, modelling, and data analysis.” A “capstone” level of proficiency would be demonstrated when the student “explicitly describes assumptions and provides compelling rationale for why each assumption is appropriate. The student shows awareness that confidence in final conclusions is limited by the accuracy of the assumptions.”

Minimum Assignment Requirements:

1. You must use one-inch margins, Times New Roman with 12 pt font.
2. Double space.
3. Number your pages at the top right of each page.
4. Use APA format.
5. Use headings as this keeps you focused on what you will write about and it also informs the reader what he or she will read. (It is also an APA requirement)
6. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.
7. Cite credible sources to support your argument.
8. Upload in Canvas using a Word document (.doc or .docx) or .pdf.

Generally, when writing an academic paper you will not use the same informal type language you use during your daily conversations. Informal, conversational language, will negatively impact your grade.

The final report must be uploaded in Canvas and is due no later than **11:59pm on April 26, 2026**.

Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

The general rule is that no assignments will be accepted late! However, I understand that “life happens” and something may arise that precludes your timely submission of an assignment. All I ask is you contact me before (some instances this may not be possible) the assignment is due so we can discuss your situation and determine a mutually agreeable (thus reasonable) time to have your work completed. These instances are exceptions to the rule. Again, the expectation is that no late assignments are accepted.

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Attendance Policy:

This is an online course, but it is not a self-paced course. It is your responsibility to remain current. There are specific reading assignments and assessments that you are expected to complete on or before the due date/time. Of course exceptions of an emergency nature arise so please let me know if you cannot make the deadline for a particular assignment or be available for our zoom sessions.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Scope of Work Memo	3%
Progress Assignments (Reference list and Data Collection/Strategy)	2%
Reading Reviews	15%
Synchronous Online Session Assignments	10%
Literature Review	15%
Oral Presentation	5%
Final Report	50%
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,” but there are links below for you also:

- [University Policy](#)
- [Student Resources](#)

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

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.

Module 1 (Weeks 1 and 2): Project Management

January 12-18 You will need to think about the nature of your paper. Will the paper primarily be a policy-oriented paper, or a process/organizational change or reform paper? Will the paper primarily focus on planning, implementation, or evaluation of a program or a policy? Will you be working with an actual agency on a problem – in which case you will need to have a department head, key leader, or your own supervisor as a contact – or will the paper be more theoretical and academic in nature? **[Your paper should be aligned with your proposal you completed in CRIJ 5397]**

Assignments: Polonsky & Waller (Intro and Chapter 1)

January 19-25 You will have your topic refined and turn in a “scope of work memo” describing the topic and strategies for researching this topic. This is a plan, at this point.

We will also meet this week for our first Zoom Session!

Assignments: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 2)

DB #1 due after our Zoom Session

Scope of Work Memo” due by 11:59pm (Jan 25)

UT Tyler is closed on Monday January 20 for the MLK, Jr. Holiday

Module 2 (Weeks 3 and 4): Project Definition

January 26-February 1 You will begin the search for literature related to your topic. You should access sources (journal articles, books, government documents, interviews, etc.) and begin to accumulate references for your paper.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 3)

Census Day is January 27

February 2-8 You will have collected and will begin to read 10 articles from journals and other credible sources for your paper. You will share those 10 sources in a list of references and provide to me.

We will also meet this week for our second Zoom Session!

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 5)

DB #2 due after our Zoom Session

Upload list of sources/references by 11:59pm (Feb 8)

If you haven't done so yet, apply for Graduation!!!

Module 3 (Weeks 5 through 11): Contextualizing Activities

(IN THIS MODULE YOU WILL BE EXPECTED TO CONTACT ME TO SCHEDULE A ZOOM MEETING TO DISCUSS YOUR PROGRESS. WE WILL DEVELOP A SCHEDULE FOR “CHECK-INS” TO ENSURE YOUR SUCCESS.)

February 9-15 You will turn in your first reading review this week. These are one-page reports (“reviews”) on five of your sources (double-space your reviews).

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 6, 7, & 8)
Reading Review #1 due by 11:59pm (Feb 15)

Have you scheduled your individual Zoom session with me to discuss your progress?

February 16-22 You will turn in your second reading review assignment this week. Again you are required to submit reviews for at least five additional credible sources.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 9 & 10)
Reading Review #2 due by 11:59pm (Feb 22)

Have you scheduled your individual Zoom session with me to discuss your progress?

February 23-March 1 You should be doing the merging of your individual articles into a tight literature review where you are weaving your evidence to support your thoughts in an organized fashion.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 11)

March 2-8 You must complete your literature review for your paper this week.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 12)
Literature Review due by 11:59pm (Mar 8)

March 9-15—Spring Break! (but you are graduate students so keep working on your project)

March 16-22 You will upload an initial articulation of your data collection and data analysis strategies for your paper.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 13 & 14)
Data collection and analysis strategy due by 11:59pm
(March 15)

March 23-29 You will begin to collect the data you will use to support your policy or organizational recommendations

Assignment: No reading or other assignment to submit

March 25: last day to withdraw from one or more classes with “W”

March 30-April 5 You should begin (if you have not already) writing the first draft of your paper. Your outline for your paper should be well developed by this time.

Assignment: Polonsky & Waller (Chapter 15)

Module 4 (Weeks 12-15): Writing the Report

April 6-12 You should continue writing your paper as the semester is quickly coming to an end. Your outline for your paper (which greatly assists you to remain organized) should be complete. You should also be elaborating on your thoughts—some refer to this as “putting the flesh on the bones” for your manuscript.

We will also meet this week for our third (and final) Zoom Session!

Assignment: DB #3 due after our Zoom Session

April 13-19 You should continue writing your paper. You should be interacting with me about any issues you may be having with the paper. You may turn in a complete first draft of the paper for my review—I will provide you comments. Submitting the draft to me is not required—only submit if you have fully completed the paper.

Assignment: No reading or other assignment to submit

April 20-26 This is it! You have completed all aspects for the Criminal Justice MS degree. Go ahead and submit your final report when you have it finished. Congrats and stay in touch!!

Assignment: Oral Presentation due by 11:59pm (April 26)
Final Report due by 11:59pm (April 26)

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.