

The University of Texas at Tyler
CRIJ-1301.001 Course Syllabus (Fall 2026)

Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Michael Ferguson
- **UTT Email:** mferguson@uttyler.edu
- **Office Telephone:** 903.730.3927
- **Office Location:** CAS 134
- **Office Hours:** MWF 9:05a - 10:00 and 11:15a - Noon; T/Th 9:30a - 10:50a. For those who wish to meet via Zoom rather than F2F, click [THIS](#) link. I will normally be logged into Zoom during my office hours, so there's no need to arrange an appointment beforehand -- just log in!

Course Catalog Description

This course provides a historical and philosophical overview of the American criminal justice system, including the nature, extent, and impact of crime; criminal law; and justice agencies and processes.

Course Rationale

This course provides you with an overview of the United States' criminal justice system. Students will learn the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of the CJS and its actors. This course will give you the basic information you need to understand the complexities of our system and why it is the way it is today. Introduction to Criminal Justice will be the foundation upon which all of your other CRIJ classes will be built.

Course Time and Location

- **Dates:** 08/24/2026 - 12/11/2026
- **Meeting Days:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
- **Time:** 8:00a to 8:55a
- **Location:** CAS Room 158

Student Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Design policy recommendations based on crime trend data (Critical Thinking)
2. Design written arguments that use high-quality and credible sources to support your opinion (Written Communication)
3. Construct tables, graphs, and other visuals to explain crime trends (Quantitative Reasoning)
4. Evaluate criminal justice practices in the United States from the perspective of diverse international cultures (Social Responsibility)
5. Describe the history, philosophy, and structure of the American criminal justice system

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6. Explain the nature and extent of crime in America
7. Compare American criminal justice practices with those of global partners
8. Assess criminal justice policy developments and their applications
9. Communicate empirical findings from criminal justice policy research to appropriate laypersons

Objectives one, two, three, and four are tied to the UT-Tyler Core Curriculum. For more information about the University's core requirements, see the UT-Tyler Catalog.

Textbooks

Required Textbook

1. None, as no-cost OER material will be provided via Canvas. The OER textbook will be [***Criminal Justice: An Overview of the System***](#) (2nd ed.) by Dr. Adam McKee.

Recommended Textbook

1. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3217-8. **Note that you can get the same basic information for free by using the Purdue University "APA Formatting and Style Guide (7th Edition)" by clicking [HERE](#).**

Technology Requirements

Students must have access to a computer or tablet with internet access to use UT-Tyler's Canvas LMS. Assignments and quizzes will be handled through Canvas. Additionally, students must have access to, and use of, a word processor (e.g., MS Word or Apple Pages) and presentation software (e.g., MS PowerPoint or Apple Keynote). Lastly, students must have access to a mind-mapping application. Work uploaded to Canvas must be in one of the following file formats:

- **Documents:** .docx, .doc, .pages, or .pdf (.pdf is the preferred format)
- **Presentations / graphs:** .docx, .doc, .pptx, .ppt, .key, or .pdf (.pdf is the preferred format)

Attendance

You can't learn if you're not in class. You must attend and participate in the class to earn credit. I understand that life happens, but you need to be in class to learn the material we're covering. **Attendance will be taken each class session and will count as a major exam grade when determining your final course grade. Your attendance grade will be based on your attendance in class. Each day you miss counts as a zero and each day you're late to class will result in a 50% reduction in that day's attendance grade.**

Course Assignments

It is the student's responsibility to keep track of due dates. Please note that quizzes, assignments, and tests will be available for several days, so missing a due date for any given quizzes, assignments, or tests will translate into a 50% reduction in score. ***There will be no extensions to complete the final exam -- if you're not here to take the final, you will receive a score of zero for the final. PLEASE don't "forget" that you have an in-class final exam!***

- **Anti-Plagiarism Certificate (5%):** You must complete the free, online anti-plagiarism course for which I will provide a link. Upon completion of the two required modules, you must upload a copy of your completion certificate to Canvas. This certificate is worth 5% of your grade and is required for successful completion of the course.
- **Quizzes (50%):** Reading the assigned chapters puts concepts into action. To help with retention and comprehension of the material, you will complete short quizzes each week. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.
- **Activities (25%):** Your class consists of multiple units. You will complete various activities, including in-class discussion, over the course of the semester.
- **Exams (20%):** There are two exam grades: your attendance average and your final exam. The final will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions taken from the material covered during the semester.

Activities and Learning Objectives

Below are the learning objectives for each online activity. More detailed instructions, including grading rubrics, are provided to you on the respective assignment page in Canvas.

Crime Data

- Interpret crime trend data from official data sources.
- Construct tables, graphs, and other visual aids to explain crime trends.
- Design an infographic that summarizes crime data for your hometown.

A Day in the Life of a Cop

- Summarize normal duties for law enforcement officers in the United States.
- Appraise law enforcement duties to determine risk level.
- Design a poster that depicts the work life of a typical law enforcement officer.

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Textbook Mind-map Project

- Read an assigned chapter from the textbook.
- Create a mind-map of an instructor-assigned, specified topic covered in that chapter. The mind-map will contain the main ideas, concepts, and information from the area(s) specified by the instructor.
- Submit the mind-map to the instructor.

Census Date

The census date for this summer class is **09/08/2026**. Drops/withdrawals after Census Date and before the Last Day to Withdraw will result in a grade of W. Courses dropped prior to Census Date will not appear on the student's record or the transcript.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

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.

The work submitted by students in this course will be generated by themselves. This includes all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, editing, and final products. This extends to group assignments where students must collaboratively create the project. Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code: a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

Student Resources and UT-Tyler Policies

[Student Resources](#)

[University Policies and Information](#)

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Course Schedule

- **WEEK 1 (08/24 - 08/28)**
 - Chapter I: The Criminal Justice System
 - Section 1.1: Major Components
 - Section 1.2: Roles, Objectives, and Limits in Criminal Justice
 - Section 1.3: Measuring Crime
 - Week One Quizzes
 - Anti-Plagiarism Certificate
- **WEEK 2 (08/31 - 09/04)**
 - Chapter I: The Criminal Justice System
 - Sections 1.4 and 1.5: The Criminal Justice Process
 - Week Two Quizzes
 - Crime Data Analysis Assignment
- **WEEK 3 (09/07 - 09/11)**
 - NOTE: Monday, 09/07/2026, is Labor Day holiday: all offices closed; no classes held.
 - Chapter II: The Political and Legal Environment of Criminal Justice
 - Section 2.1: Dual Federalism
 - Section 2.5: Theories of Punishment
 - Week Three Quizzes
- **WEEK 4 (09/14 - 09/18)**
 - Chapter III: Criminal Law
 - Section 3.1: Sources of the Criminal Law
 - Section 3.2: Substantive Criminal Law
 - Section 3.3: Elements of Crimes
 - Week Four Quizzes
- **WEEK 5 (09/21 - 09/25)**
 - Chapter IV: Law Enforcement
 - Section 4.1: Early History of Policing
 - Section 4.2: Structure and Nature of Policing
 - Section 4.3: Police Methods
 - Week Five Quizzes
- **WEEK 6 (09/28 - 10/02)**
 - Chapter IV: Law Enforcement
 - Section 4.4: Investigations and Specialized Units
 - Section 4.5: Legal Environment of Policing
 - Week Six Quizzes
- **WEEK 7 (10/05 - 10/09)**
 - Chapter V: Courts and Sentencing
 - Section 5.1: State and Federal Courts
 - "A Day in the Life of a Cop" Assignment
 - Week Seven Quiz

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- **WEEK 8 (10/12 - 10/16)**
 - Chapter V: Courts and Sentencing
 - Section 5.2: Prosecution and Defense
 - Section 5.3: Pretrial Process
 - Week Eight Quizzes
- **WEEK 09 (10/19 - 10/23)**
 - Chapter V: Courts and Sentencing
 - Section 5.4: The Criminal Trial
 - Section 5.5: Sentencing
 - Week Nine Quizzes
- **WEEK 10 (10/26 - 10/30)**
 - Chapter VI: Prisons, Jails, and Community Corrections
 - Section 6.1: Jails
 - Week 10 Quiz
- **WEEK 11 (11/02 - 11/06)**
 - Chapter VI: Prisons, Jails, and Community Corrections
 - Section 6.2 Prisons
 - Section 6.3: Prisoners' Rights
 - Week 11 Quizzes
- **WEEK 12 (11/09 - 11/13)**
 - Chapter VI: Prisons, Jails, and Community Corrections
 - Section 6.4: Probation
 - Section 6.5: Parole
 - Week 12 Quizzes
- **WEEK 13 (11/16 - 11/20)**
 - Chapter VII: Criminal Justice Theory
 - SECTION 7.1: Classical Theories in Criminal Justice
 - SECTION 7.2: Biological Theories of Crime
 - Week 13 Quizzes
- **THANKSGIVING (11/23 - 11/27)**
 - Campus closed - no classes
- **WEEK 14 (11/30 - 12/04)**
 - Chapter VII: Criminal Justice Theory
 - SECTION 7.3: Psychological Theories of Crime
 - SECTION 7.4: Sociological Theories of Crime
 - Mind-map Project
 - Week 14 Quizzes
- **WEEK 15 (12/07 - 12/11)**
 - Comprehensive Final Exam