



Academic Learning Compact

Criminal Justice

Program Mission Statement

The Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice seeks to provide its students the theoretical, practical and ethical foundations necessary for understanding crime and the criminal justice system in its social context while developing new knowledge through faculty scholarship. Through study of the legal, social, and political processes of social control, students examine law making, crime and deviance, issues of social and racial justice, societal responses to law violation, and the effectiveness of various crime prevention and punishment strategies. Participation in research and internships further prepares students to apply their knowledge directly in the field, to develop critical thinking necessary for democratic citizenship, and to undertake policy development and implementation. Students at the graduate level receive advanced instruction in methodology and theory, work directly with faculty on research and writing projects, and are encouraged to pursue doctoral studies. Crime and punishment are complex social processes involving sometimes controversial issues. Rigorous training in social science research methods and theory form the backbone of the Department's academic process. The faculty is also committed to serving the diverse communities in which they live and work.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates will be able

Content/Discipline-Specific Knowledge/Skills

- Demonstrate knowledge of patterns and trends of crime in the United States through identification of relevant data sources and critical analysis of crime data.
- Apply criminological theory, including various schools of thought through recognition, analysis, and evaluation of theory strengths and limitations to specific scenarios.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the logic of the American justice system and characteristics of the law enforcement, courts, and correctional systems through critical analysis and evaluation of relevant research.
- Students should be able to:
 - 2a. summarize basic issues in the area.
 - 2b. compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations and middle range theories in the area.
 - 2c. explain how criminology and criminal justice contributes to understanding of the area.
 - 2d. summarize current research in the area.
 - 2e. suggest specific policy implications of research and theories in the area.

Communication Skills

- Articulate specific applications of theoretical knowledge derived from core coursework in applied practical settings through internship placements and assigned papers.
- Articulate awareness of the ways in which prevailing social arrangements may bias the legal process against some groups and not others.
- Students should be able to:
 1. communicate effectively orally,
 2. communicate effectively in writing, and
 3. communicate effectively using a variety of information technologies and media.

Critical Thinking Skills

- Recognize and identify the appropriate qualitative and quantitative research designs on researchable topics.
- Critically assess criminological theories through written work and objective examinations.

- Critically analyze the tension between social control and democracy through identification and critical analysis of legal doctrine, social philosophy and system practice.
- Apply appropriate methodological concepts to field experience during required internship placement.
- Students should be able to:
 - 1a. identify assumptions underlying theoretical arguments.
 - 1b. identify limitations of theoretical arguments.
 - 1c. identify assumptions underlying particular research methodologies.
 - 1d. identify limitations of particular research methodologies.
 - 1e. understand alternative viewpoints on criminological/criminal justice issues.

Assessment Approaches

Direct and indirect measures of student learning will be employed to assess mastery of the intended student learning outcomes on a four year cycle. Asynchronous assessment of core departmental learning outcomes in both capstone and earlier courses in the major will take place. Course embedded assessments using a defined scoring rubric for communication skills will also be undertaken. Other direct measures of learning outcomes may include capstone projects, pass rates on subject-area tests, and/or intern supervisor ratings of students' performance. Indirect measures may include employer or alumni surveys, student perception surveys, employment data, and graduate and law school placement information.