

**The Politics of Punishment**  
**PSCI 209**  
**Fall 2023**

the criminal justice system can be more effectively understood by considering the perspectives, arguments, or evidence provided by that week's readings. Response papers will be graded against the following rubric:

*Check plus (6/6 points)* - demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the reading material; provides exceptional insight into a significant deficiency, strength, or application of the reading's arguments.

*Check (4/6 points)* - shows a basic familiarity with the reading material and some effort toward creating a coherent argument but mainly summarizes the text.

*Check minus (2/6 points)*: indicates no familiarity with the reading material and a shallow engagement with the topic.

*No or late submission (0/6 points)*

Students will be organized into two groups in accordance with seniority:

- Students in the Class of 2025 or in the MT, T5, or G programs in Group A and;
- Students in the Classes of 2024 or 2026 in Group B.

Each group will have six opportunities to write a response memo. The final grade will be based on the five best paper scores.

Student assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard by 5 PM on the day preceding the Thursday course meeting. Shortly after 5 pm, the option to upload a new assignment will close and submitted memos will be made available for viewing by the entire class.

**Midterm exam (20%):** Administered in class on *Thursday, October 19*.

**Final exam (40%):** Administered in class on *Thursday, December 21*.

**Upper-Level Writing Students Only:** In lieu of a final or midterm exam, students will write a 12-page research paper, due *Thursday, December 21* (worth 40% of total grade). A summary of the research project, up to one page in length, is expected by 5 pm on *Thursday, October 19* (worth 20% of total grade). Please note that any submissions received after either due date will be subject to a reduction in grade of one-third of a letter per day of delay (for example, from an 'A' to an 'A-').

#### **IV. University Principles and Policies**

---

**Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Students are expected to submit their own work. Any instance of academic dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism will not be tolerated and may result in a zero grade for the submitted assignment. Review the University Academic Honesty Policy ([here](#)).

## **V. Schedule**

---

### **Part 1. Preliminaries**

#### **Week 1. Course Introduction**

##### *Assignments*

- Group A response memos due by 5

- Esberg, Jane, Jonathan Mummolo, and Sean J. Westwood. "The Stability of Criminal Justice Policy Views: Evaluating the Effects of Factual Corrections and Appeals to Social Identity." *Working paper* (2020).

*Optional Reading*

- Gilliam Jr, Franklin D., and Shanto Iyengar. "Prime Suspects: the Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." *American Journal of Political Science* (2000): 560-573.

## **Part 2. Selection and Control of Elected Officials**

### **Week 5. Electoral Incentives**

*Assignments*

- Group A response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, October 4

*Required Reading*

- Gordon, Sanford C., and Gregory Huber. "The effect of electoral competitiveness on incumbent behavior." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2.2 (2007): 107-138.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Tom S. Clark, and Jason P. Kelly. "Judicial selection and death penalty decisions." *American Political Science Review* 108.1 (2014): 23-39.

*Optional Reading*

- Bandyopadhyay, Siddhartha, and Bryan C. McCannon. "The effect of the election of prosecutors on criminal trials." *Public Choice* 161.1-2 (2014): 141-156.

### **Week 6. Electoral Parties and Electoral Distortions**

*Assignments*

- Group B response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, October 11

*Required Reading*

- Thompson, Daniel M. "How partisan is local law enforcement? Evidence from sheriff cooperation with immigration authorities." *American Political Science Review* 114.1 (2020): 222-236.
- White, Ariel. "Misdemeanor Disenfranchisement? The demobilizing effects of brief jail spells on potential voters." *American Political Science Review* 113.2 (2019): 311-324.

*Optional Reading*

Weaver, Vesla M., and Amy E. Lerman. 2010. "Political Consequences of the Carceral State." *American Political Science Review* 104(4): 817-833

Gerber, Alan S., et al. "Does incarceration reduce voting? Evidence about the political consequences of spending time in prison." *The Journal of Politics* 79.4 (2017): 1130-1146.

## **Week 7. Fall Break and Midterm**

### *Assignments*

- Midterm administered in class on Thursday, October 19.
- *Upper-Level Writing Students Only*: No class meeting. Research proposals due by 5 pm on Thursday, October 19.

## **Week 8. Race, Crime and Politics**

### *Assignments*

- Group A response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, October 25

### *Required Reading*

- Alesina, Alberto, and Eliana La Ferrara. "A test of racial bias in capital sentencing." *American Economic Review* 104.11 (2014): 3397-3433.
- Feigenberg, Benjamin, and Conrad Miller. "Racial divisions and criminal justice: Evidence from southern state courts." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 13.2 (2021): 207-40.

### *Optional Reading*

- Baumgartner, Epp and Shoub 2018. Chapter 8. "Black Political Power and Disparities in Policing." In *Suspect citizens: What 20 million traffic stops tell us about policing and race*

McCrary, Justin. "The effect of court-ordered hiring quotas on the composition and quality of police." *American Economic Review* 97.1 (2007): 318-353.

*Optional Reading*

Gordon, Sanford C. "Assessing partisan bias in federal public corruption prosecutions." *American Political Science Review* 103.4 (2009): 534-554.

## **Week 11. Racial Disparities in Policing**

*Assignments*

- Group B response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, November 15

*Required Reading*

- McCall, Andrew. "Resident assistance, police chief learning, and the persistence of aggressive policing tactics in Black neighborhoods." *The Journal of Politics* 81.3 (2019): 1133-1142.
- Hübert, Ryan, and Andrew T. Little. "A Behavioural Theory of Discrimination in Policing." *The Economic Journal* (2023)

## **Week 12. Fiscal Incentives**

*Assignments*

- Group A response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, November 22

*Required Reading*

- United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (2015). Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department. [Read just the report summary.]
- Ouss, Aurélie. "Misaligned incentives and the scale of incarceration in the United States." *Journal of Public Economics* 191 (2020): 104285.

*Optional Reading*

- Baicker, Katherine, and Mireille Jacobson. "Finder's keepers: Forfeiture laws, policing incentives, and local budgets." *Journal of Public Economics* 91.11 (2007): 2113-2136.

## **Week 13. Organized Interest Groups**

*Assignments*

- Group B response memos due by 5 pm on Wednesday, November 29

*Required Reading*

- Dharmapala, Dhammika, Richard H. McAdams, and John Rappaport. "Collective bargaining rights and police misconduct: Evidence from Florida." *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 38.1 (2022): 1-41.
- Page, Joshua. Chapter 1 (pages 1-8) and Chapter 3. In *The Toughest Beat: Politics, Punishment, and the Prison Officers Union in California*. Oxford University Press, 2011

## **Part 4. Reforming the Criminal Justice System**