Sul Ross State University

Criminal Justice 4300
American Corrections
Spring 2019

Professor: Martin Guevara Urbina, Ph.D.
Classroom: Web
Class Meeting: Online

Office: 201 (Faculty Building)
Phone: 830-703-4820 (office, direct line)
Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 12:00 to 5:00. At times other than the specified days you are welcome to visit the Professor’s office.
E-mail: murbina@sulross.edu

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
1. Demonstrate proficiency in the application of legal concepts, theoretical applications, scientific principles, and historical trends in the criminal justice arena.

2. Demonstrate competency in the application of basic research methods, to include: research design, statistical analysis, and uses of empirical findings and interpretations.

3. Demonstrate the application of organizational principles, cultural, social and behavioral knowledge, critical thinking skills and cognitive thought processes within the criminal justice arena.

Course (Catalog) Description: An overview of state and federal correctional systems; methods of treatment of offenders and humanistic approach to corrections, institutional and community sanctions, and correctional administration is studied.

Objective: American Corrections will offer a holistic analysis of the dynamics of the US correctional system, combined with an historical, sociological, theoretical, criminological, and legal examination of America’s penal system, to include law, order, and justice, as it pertains to the implications, manifestations, and ramifications of criminal behavior. While the focus will be primarily, but not exclusively, on the evolution, structural and penal polices, profile of people in jails and prisons, and
practicality, particular attention will be given to what I call a symbiotic triangle (society, law, and justice), giving us insight into the nature of social and criminal dynamics, legal systems, correctional institutions, and international penal arrangements. Some social scientists approach the penal system, as an institution of social control, from an outside rather an inside perspective, which focus on the violation of adopted laws as seen from inside the American society, often in an idealized form of social control and governance. Specifically, the intent of this course is to provide the student with a detailed understanding of 10 main topics, which are best expressed in the following questions:

1. What is penology; corrections? WHAT constitutes the correctional system? What is the objective of the penal system?
2. How is the penal system defined within the context of law, order, justice, jurisdiction, and time?
3. Pragmatically, philosophically, politically, economically, culturally, and socially, what do we mean by American corrections? Please think critically!
4. What are the most influential theoretical and philosophical ideologies (or mentalities) shaping MODERN correctional practices in the US? How has the correctional system, in the context of social control vis-à-vis institutionalization, particularly in regards to gender, race, ethnicity, and class, evolved in the US? What are the links between gender, class (SES), race, ethnicity, time, jurisdiction, and space?
5. What FORCES have driven and/or continue to drive correctional policy and practice as it pertains to inmates in jails, prisons, probation, and parole? What role do politics, the media, symbolism, power, social norms, and society play in the development and implementation of correctional expectations, polices, and treatment? Likewise, what role have historical EVENTS played in shaping and re-shaping penal policies?
6. What role does sensitive issues like race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and morality play in the evolution of correctional policy and application? How influential are subtle factors, like fear, revenge, and vindictiveness in shaping and reshaping correctional policy and practice?
7. WHO has played the most significant role in “shaping and reshaping” penal reform as it pertains to inmates? What are the reasons of amending existing laws?
8. What is the scope and nature of current “critical” issues currently confronting the American correctional system? For instance, some social scientists question the very existence of the US penal system as it stands today.
9. What are the avenues for the establishment of a realistic, logical, effective, and just penal system?
10. What is the future of American corrections, in the context of imprisonment, law, order, and justice?

The next set of questions is essentially definitional in nature. It is essential that we share the same definitions of issues, events, situations, or problems if we are to come to a common understanding of both the problem and any possible solutions/remedies. As such, the class’s first segment deals with defining American Corrections, as it pertains to inmates and social control in the US and placing it in a global context.
The last set of questions is more analytical. A particular truism about human behavior, penology, criminological, sociological, and theoretical aspects of the nature of society is as follows: There are many typologies of penology, criminological, sociological, and legal theories as there are authors writing textbooks about the subject. The five-fold approach we will take is an amalgam of several such typologies:

History—When deemed appropriate, we will make use of historical events, situations, and circumstances to better understand the subject matter by its totality. It is essential that we obtain an understanding and appreciation for historical ruptures and discontinuities as we try to bridge existing gaps. According to an African proverb, “Until lions have their own historians, histories of the hunt will glorify the hunter.”

Theory—Theoretically, we must investigate which theories provide the best guidance in our search for “truth and reality.”

Law and Society—In a society where most behavior is governed by some type of law, it is vital that we explore the relationship between law and society. To some scholars, laws are a measure of culture; crime, another element of all known cultures, is the violation of those laws. In essence, why do we have laws? Do we need laws? Does law makes a difference?

Philosophy—While penal, sociological, and criminological theories might serve as “road maps” to everyday life, philosophy gives “meaning” to human existence. It enables us to better appreciate what matters most at the END of the day.

Poetry—Even though poetry is one of the oldest forms of dialogue, it is seldom mentioned in academic discussions. Yet, poetry allows us to transcend the unknown … it allows us to dream the impossible … to dream the impossible dream. “Invent the age, invent the metaphor. Without a credible structure of law a society is inconceivable. Without a workable poetry no society can conceive a [person].” --Archibald MacLeish, Apologia, 1972.

The final question has policy overtones. First, we must briefly look at the nature and process of human behavior, in the context of criminal behavior and the US criminal justice system, with a focus on public safety, practicality, and justice. Next, we turn to the more difficult task of linking criminal justice policy, sociological, psychological, and criminological theory, particularly those we will review, to criminal behavior, legal rights, research, and practices.

Overall, this course is designed to introduce you to the nature and dynamics of corrections within the context of the criminal justice system and, by extension, social interactions in a broad context and, ultimately, human behavior in the world. By introducing you to influential issues that provide the frameworks to studying a wide variety of phenomena, I intend this course to be a basis for further, more in-depth study in the areas that interest you.

Course Context: As an upper-level course, this class may include controversial, sensitive, and/or adult material. For instance, what should happen to people currently dying in prison due to chronic illness, like AIDS? Should they be kept in prison until they die? Or, should they be released from prison? Students are expected to have the mentality and readiness for upper-level content and rigor.

Course Structure: This course will be presented in modules. Please note that the ENTIRE course will be taught online via Blackboard.
Required Texts:
[ISBN: 978-0813541860]


Optional Readings:


Fogel, David (1979). “... we are the living proof”: *The justice model of corrections.* Cincinnati: Anderson.


Recommended Readings:
Books:


Book Chapters:


Refereed (Peer-Reviewed) Journal Articles:


**Encyclopedia, Magazine, and Other Publications:**


**Weekly Assignments:**
There will be ten (10) Weekly Assignments, each worth 10 points for a total of 100 points. The “Weekly Assignments” will be discussed further the first week of class. Please do NOT panic! Handouts will be posted to assist you as you prepare your weekly assignments.

**Activities/Participation:**
Please complete the reading assignments as assigned to avoid falling behind, and, more fundamentally, to capture the essence of the class. During the semester, I will be posting a question or a statement for you to respond (100 points) and post for ALL students to read. Again, please do NOT panic! If you do the reading, you should be fine. Participation in these “exercises” will be equated into your final grade.

**Reviews (Book, Article, Movie):**

**Book Review** (50 points): For your Book Reviews you are asked to read and make critical judgment about one book (50 points). Here is the complete citation for the required book review:


The Book Review is limited to 3 to 5 typed pages. The logistics of the Book Reviews will be discussed in class and handouts will be provided to assist you with the writing assignments.

**Article Review** (50 points): An article will be provided (or posted online) your review and assessment.

**Movie Review** (50 points): A movie title will be provided (or posted online) for your review and assessment.

**Required Project:**
The logistics of the project, which will be submitted as a formal paper, will be discussed in detailed during the first part of the class. Illustration: some agencies allow citizens to go in and observe. Some law enforcement agencies, for instance, allow “ride alongs.” Hence, you could arrange to participate in a series of “field” activities. At the end of the shift/session, write down what you observed. Describe how it compares with elements of what you have learned in class (like criminal behavior, perceptions, gender, social class, age, imprisonment, and justice). For instance, based on your observations, what are the links between criminal behavior, law, imprisonment, justice, research, and practice?

Your project, which is required (100 points), will be shared with the rest of the class at the end of the semester, allowing other students to provide feedback (vis-à-vis a short reaction comments), if time allows. Papers (approximately 8 to 12 pages in length) must be typed. Late papers will not be accepted. Do not
submit (post) your only copy of any paper without saving your essay in case assignments are lost or destroyed. In effect, make sure that you have a backup copy of the latest version. Note: The project will be discussed further in class.

**Mini-project:**

This should be a fun exercise that allows you to explore (critically) some aspect of human behavior as it pertain to **penology** in greater depth with less evaluation anxiety than you would have in a full-length paper assignment. I would like you to try to and choose a project that you will enjoy, and that will stimulate your thinking about the concepts covered in this course.

Mini-projects are **optional**. You will receive “extra credit” points for completing mini-projects. If your mini-project is **adequate**, you will receive one percentage point. This point(s) will be added on to your final grade at the end of the semester.

You may turn in your mini-projects any time during the semester. The projects will be of greater value if they are done thoughtfully. Thus, you may not submit more than three (3) mini-projects.

There is no minimum or maximum length requirement. Typically you will submit a three to five-page typed paper as the final product of each mini-project. Some projects, however, may require longer (or shorter) write-ups. Your analysis should illustrate or explore some phenomenon relevant to the course, while knowledgeably using concepts, principles, and language in the context of **corrections and penology**.

Attached to the end of the syllabus are descriptions of some mini-project options. Some of them will make more sense to you as we progress through the course. If you think of an **alternative** you would like to do as a mini-project, please feel free to ask me about it. Again, I am looking for you to implement class material—especially critical issues/perspectives—when describing the phenomena you choose to explore.

**Make-up Work:**

A **tentative** schedule of assignment will be provided (posted) at the beginning of the semester. However, it is possible that the schedule will be **modified** during the semester. Hence, if you fail to log on as discussed herein, it is the student’s responsibility to check with the Professor (or the Professor’s website) regularly to determine the deadlines for weekly readings, assignments, and activities. To this end, as noted above, make-up exercises will NOT be given, unless otherwise specified. For missed readings, weekly assignments and activities (i.e., “special circumstances”), it is the student’s responsibilities to find out what make-up work is required. If you have any difficulties getting the assignments or making the deadlines, please contact me right way.

**Note:**

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments and activities are due on the scheduled due date. **No late assignments will be accepted.**
Grades: There are a total of 450 points available in this course. Grades will be based on the total points for the semester. Specifically, grades will be assigned by comparing your performance to the best possible score (450) as follows:

- Weekly Assignments: 100 points*
- Reviews: 150 points
- Required Project: 100 points
- Activities/Participation: 100 points**

Total...................................................450 points

*Tentatively, Weekly Assignments will count for 100 points. However, it is possible that the total possible points (i.e., 100) will be increased, or reduced. If increased, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to more than 450 points. If reduced, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to less than 450 points.

**Similarly, if the 100 Activities and Participation points are either increased or reduced, only the total possible points for Activities/Participation that are utilized will be equated in the final grade distribution. In such case, the TOTAL POSSIBLE points discussed herein (i.e., 450) will add to less (or more) than 450 points.

Grade Distribution:

- 90-100% = A (Excellent)
- 80-89% = B (Better than Average)
- 70-79% = C (Average)
- 60-69% = D (Below Average)
- Below 60% = Failing

Note: Mini-project points will be added to your point total at the end of the course.

Please be aware of class expectations, rules, and University/College Policies, which follow:

Attendance Policy: This course is “Web” based. Students are expected to log-on regularly, check the calendar for due dates and respond to all emails. Thus, it is to your advantage to log-on regularly. For instance, if you do not participate, you cannot learn the discussed material. Additionally, you will not be able to discuss the assigned readings. Much of the learning in class is through discussion with other students. In the process, feel free to ask questions and/or make comments that might enhance our understanding of American Corrections and related issues. Also, do not hesitate to share experiences that may help to enhance our understanding of the nature and significance of imprisonment within the context of the criminal justice system. (Please reference Sul Ross State University—Rio Grande College Catalog for additional information.)

Punctuality: It is of extreme importance that you complete the readings and writing assignments on time to avoid falling beyond. I understand that it is not possible at times, but please do not make it a routine.
**Classroom etiquette:** Above all, always respect yourself and others; be patient; be willing to explore new ideas (perspectives); and restrict questions and comments to the topic being discussed.

**Incomplete Grades:**
PLEASE AVOID INCOMPLETE GRADES. ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THE DATES OUTLINED IN THE SYLLABUS. It is the responsibility of students to notify the Professor if they cannot make an assignment or will not be able to log-on to the class. Please call me at 830/758-5017 if you do not plan to participate in a class discussion question or feel you will be missing an assignment. If I do not hear from you in regards to missed assignments, I will not allow an excuse for the missed work.

**Class Responsibilities and Conduct:**
You will be responsible for all information posted anytime during the semester. You will be responsible for obtaining announcements or amendments you may have missed. Any student who is intentionally abusive, disruptive, or disrespectful vis-à-vis posted discussions, activities, or emails will be asked immediately amend such communication, AND possibly dropped from the course. Any student who has been asked to amend “unjustified” communication twice will be reported to the Department Chair or Academic Dean. You are expected to show respect to yourself, other students, and your Professor.

**Academic Honesty (Reference Sul Ross State University—Rio Grande College Catalog):**
Rio Grande College expects its students to maintain high standards of personal and academic conduct. Students who take part in academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. The faculty member is responsible for initiating action for each case of academic dishonesty. Discover any academic dishonesty by a student, may be reported to the Department Chair or Academic Dean.

**Disability Services:**
Students who have special instructional needs because of a physical handicap or a learning disability should discuss their special needs with the office of Student Disabilities Services. You may also see the University/College Catalog for additional information. Please do so before the end of the first week of class.

Contact person for ADA:
Mary Schwartz, M.Ed., LPC
Accessibility Services Coordinator
Counseling & Accessibility Services
Ferguson Hall, Rm #112
P.O. Box C-122
Alpine, TX. 79832
mschwartz@sulross.edu

**Drop Policy:**
If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must contact the Records Office and ask for the necessary paperwork. Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Record’s Office will give a deadline for which the paperwork and form, if required, must be returned,
complete and signed. If you discover that you are still enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Records Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course.

**Library Services:**
Library information and technology focus on research skills that prepare individuals to live and work in an information-centered society. Librarians will work with students in the development of critical reasoning, ethical use of information, and the appropriate use of secondary research techniques including: exploring information resources such as library collections and services, identify sources such as subject databases and scholarly journals, executing effective search strategies, retrieving, recording, and citing relevant results correctly, and interpreting search results and deciding whether to expand the search.

**The Rio Grande College Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP):**
Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). As part of the reaffirmation process, SACS requires every institution to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that enhances student learning. Rio Grande College has developed a QEP called Putting Your Words to Work that requires students to write different kinds of papers and deliver oral presentations for courses in all departments. Rio Grande College is committed to enhancing students’ written and oral communication skills which means that students should be writing and speaking significantly more in courses across all departments.

To prepare for the increased number of written assignments, students should make every effort to enroll in English 3312 in their first semester at RGC. Students should expect to write and speak professionally in all courses, not just English classes. In this course, American Corrections, students will write various papers and present student work to other students and the Professor, as discussed herein.

**Distance Education Statement:**
Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university’s academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students’ identities and to protect students’ information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

Again, I want this class to be useful to you in your future careers. As such, if I can assist you in any way, please stop by and see me or call/e-mail me. If a problem is to arise during the semester, please contact me immediately so that we can work out a solution. Do not wait until it is too late to remedy the problem.
# Tentative* Schedule of Classes and Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td><strong>Focus</strong>: Detail class expectations; provide a foundation for the study of American corrections; &amp; provide an introduction &amp; broad overview of the subject matter: penology. Explore “Urbina Links”:</td>
<td>The “Urbina Links” will be provided!</td>
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| Week 2 | Female prisoners: A 21st Century profile  
**Focus**: Explore the characteristics of female prisoners in the US, paying particular attention as to how and why female criminality has shifted over the years. | Urbina:  
Chapters 1 & 2 |
| Week 3 | Life before prison; the road to prison  
**Focus**: Detail the realities that women experience before their arrest and subsequent incarceration; and examine the intertwining forces that “pave” the road to jail or prison. | Urbina:  
Chapters 3 & 4 |
| Week 4 | Life behind bars . . . cages of steel  
**Focus**: Examine the everyday realities of living behind prison bars, as people who broke the law, but, nonetheless, as people trying to cope with the challenges they confront, like not being able to see their young children. | Urbina:  
Chapter 5 |
| Week 5 | Health care in prison: A question of justice  
**Focus**: With inmates’ health care being a critical element for their rehabilitation, how they serve their time in prison, and the prospect of “survival” once released from prison, health care service delivery will be analyzed. | Urbina:  
Chapter 6 |
| Week 6 | Living under the same roof; critical issues  
**Focus**: With the American penal system already being the largest in the developed world, the multiple challenges currently confronting both inmates and the correctional system will be examined. | Urbina:  
Chapters 7 & 8 |
| Week 7 | **“Reflection Week”**:  
**Focus**: “Reflection Week” is designed to give students the opportunity to reflect (think and act) on what has transpired during the first half of the semester, and, more fundamentally, how things “fits” into their broader academic career, professional life, and personal life. |  |
| Week 8 | **Movie**: *The Shawshank Redemption*  
**Focus**: The selected movie gives students a vivid illustration as to how various elements are tied, and, more importantly, how they influence judicial and penal proceedings in the U.S. criminal justice system, including final outcomes. |  |
| Week 9 | Life after prison . . . shadow of the night . . .  
**Focus**: Detail the experience of prisoners once they are released from prison; how they integrate with society; challenges they face upon release; and prospects for staying out of prison. | Urbina:  
Chapters 9 & 10 |
| Week 10 | Big, dark secrets, & America’s prison system; Prisons & crime  
**Focus**: Explore the realities of public safety, crime, punishment, and imprisonment in America. Why is the U.S. the #1 incarcerator in the world? | Lynch:  
Chapter s 1 & 2 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th>The growth of America’s prison system; Raising questions about America’s big prison system</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>Detail the major forces defining and shaping the nature of crime, punishment, and imprisonment: historical, theoretical, cultural, financial, political, philosophical, ideological, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynch:</td>
<td>Chapters 3 &amp; 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Explaining prison growth in the United States; Prison effects: Who gets locked up</td>
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<td>Focus:</td>
<td>Analyze the major issues paving the road to prison. Explore the prison experience, life behind bars, focusing on various issues that while sensitive and often polemical, are essential as to how inmates do their time in prison.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynch:</td>
<td>Chapters 5 &amp; 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td><strong>Projects are due: TBA</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>The imprisonment binge &amp; crime; The end of oil &amp; the future of American prisons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynch:</td>
<td>Chapters 7 &amp; 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>A consuming culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus:</td>
<td>Detail strategies for the development of an effective and just penal system. Explore mechanisms that can be implemented to alter the current culture of imprisonment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynch:</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Conclusion: Reflections and thoughts for the future</td>
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<td>Focus:</td>
<td>As the final week of regular class, the various topics discussed during the semester will tied together, placing them within a broader framework; that is, globalization, to include the globalization of knowledge. Concluding with recommendations for the future, as we continue the discourse on American corrections.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nieling &amp; Urbina:</td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final Exam:</strong></td>
<td>TBA</td>
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*The syllabus is likely to be amended during the semester at the discretion of the Professor!*

**Note:** Please check Calendar on Blackboard for **due dates!**
Mini-Project Suggestions

1. With fellow students, family members, or friends, discuss the issue of what could possibly be the DRIVING force behind criminal behavior and subsequent imprisonment in the US (and abroad).

2. With fellow students, family members, boy-friends, or girl-friends, discuss the issue of whether issues like poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, culture, religion, and morality are influential in the dynamics of imprisonment. WHY? Or, WHY NOT?

3. Make observations of HOW people treat/interact with people who have been arrested, done time in jail or prison, and see if you notice variation in treatment. For instance, do you notice a stigma, and possible consequences? Compare what you see with the descriptions in this class. Keep a diary of your experience.

4. Find interesting stories in newspapers and magazines pertaining to imprisonment in the area, or other community, and detail a brief report. Explain what you find interesting about the stories, as projected through the lens of the media.

5. Watch a documentary, video, or movie that vividly documents that history of American corrections and write a brief reaction paper.