

University of North Texas at Dallas

Spring 2025

SYLLABUS

SOCI 5326: The Police Organization and Mental Health Policy 3Hrs			
Department of	Criminal Justice & Sociology	Division	Arts & Life Sciences
Instructor Name:	Syeda S. Jesmin, Ph.D., M.P.H.		
Office Location:	Dallas#2 Room# 259		
Office Phone:	972-338-1589		
Email Address:	Syeda.jesmin@untdallas.edu		
Office Hours:		Mondays noon- 3 pm; and by appointment	
Class location & meeting time		Online	
Course Catalog Description:	The topic of mental health and illnesses, for individuals who have contact with the criminal justice system, is approached from the broad perspective of social justice and equity. The course focuses on the correctional system’s response to behavioral health needs, and the emerging programs and best practices to improve the response.		
Prerequisites or Co-requisites:		None	
Required Text:		No text is required. Scholarly articles and reading materials will be provided free of cost to students	
Recommended Text and References:		None	
Access to Learning Resources:		UNT Dallas Library: phone: (972) 780-3625; web: http://www.unt.edu/unt-dallas/library.htm UNT Dallas Bookstore: Phone: (972) 780-3652; email: 1012mgr@fhcg.follett.com	
Course Goals or Overview:			
From the social justice perspective, there is a growing concern about the overrepresentation of people with mental illness in the U.S. prisons and jails, and the criminal justice system’s response to behavioral health emergencies. Mental health is a social justice issue when individuals with mental illness are excluded from full participation in society. The course will provide an overview of best practices for formulating and evaluating collaborative law enforcement responses to people with behavioral health needs. The students will have the opportunity to participate in the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Public Safety training program and receive certification on MHFA, a nationally recognized certification with evidence of increasing justice professional’s skills to safely and responsibly meet the needs of people with mental illness.			

Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, the student will	
1	Identifying the factors contributing to the overrepresentation of people with mental illnesses in jails and prisons.
2	Evaluate the treatment options of mentally ill individuals in prisons and jails.
3	Compare and contrast interventions used in the criminal justice field to improve response to people in crisis.
4	Assess the effectiveness of diversion programs that keep people with mental illness out of the criminal legal system and address substance use and misuse.
5	Demonstrate understanding of the Mental Health First Aid for Public Safety program by becoming certified.
6	Develop an effective program for preventing and treating correctional officers' mental health issues.

Course Evaluation Methods

This course will utilize the following instruments to determine student grades and proficiency of the learning outcomes. Grading rubrics for each work/assignment is provided in the related weekly module.

I. Discussion Forums:

You will be required to participate in five discussion forums (50 X5= 250 points). Discussion topics are detailed in each module. You should submit your comments in writing or in audio/video form, and then comment on two classmates' postings in writing. These posts and comments are a chance to engage in a discussion while building a respectful learning community. They should go beyond "Well done" or "Good idea." However, overly long posts are ineffective and disrespectful of other people's time. As a graduate student, you must learn to make substantive comments in a succinct and engaging fashion. Your grades will depend upon) how well you demonstrate your mastery of the information in the assigned material; 2) how well you connect this information to your own experience as well as to additional research and reading you undertake on your own.

II. Reading Reflections:

You are required to submit five reading reflection papers throughout the term (50X5= 250 points). For reflections, you must summarize the readings from the weekly module, and critically analyze the information connecting them to real-world scenarios. Reading reflections should be 2-pages, double-spaced, and written in your own words. Responses should contain a summary (3/4 of the response) that identifies the main points and central argument of the reading, and a critique or question (1/4 of the

reflection paper). Citation of relevant literature that demonstrates that you did some research on the topic is likely to increase your scores on the paper.

III. Mental Health First Aid Certification:

Students will participate in the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Public Safety, an early intervention training program. This program is developed for public safety personnel to learn how to assist and support their peers or individuals they encounter in the field who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge. This is an 8- hours course. Students will be provided with different dates from which they can choose a date and participate free of cost in the training via Zoom instructor-led sessions. Upon completion of the training, they will be certified as Mental Health First Aider, a nationally recognized certification. This component is worth 200 points.

III. Research Paper (groups project):

Research shows officers are more likely to seek treatment when they feel encouraged and supported by their departments, so it is important to cultivate a policy environment that does not stigmatize mental health. At the end of this semester, you will work with your classmates in a group of 3-4 students and design an intervention plan for a law enforcement agency. This intervention will incorporate strategies to help law enforcement officers and the agency achieve the highest level of mental well-being possible. You will identify outcome measurements, key stakeholders, and tracking strategies. More specifically, your objectives would be (1) design a program that if implemented would facilitate a healthy environment within the agency and mental well-being for law enforcement officers, (2) apply evidence-based practices as a basis for the intervention, (3) discuss strategic partnerships which will facilitate the effectiveness of the interventions through key stakeholders. You will submit a 4-5-page paper describing the intervention plan. The paper is worth 200 points.

IV. Presentation of Your Project

Develop a presentation for your classmates explaining your research paper/intervention plan. Presentations will last for between 4-5 minutes. This presentation will be worth 100 points. You can have a recorded presentation or a PowerPoint, or you have the option to be creative in how you present your paper. The presentations have to be sent to me by the end of Week 7 so that I can upload them on Canvas for the class. Your peers will review your presentations. This presentation is worth 100 points.

Course Outline

This schedule is subject to change by the instructor. Additional readings and activities may be added. Any changes to this schedule will be communicated in class or via class email or Canvas announcement.

Weeks	Topics	Assignments
Week 1 Jan 13-19	<p>The social justice framework</p> <p>Overrepresentation of people with serious mental illness (SMI) in correctional settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data, trends, and causes (rates, deinstitutionalization, medicalization, privatization) - co-occurring disorders and substance abuse - incarceration and subsequent increase in suicide risks and worsening mental illness conditions <p>Criminalization of SMI- Mental illness, violence, and crime</p> <p>Read:</p> <p>Compton, M. T., & Shim, R. S. (2015). The social determinants of mental health. <i>Focus</i>, 13(4), 419-425.</p> <p>Bronson, J., & Berzofsky, M. (2017). Indicators of mental health problems reported by prisoners and jail inmates, 2011–12. <i>Bureau of Justice Statistics</i>, (Special Issue), 1-16.</p>	Reflection#1 Discussion#1
Week 2 Jan 20- 26	<p>Racial Biases and Inequities in Law Enforcement Response to Behavioral Health Emergencies</p> <p>Intersectionality; Racial disparity</p> <p>Appel, O., Stephens, D., Shadravan, S. M., Key, J., & Ochoa, K. (2020). Differential incarceration by race-ethnicity and mental health service status in the Los Angeles County Jail System. <i>Psychiatric services</i>, 71(8), 843-846.</p> <p>Laurencin, C. T., & Walker, J. M. (2020). Racial profiling is a public health and health disparities issue. <i>Journal of racial and ethnic health disparities</i>, 7(3), 393-397.</p>	Reflection#2 Discussion#2

Week 3 Jan 27- Feb 2	<p>The blurred boundaries between the criminal justice and mental health systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treatment of SMIs in jails and prisons and its difficulties. - compartmentalized services <p>Yoon, I. A., Slade, K., & Fazel, S. (2017). Outcomes of psychological therapies for prisoners with mental health problems: A systematic review and meta-analysis. <i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology</i>, 85(8), 783.</p> <p>Haney, C. (2017). "Madness" and penal confinement: Some observations on mental illness and prison pain. <i>Punishment & Society</i>, 19(3), 310-326.</p>	Reflection #3 Discussion #3
Week 4 Feb 3-9	<p>Diversion Programs; Jail diversions; Mental health court programs</p> <p>Dewa, C. S., Loong, D., Trujillo, A., & Bonato, S. (2018). Evidence for the effectiveness of police-based pre-arrest diversion programs in decriminalizing mental illness: A systematic literature review. <i>PloS one</i>, 13(6), e0199368.</p> <p>Epperson, M. W., Wolff, N., Morgan, R. D., Fisher, W. H., Frueh, B. C., & Huening, J. (2014). Envisioning the next generation of behavioral health and criminal justice interventions. <i>International Journal of Law and Psychiatry</i>, 37(5), 427-438.</p>	Reflection #4 Discussion #4
Week 5 Feb 10- 16	<p>Training Programs for Criminal Justice Professionals Peer support strategies; Evidence-based programs Current Research and Best Practices; CIT and MHFA</p> <p>Arazan, C. L., & Weich, L. (2023). The Intersection of Health and Justice: An Evaluation of Mental Health First Aid Training for Justice-involved Professionals. <i>Police Quarterly</i>, 10986111231169275.</p> <p>Nick, G. A., Williams, S., Lekas, H. M., Pahl, K., Blau, C., Kamin, D., & Fuller-Lewis, C. (2022). Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and impact on mental illness and substance use-related stigma among law enforcement. <i>Drug and alcohol dependence reports</i>, 5, 100099</p> <p>Van Hasselt, V. B., Klimley, K. E., Rodriguez, S., Themis-Fernandez, M., Henderson, S. N., & Schneider, B. A. (2019). Peers as Law Enforcement Support (PALS): an early prevention program. <i>Aggression and Violent Behavior</i>, 48, 1-5.</p> <p>Grupe, D. W., McGehee, C., Smith, C., Francis, A. D., Mumford, J. A., & Davidson, R. J. (2021). Mindfulness training reduces PTSD symptoms and improves stress-related health outcomes in police officers. <i>Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology</i>, 36, 72-85</p>	Reflection #5 Discussion #5
Week 6 Feb 17- 23	<p>MHFA for Public Safety (A 7-hours training will be given via Zoom instructor-led session) Certificate due</p>	

Week 7 Feb 24- March 2	GROUP WORK Research Paper/Intervention Plan Research Paper due
Week 8 March 3- 9	Work on Presentations Presentation due

Grading Matrix

Instrument	Value (points)	Total
Discussions	5 @ 50 points each	250
Reflections	5 @ 50 points each	250
MHFA Certificate	1 @ 200 points	200
Research Paper	1@200 points	200
Presentation	1@100 points	100
Total:		1000

Grade Determination:

- A = 1000- 900 pts; i.e. 90% or better
- B = 899 – 800 pts; i.e. 80 – 89 %
- C = 799 – 700 pts; i.e. 70 – 79 %
- D = 699 – 600 pts; i.e. 60 – 69 %;
- F = 599 pts or below; i.e. less than 60%

Students with Disabilities (ADA Compliance):

Chapter 7(7.004) Disability Accommodations for Students:

The University of North Texas at Dallas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations must first register with the Disability Services Office (DSO) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the DSO will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, DSO notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet/communicate with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the

privacy of the student. For additional information see [Disability Services Office](#). You may also contact them by phone at 972-338-1777; by email at UNTDDisability@untDallas.edu or at Building 2, room 204.

Canvas Instructure Accessibility Statement:

University of North Texas at Dallas is committed to ensuring its online and hybrid courses are usable by all students and faculty including those with disabilities. If you encounter any difficulties with technologies, please contact our ITSS Department. To better assist them, you would want to have the operating system, web browser and information on any assistive technology being used. [Canvas Instructure Accessibility Statement is also provided.](#)

NOTE: Additional instructional technology tools, such as Turnitin, Respondus, Panopto, and publisher cartridge content (i.e. MyLab, Pearson, etc.) may NOT be fully ADA compliant. Please contact our Disability Office should you require additional assistance utilizing any of these tools.

Course Evaluation Policy:

Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness are a requirement for all organized classes at UNT Dallas. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you with a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider students' evaluations to be an important part of your participation in this class.

Assignment Policy: (At the instructor's discretion while working in concert with the division/program's guidelines).

Exam Policy: (Online exams and the ability to retake them are solely at the instructor's discretion). **NOTE:** Online exams may be proctored on campus at the instructor's discretion.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a hallmark of higher education. You are expected to abide by the University's code of Academic Integrity policy. Any person suspected of academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating or plagiarism) will be handled in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. Refer to [UNT Dallas' Student Code of Academic Integrity](#) for complete provisions of this code. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts

of dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor or tampering with the academic work of other students.

Web-based Plagiarism Detection: Please be aware in some online or hybrid courses, students may be required to submit written assignments to Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service, or another method. If submitting to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information.

Statement Regarding Artificial Intelligence

The UNT-Dallas Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology acknowledges the evolving capabilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and their various effects on student writing and content creation. The department and its programs take a use-with-permission approach to AI. Students are only permitted to use AI technology in the creation of any course content if permitted by the course instructor. If the use of AI technology is detected, without specific instructor permission, the student will be deemed in violation of the plagiarism policy (see Student Code of Conduct).

Incomplete Policies:

The deadline to file for an incomplete for the course is the last day on which there is regular instruction for the session (not including finals).

In order to receive an incomplete in this course, the Grade of Incomplete Form posted on the Registrar forms site must be completed, signed, and returned to the Office of the Registrar by the deadline posted in the Academic Calendar. For other questions related to the grade of incomplete, contact Dr. Dawn Remmers, Assistant Provost, at dawn.remmers@untdallas.edu.

Classroom Policies

Attendance and Participation:

To maintain financial aid award eligibility, class attendance must occur before the census date of the session or term of the course. Refer to [UNT Dallas' Registrar](#) for specific dates. If you are absent/not active in the course shell, it is YOUR responsibility to let the instructor know immediately, upon your return, the reason for your absence if it is to be excused. All instructors must follow university policy 7.005 covering excused absences; however, it is the instructor's discretion, as outlined in the course syllabus, of how unexcused absences may or may not count against successful completion of the course.

Inclement Weather and Online Classes: Online classes may or may not be affected by

campus closures due to inclement weather. Unless otherwise notified by your instructor via e-mail, online messaging, or online announcement, students should assume that assignments are due as scheduled.

Online “Netiquette”:

Some works in this class will be submitted via online Canvas. In any social interaction, certain rules of etiquette are expected and contribute to more enjoyable and productive communication. Emails, Discussion Board messages and/or any other forms of written communication in the online environment should use proper “netiquette” (i.e., no writing in all caps (usually denotes yelling), no curse words, and no “flaming” messages (angry, personal attacks). Racial, ethnic, or gender slurs will not be tolerated, nor will pornography of any kind.

Any violation of online netiquette may result in a loss of points or removal from the course and referral to the Dean of Students, including warnings and other sanctions in accordance with the University’s policies and procedures. Refer to [UNT Dallas Student Code of Conduct](#). Respect is a given principle in all online communication. Therefore, please be sure to proofread all of your written communication prior to submission.

Diversity/Tolerance Policy:

Students are encouraged to contribute their perspectives and insights to class discussions in the online environment. However, offensive & inappropriate language (swearing) and remarks offensive to others of particular nationalities, ethnic groups, sexual preferences, religious groups, genders, or other ascribed statuses will not be tolerated. Disruptions which violate the Code of Student Conduct will be referred to the Dean of Students as the instructor deems appropriate.

Technology Assistance: In order to successfully access the materials in an online or hybrid course, UNT Dallas advises that your computer be equipped with the minimum system requirements listed on the first page of the syllabus.

If you experience difficulty accessing or using components of the course, try using Google Chrome browser. If you still experience technical difficulties, first, notify your instructor. If the problem is still not resolved, call Student Assistance (Distance Learning) at the phone number listed

on the first page of the syllabus. Also, no matter what browser you use, always enable pop-ups. For more information see:

- [UNT Dallas Canvas Technical Requirements](#)
- [Canvas Instructure Supported & Unsupported Operating Systems](#)