CJ 497
Senior Thesis
Spring 2014

Paul Kaplan, PhD, Associate Professor
School of Public Affairs
San Diego State University

Time: Selected Thursdays 4:00pm – 6:40pm
Room: PSFA 413
Schedule No. 20714

Email: pkaplan@mail.sdsu.edu
Office: PSFA 181
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Course Description:
Description from General Catalog: “Using library, Internet, and empirical research. Analysis of current criminal justice policy issues.”

This class is an independent study course designed for students who believe they have the academic maturity and preparation to pursue a thesis project independently—as such, the course meets periodically, rather than weekly.

This course is a research-based seminar designed to integrate students’ knowledge from previous course work around a project focused on an important topic in criminal justice that the student selects. Students will draw on their knowledge of theory, methods, and policy learned in core and elective courses to analyze in detail an important topic in criminal justice. The primary assignment for students in this course will be to produce a term paper length proposal for research.

Student Outcomes: after completing the course, students will be able to apply the knowledge of theory, methods, and policy learned in core and elective courses to analyze in detail and propose a research plan on an important topic in criminal justice.

Course Requirements:
This course requires students to work independently, on a directed project, with the guidance of the instructor. The course is structured with target dates for sections of written work to be submitted in hard copy to the instructor. Students are required to attend periodic meetings and strongly encouraged to schedule meetings with the instructor throughout the semester for assistance with their project.

Recommended Reading:

**Thesis:**

Your thesis will be in the form of a research proposal, and must address the following:

1. **State a research question.** Discuss your research question by defining the problem to be addressed, and discussing differences in interpretations of the definition from different perspectives. What is the significance of researching this problem? Identify and briefly discuss at least two of the main policies or programs that have previously been used to think about, prevent, or respond to this issue in the past ten years.

2. **Provide a theoretical framework from which you will be studying this issue.** What theory or theories are important for understanding the issues related to your research question? Why did you select these theories, instead of others; explain how and why this material applies to this issue. What are the policy implications indicated by the theory that you identify and how do these compare to the ones identified above?

3. **Explain your research design, methodology & techniques of analysis for studying this issue.**
   a. **Methods:** What are the quantitative or qualitative research methods that you propose to be used to collect the data? Explain your sampling and data collection techniques. Why is this design appropriate for addressing your research question? How will the data gathered allow you to assess the veracity of the theoretical perspective you’ve selected?
   b. **Analysis:** How will the data gathered through the research be analyzed? What statistical and/or qualitative models or techniques will be used to analyze and interpret your data? What are the strengths and limitations of your research and analysis design; explain; include a discussion of the reliability, validity and generalizability of your findings.

4. **What are the policy implications of your research?** Sketch out scenarios that flow from the potential findings of your research, showing what policies would be logical and appropriate if your findings support the theory and what policies would be abandoned if the data does not support the theory. Can you conceive of structural or juridical problems that would preclude your policy ideas? Or new problems that those policies might create? How might they be addressed, avoided, and/or accommodated; does previous research evidence on the effectiveness of these policies in preventing, reducing or controlling the problem offer any lessons for the significance of your proposed research project and about why it should be funded?

**Thesis Requirements:**
- 20 pages (minimum)
- Size-12 font
- Page-numbered
• Double spaced
• One inch margins
• Consistent citation format throughout (such as APA)
• Separate reference page at the end

Turning in your thesis:
• A hard copy of the thesis is due during finals week (no later than Tues. 5/13/14)
• I will not accept emailed papers

60% of the grade will be based on the quality of the final thesis.
40% of the grade will be based on completing a draft of each component by the deadline dates
(Ten points possible per assignment for four assignments).

Grading:

Grades are based on the number of points you accumulate on the thesis and preliminary sections, which have the maximum potential of 100. Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- 93-100 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- Below 60 = F

Without advance approval from the instructor or a documented emergency, two points will be deducted from the grade for each assignment for each day the assignment is late, with the exception of the final thesis/project. Without advance approval from the instructor or a documented emergency, five points will be deducted from the grade for the final thesis/project for each day the final thesis/project is late.

Hints for Preparing Assignments:

• In order to comply with typical academic standards regarding plagiarism, students must cite their work every time they use information from a source other than their own knowledge in every assignment, and students must include a bibliography of these sources every time they use them, in every assignment. You can use any citation style
you choose, as long as you are consistent throughout the paper.

- Do not plagiarize. Doing so is shameful, and if you get caught, you will face serious academic consequences. There is a good definition of plagiarism on this SDSU website: [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/htc/plagiarism.pdf](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/htc/plagiarism.pdf).

- Your writing should be professional in style. This means no use of slang, and no use of conversational language in your thesis.

- Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence form are important.

- Students are strongly encouraged to schedule additional meetings with the instructor throughout the semester for assistance with their project. Students who meet with the instructor regularly typically perform than students who rarely or never meet with the instructor.

### Schedule (subject to change):

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs. 1/23/14</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction Syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 1/30/14</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 2/6/14</td>
<td>NO CLASS WSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 2/13/14</td>
<td>Discuss Research Question</td>
<td>Discuss Research Question</td>
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<td>Thurs. 2/20/14</td>
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<td>Draft of Part 1 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 2/27/14</td>
<td>Discuss Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. 3/6/14</td>
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<td>Thurs. 3/13/14</td>
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<td>Draft of Part 2 Due</td>
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<td>Thurs. 3/27/14</td>
<td>Discuss Methods</td>
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<td>Thurs. 4/3/14</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Thurs. 4/24/14</td>
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<td>Thurs. 5/1/14</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td>NO CLASS Draft of part 4 Due</td>
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<td>Thurs. 5/8/14</td>
<td>Discuss thesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. 5/13/14</td>
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<td>Final Thesis Due</td>
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