

**SOC 270 Corrections in America**  
**Course Syllabus: Fall 2015**  
**MW 8:55-10:05 a.m. PPHAC 235**

**Instructor: Joyce Dougherty, Ph.D.**

**Office: PPHAC Room 310**

**Office Hours: MW 8:30-8:50 a.m. and by appointment**

**Contact Information: [doughertyj@moravian.edu](mailto:doughertyj@moravian.edu)**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines issues surrounding correctional systems in America today. In 1973 the prison incarceration rate in the United States was 96 out of 100,000; by 2011 that rate grew to exceed 700 out of 100,000. The U.S. makes up only 5 percent of the world's total population, but it has 25 percent of the incarcerated population giving the U.S. the dubious distinction of having the highest incarceration rate in the world. In 1980 the annual cost of operating all local, state and federal correctional facilities stood at \$17 billion; by 2010 that annual cost rose to \$80 billion. Students will explore the factors behind this trend toward "mass incarceration" and will learn what the future may hold for corrections in America. There are two required texts: Stohr, Walsh and Hemmens' Corrections: A Text/Reader; and Heinlein's Among Murderers: Life After Prison.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Upon completion of this course, a successful student will be better prepared to participate in and intelligently contribute to the larger public conversation about crime, punishment, and corrections in America today. Assignments are designed to build and/or strengthen all of the following core skills:

- Analysis and Problem Solving Skills
- Interpersonal and Leadership Skills
- Project Management and Organizational Skills
- Research and Information Management Skills
- Self- Management and Work Habits
- Written and Oral Communication

**PARTICIPATION:**

This course is structured in a format that blends lectures, documentaries, discussions, and student presentations. As a student in this class, you become a part of an intellectual community actively involved in exploring issues relating to crime, punishment, and corrections in America. While consensus on every issue may not be possible, the expectation is that the classroom will be a safe, supportive environment in which ideas and differences can be shared in a respectful and positive way.

**Active participation will be worth 15 percent of the final grade** and will be measured by attendance and participation during class discussions, thoughtfully completed peer and group presentation evaluations, and submission of two multiple choice, short answer, or true/false questions and answers for every class that does not involve discussions or student presentations and two questions

from all 14 sections in the Stohr, Walsh and Hemmens' text and one question from each of the 35 readings in that text. To receive full credit for active participation, questions, clearly labeled by class date, text section and readings must be submitted in class according to the following schedule:

- Class Questions and Questions from Sections I, II, III and IV, readings #1-8: Wednesday, **September 23**
- Class Questions and Questions from Sections V, VI, VII and VIII readings #9-20: Wednesday, **October 21**
- Class Questions and Questions from Sections IX, X, XI and XII readings #21-30: Wednesday, **November 18**
- Class Questions and Questions from Sections XIII and XIV, readings #31-35: Wednesday, **December 9**

Submitting questions late, or failing to include questions from all of the required classes, sections and readings will impact the final grade for active participation.

### **ATTENDANCE:**

It is essential that everyone faithfully attend, and come to class on time and prepared. Students will be permitted to have two (2) unexcused absences (missing one week of class), but using those unexcused absences will impact your final grade. Excessive tardiness to class will count as one unexcused absence. For an absence to be considered "excused" an email must be received prior to the class with an explanation as to why you cannot attend (i.e., illness, family emergency, etc.) and proper documentation must be received upon your return to class. Notes from the College's Health Center must be signed by someone from the Health Center staff to be considered valid excuses.

**Attendance will be worth 10 percent of the final grade.** Only students with no absences will receive 100 percent for attendance. Students with one unexcused absence will receive 95 percent and students with two unexcused absences will receive 90 percent. Students with three unexcused absences will receive 75 percent, those with four unexcused absences will receive 65 percent, and those with more than four unexcused absences will receive no credit for attendance. Having an unexcused absence on a class discussion day also will impact the final grade for active participation.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Short Papers and Class Discussions:** Students will be expected to write three (3) short papers (three to four pages maximum, double-spaced, 12 point font, not including a bibliographical reference list) and come to class prepared to discuss each paper. The quality of the writing, thoughtfulness of each paper and how effectively you express your opinions will all be taken into consideration. **Each paper will be worth 15 percent of the final grade.**

While students may incorporate independent research into each paper, the expectation is that specific references with appropriate citations from the Stohr, Walsh and Hemmens' text must be included in each paper. Citations should follow the American Psychological Association (APA) format. Guidelines for the American Psychological Association format can be found at the following website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>.

**The expectation is that all students abide by the established norms of academic honesty and the College's specific academic honesty policy when writing all papers for this class.**

Each paper will be due on the following dates via email no later than 8 a.m. Students also must bring a hard copy of each paper to class and be prepared to discuss their work on these dates:

- Short Paper #1 on the justification for punishment: Briefly review the justifications for punishment and identify which you think is the most “appropriate” justification given crime in America today and why (defend your choice). **Due September 16**
- Short Paper #2 on the violence in prisons: In 2003, Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) aimed at curbing sexual violence in jails and prisons by mandating correctional institutions adopt a “zero tolerance” policy. As a result, many jails and prisons place inmates determined to be at risk of sexual victimization, including but not limited to juveniles being tried as adults, in solitary confinement. Briefly review issues surrounding violence in jails and prisons. Also review issues surrounding the use of solitary confinement. Given the potential impact solitary confinement can have on inmates, do you think it should be used as a tool to protect inmates against sexual assault? Why or why not? **Due October 7**
- Short Paper #3 on the impact victimization has on the lives of female offenders. Briefly review the impact that victimization can have on a woman’s pathway into a life of crime and the basic principles of trauma informed care. Do you think incorporating trauma informed care into the management of inmates in jails and prisons is a realistic goal? Why or why not? **Due November 2**

**Major Group Project – Written and Oral:** Students will be assigned in groups of three or four by the instructor on **September 9**. Once in the group, students will be expected to agree upon who in the group will be assigned to one of three parts of the group’s final paper based on an assessment of their core skills. Part One of the paper must explore the major issues facing corrections today. Part Two must identify different reform strategies to address each of the issues identified in Part One. Part Three must examine a specific reform strategy the group agrees would have the most positive impact on offenders, their families, and the general public and why. In groups made up of four students, Part Four must address how the strategy chosen by the group might have positively impacted the experience of the three formerly incarcerated men in Heilein’s book. In groups made up of three students, during the class presentation of the paper each student in the group will be expected to address how the strategy chosen by the group might have positively impacted the experience of the three formerly incarcerated men in Heinlein’s book. Each section of the paper should be 5 to 6 pages maximum (double-spaced, 12 point font and not including the bibliography). Each section must incorporate class readings, lecture material, and independent research, using the APA format for in-text citations and the bibliography. **Each section of the paper will be worth 15 percent of the final grade.**

A draft copy of each section will be **due on in class on October 19**. The drafts will be reviewed, but not graded, with particular attention paid to the organization of each section and the logical flow of the paper as a whole, the quality of writing, scholarship, and articulation and defense of positions taken. Proper citation of all sources will be critical; **the expectation being that all group members abide by the established norms of academic honesty and the College’s specific academic honesty policy when writing each section of the paper**. Each group will be expected to set up an appointment with the instructor to review the draft and any suggested revisions. All group members must attend this appointment. **The revised final version of the group project is due November 23.**

A one to two page progress report from each group (one report per group **worth 5 percent of each student's the final grade**) will be due and presented in class on **September 21**. This report must identify who is responsible for each of the three sections of the paper and why that person was determined to be best suited for that assignment based on an assessment of that person's core skills. The report also will need to include a timetable that demonstrates how the group plans to ensure the draft of the paper and the final paper itself will be completed on time.

Each group will be expected **present their work in class** beginning on **December 2**. The presentation will be worth **10 percent of the final grade**. The goal will be to convince the rest of the class that your group has identified the most effective strategy to address the most pressing issues facing corrections in America today. All students will be expected to complete a group self-evaluation, and each group presentation will be evaluated by the class, with those completed evaluations making up part of the active participation portion of the final grade.

#### **EXTRA CREDIT:**

This course does not require that students take regular tests, the emphasis being on improving core skills. However, for extra credit students may opt to take a final exam (during the regularly scheduled final exam period on Wednesday, **December 16 at 1:30 p.m.**) The exam will be made up of the questions submitted by students during the semester. Taking this test will give students the option of dropping their lowest short paper grade if their test grade is higher than that lowest grade and will be worth 15 percent of the final grade. All of the three short papers must be submitted for this option to apply. In other words, choosing not to do a paper because you plan on taking this test is not an option! Students email the instructor by **November 16** indicating whether or not they intend to take advantage of this extra credit option.

#### **DISABILITY STATEMENT:**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Laurie Roth, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office.