

Criminal Justice Ethics RELS 399
Riker's Island
Fall 2015
Prof. Andrew Skotnicki/Prof. Alicja Reuben

In this course we will explore some of the dimensions of the most important ethical issues in the area of criminal justice: crime, law, media, justice, punishment, and forgiveness. The course will utilize both classical and modern texts to trace the evolution of thought on these topics; it will analyze the multiple ways they are understood and expressed in the current context; and it will create the opportunity for students to work together to configure the most intellectually coherent and ethically sound understanding of these concepts in the current practice of criminal justice.

Goals

- 1) Create a learning and caring community between Manhattan College and Department of Corrections students
- 2) Familiarize students with classical and modern authors and theories in the field of criminal justice ethics and the ethics of mass communication
- 3) Stimulate informed, critical, and compassionate analysis of some of the principal issues and challenges facing society in its response to illegal behavior
- 4) Facilitate the transition of interested DOC students to Manhattan College upon their release

Readings

All of the readings for the course will be distributed at the opening session. Each student must do the assigned reading for the day, come prepared to discuss its content, and must bring a copy of the reading to class. As you read, take notes on the argument of the author and any ideas of interest to you. Come to class prepared to say something about each reading.

Reflection Papers

There will be four reflection papers. They are to be typed, double spaced, and should be approximately three pages in length, incorporating a minimum of five references to the day's readings. You must submit **TWO** copies of the paper, one of which will be returned to you. Each paper must have three sections: 1) observation (identify at least three things that you observed during our combined meetings, e.g., interactions between people, insights on group dynamics etc); 2) analysis and integration (discuss and analyze the principal issues raised in the class using at least five quotes or references to the readings assigned for that day, although you may also bring in ideas from previous classes (do not use the quotes as a substitute for your own analysis!); 3) write about your emotional reaction to the class; take the time to explain the reactions rather than simply recording them.

Final Paper and Presentation

Beginning on April 7, students will form groups and begin to work on a final project of their own choosing that will be presented to the class and to representatives of the Department of

Corrections on April 21. The students may **Not** read their report. While the project must draw on the concepts and authors we have discussed during the semester, the project is an attempt for you to explain to us how you would address in a practical way one of the principal ethical issues in criminal justice ethics. It will furthermore be expected that there be some attempt to demonstrate creatively your ideas, i.e., present a role play, tell a story, engage the group, show a video etc. We will be available to discuss this with you and we will take some time on November 7 and 14 to allow the class to offer suggestions to each group.

A final integrative paper on criminal justice ethics will be due on the last day of class. It must be at least ten pages long, typed, double-spaced, and draw upon a minimum of fifteen quotes from or references to the readings. A full citation page with APA formatting is required at the end of each paper citing all sources. It is an opportunity for each student to summarize his or her thoughts on the work we have done.

Final Grade

20% of the final grade will be based upon class participation (attending class, listening, and contributing to discussions); 40% will be based on the reflection papers; 20% will be based on the final presentation; and 20% on the final paper. DOC students will take the course as pass/fail.

Schedule of Classes

8/31 Introduction of course: explain all requirements, distribute all reading materials, and discuss key issues in the interaction between residents and guests. Students will meet separately with the professors: DOC students at Riker's Island, Manhattan College students at the college.

Midweek: Separate session. Reactions to initial gathering. Overview of Criminal Justice System

9/14 First combined session. Group activities to create sense of community and begin to explore initial understanding of the issues we will study.

Module 1 : Who do we punish?

9/21 Combined session. What is the nature of our violent and anti-social tendencies?

Assignment: James Gilligan, *Preventing Violence*; Rene Girard, "Mimesis and Violence"; Jeffrey Polzer, "How Subgroup Interests and Reputations Moderate the Effect of Organizational Identification on Cooperation"

Activity: Violent or Nonviolent; Prisoner's Dilemma

- First reflection paper due (see paper guidelines)

Module 2: Why do we punish?

9/28 Combined session. Why do we punish?

Assignment: Selections from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*; Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*; Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*.

Activity: Cross the line

Module 3: Who do we punish?

10/5 Who Do We Punish?

Assignment: Read, Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; John Irwin, *Jail*, pp. 1-17; Richard Lempert, "A Classic at 25: Reflections on Galanter's 'Haves' Article and Work It Has Inspired,"
Activity: Island Game

- Second reflection paper due

10/13 Combined session. How do we punish?

Assignment: Read: Plato, *The Laws*; *Rule of St. Benedict*; Dom Jean Mabillon, "Reflections on the Prisons"; Alexis de Toqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, *On the Penitentiary System in the United States*. Levitt and Venkatesh *American Economic Review* 2001 "Growing up in the Projects: The Economic Lives of a Cohort of Men Who Come of Age in Chicago Public Housing"
There are no children here by Alex Kotlowitz.

Activity: Three day journal

Module 4: Restorative Justice

10/19 Combined session. Law and Judgment; Law and Violence

Assignment: Read: James Whitman, *The Origins of Reasonable Doubt*; George Felkenes, "The Prosecutor: A Look at Reality" Murakawa and Beckett, "The Penology of Racial Innocence: The Erasure of Racism in the Study and Practice of Punishment"

Activities: Mid-semester evaluation. Role play on the ordeal. Mid-semester evaluation.

- Third reflection paper due

10/23 Combined session. Is there justice without mercy?

Assignment: Read: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Kevin Jung, "Fallibility and Fragility"; Jeffrie Murphy, "What if we based the law on love?"

Activity: Victimization survey

10/26 Combined session. Restorative justice.

Assignment: Read: John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame, and Reintegration*; Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses*; Dan M. Kahan and Eric A. Posner, "Shaming White-Collar Criminals: A Proposal for Reform of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines"

Activity: Restorative justice role play

11/2 Combined Session: Work on group presentations

- Fourth reflection paper due

11/16 Combined Session: Work on group presentations

11/23 Combined Session: Group presentations

11/30 Combined Session: Closing ceremony

- Final paper due

12/7 Separate session. Tour of facility for outside students. Professors meet with inside students