

**University of Florida Levin College of Law**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**TRANSFORMATIVE PERSPECTIVES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE INSIDE-OUT**

**LAW 6930 (18258)**

*Spring 2025*

**INSTRUCTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Professor Sarah H. Wolking  
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*Office Hours:* Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 p.m.

**CLASSROOM AND CLASS TIME:**

Tuesdays from 5:30-8:30 p.m. The class will meet weekly for three hours at Lancaster Correctional Institution in Trenton. Law students must allow travel time and processing in and out of the facility. Transportation to/from the facility will be by van, leaving the law school at 4 p.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This course brings together students from UF Law and students incarcerated at Lancaster Correctional Institution to study the criminal justice system. Part of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, this class challenges students to integrate their theoretical knowledge with lived experiences. The course will focus on current issues in the criminal justice system and cover topics including the causes and the impact of crime, the rationale for and critiques of the criminal justice system, and alternatives such as restorative justice. This I-O course will strive to:

- Encourage students to think critically about various criminal justice and correctional issues, testing their theoretical understanding;
- Create an environment that will facilitate the honest exchange of ideas in a constructive dialogue;
- Facilitate the development of tools for acting as engaged citizens working towards a more just society;
- Build a connection between those on the outside and those on the inside, and
- Develop students' capacities for both written and oral expression.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Review, reflect on, and hone their thinking about the operation of the criminal justice system;
- Identify alternatives to current legal doctrine and practices, distilling solutions out of what legal agencies currently do;
- Produce high-quality writing;
- Recognize disparate outcomes within the criminal justice system, learning how to address and challenge them sensitively in a group setting;
- Develop the skills to think like a leader;
- Collaborate with classmates to produce a group project.

## REQUIRED READING MATERIALS:

- Larry Miller, *Jump: My Secret Journey from the Streets to the Boardroom* (2022)
- James Forman, Jr. *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (2018)
- David Brooks, *How to Know a Person* (2023)
- Premal Dharia and James Forman, Jr. *Dismantling Mass Incarceration: A Handbook for Change* (2024)
  - Patrick Sharkey and Rogé Karma *How Cities Can Tackle Violent Crime Without Relying on Police* (2020)
  - Taylor Pendergrass and Somil Trivedi *Beyond Reform: Four Virtues of a Transformational Prosecutor* (2021)
  - Rachel Barkow *Can Prosecutors End Mass Incarceration?* (2021)
  - Community Justice Exchange, CourtWatch MA, Families for Justice and Healing, Project NIA, and Survived and Punished NY *Abolitionist Principles and Campaign for Prosecutor Organizing* (2019)
  - Raj Jayadev *1,862 Fewer Years in Prison* (2015)
  - Dashka Slater *North Dakota's Norway Experiment* (2017)
  - Clint Smith *Restoring Pell Grants—and Possibilities—for Prisoners* (2021)
  - Lori Pompa *The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program: Its Origin, Essence, and Global Reach* (2021)
  - Adrian Horton *Reginald Dwayne Betts on His Groundbreaking Prison Library Project* (2021)
  - Piper French *A Future for Susanville* (2022)
  - Judge Frederic Block *United States v. Chevelle Nesbeth* (2016)
  - Lawrence Bartley, Crystal Mourias-Juan, and Rahsaan Sloan *A Conversation About Second Chance Employment* (2023)
  - Zachariah Oquenda *The Case for a Fair Chance Housing Act: From a Brother's Perspective* (2021)
  - Kira Lerner *D.C. Residents Are Voting from Prison This Week* (2022)

- James M. Binnall *The Time I Was Called for Jury Duty...and What Happened Next* (2023)
- Ben Fleury-Steiner *Rights Restoration Success Stories* (2023)
- Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy* (2014)
- Lifers Inc. at SCI-Graterford, *Ending the Culture of Street Crime* (2004)
- Maurice Chammah, *The Future of Prisons?* (2024)
- Jeffrey Bellin, *Mass Incarceration Nation: How the United States Became Addicted to Prisons and Jails and How It Can Recover* (2022)

***The reading load for this course is substantial. We will not always have the opportunity to discuss each reading, but the readings are always essential to the day's topic. Additional readings may be distributed throughout the semester, and students are encouraged to draw the class's attention to current events and issues in the criminal justice system.***

### **CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PARTICIPATION:**

Attendance in class is required by both the ABA and the Law School. The class is three hours long. It is dialogue-based and, therefore, highly interactive. Given the unique nature of this class, it is essential that each student attend and fully participate in every session. If, due to serious circumstances, you won't be able to attend one of the sessions, please contact me in advance. Any absence will change the dynamics of the group, as well as disappoint other members of the class. Depending on the circumstances, missed classes may affect your grade in the class. Inside students can contact the instructor through the FDC staff liaison. Unexcused absence from class will result in a 5-point reduction in a student's final grade (on the 100-point scale) for each missed class. Further information about UF Law's attendance policy is available here: <https://www.law.ufl.edu/life-at-uf-law/office-of-student-affairs/current-students/uf-law-student-handbook-and-academic-policies>.

For outside students, you must be on time at the meeting place for the carpool or the facility. Your lateness can cause difficulties at the gate and will delay the class for all. A student who fails to meet the attendance requirement will be dropped from the course. The law school's policy on attendance can be found [here](#).

Active participation is critical in this class. We will discuss difficult and controversial issues, and you may disagree with one another. Say what you think, even if it isn't a popular point of view. For this experience to be the meaningful educational opportunity it's intended to be, each of you must take responsibility for the direction and depth of the discussion. As we'll be meeting in an unfamiliar setting, we will each have to work on getting comfortable enough to take risks involved in fully participating in discussions. While listening is important, sitting back and merely listening is not acceptable. Everyone must be fully engaged for this to work.

### **UF LEVIN COLLEGE OF LAW STANDARD SYLLABUS POLICIES:**

Other information about UF Levin College of Law policies, including compliance with the UF Honor Code, Grading, Accommodations, Class Recordings, and Course Evaluations, can be found at this link: <https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/427635/files/74674656?wrap=1>.

**ABA OUT-OF-CLASS HOURS REQUIREMENTS:** ABA Standard 310 requires that students devote 120 minutes to out-of-class preparation for every “classroom hour” of in-class instruction. Each weekly class is approximately three hours, requiring at least six hours of preparation outside of class, including reading the assigned materials, writing reflection papers, and developing your final project.

**COMMUNICATION COURTESY AND CIVILITY:**

Please follow the rules of common courtesy in all class discussions. I reserve the right to lower your final grade if you engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for your classmates.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING EVALUATION:**

For this course, you will earn three (3) total credits. Outside students will be graded under regular law school grading policies. Inside students will complete the same assignments and be given a choice of how they would like to be graded and receive feedback (high school, college, or post-secondary level). All students are expected to hand in papers on time, and late papers without a valid excuse will be graded down. A student’s final grade will be based upon the following: 50% Coursework (completing reading assignments, being prepared for class, and written reflections) and 50% Class Participation, including the small group Final Project.

**1. COURSEWORK: 50% of final grade**

Reflection papers and class readings challenge you to think and form opinions about how the criminal justice system works.

**Weekly Reflection Papers**

Students will write weekly reflection papers based on the previous week’s class discussion and upcoming readings. Papers are due each week in class. Note to outside students: Do not email or upload papers to me before or after class. Please bring them with you.

Papers may be typed or hand-written and should be three pages. If you type, papers should be double-spaced. If you hand-write, please write clearly. Include your name and the date on the first page of your reflection paper, but do not include your name on any other pages. Identify the paper on page 1 by number (i.e., Reflection Paper #1, #2, etc.). I will read your papers and comment on the margins, but I won’t give detailed feedback.

I will distribute a copy of everyone’s papers to the class the following week. Students have reported that reading one another’s reaction papers is a highlight of the class and a way to continue the conversation beyond the classroom walls.

Your reflection papers should convey that you have read carefully and thought hard about the issues presented. Each paper should include two sections:

- Section One: Observation and reaction to class discussion
- Section Two: Analysis and integration of readings

### **Section One: Observations and Reactions:**

Identify at least one thing that you observed during our class session. Observations can include anything that stood out for you, such as specific interactions between people, interesting issues or common themes that emerged, or your insights about group dynamics. Explain what was significant to you about each of the observations.

In addition to your observation, write about your emotional reaction (how you felt after and during class). Describe, in as much detail as possible, how the experiences and exercises in class made you feel. Instead of just reporting that class made you feel sad or happy, write about what made you feel sad or happy, how long you were sad or happy, what sadness or happiness feels like, did others notice, when it stopped, etc. Exploring your feelings in this way takes courage and strength. Writing can be helpful to examine feelings that we might otherwise ignore. Be honest in expressing your feelings. Write about them, then let go.

### **Section Two: Analysis and Integration:**

In this section, you transition from reflecting on the last class session to looking forward to the upcoming class. You will do this by reflecting on and analyzing the topics raised by the readings. Integrate the readings for the week, including at least one relevant passage (with citations) from those readings.

If you are having trouble getting started on this section of the paper, these prompts may be helpful:

- What themes, points, or issues did you find interesting?
- Which reading did you disagree with, and why?
- Which reading would you want to share with a friend or family, and why?
- Does the author's argument square with your life experiences? If so, how? Does the author's argument shed light on recent news events? If so, how?
- Does a particular article or set of articles cause you to change your mind about something you believe? Does it reinforce a belief? If so, how?
- How does the reading relate to or conflict with readings from previous weeks?

A few pointers when writing this section:

- Instead of tackling several issues, select one (maybe two) of these issues or themes to write about.
- You may only have space to react to one of the readings. That is just fine.

- Develop your own analysis of the issue or theme you select. What do YOU think about what you read?
- Use quotations or excerpts from the readings and examples from the reading to support your analysis or highlight your analysis's limitations.

## **2. CLASS PARTICIPATION AND FINAL GROUP PROJECT: 50% of final grade**

The classes will consist of a guided dialogue on the particular topic of the week in both the large group and smaller subgroups. This format will make our discussions all the more productive and engaging. Our course structure provides us with unique opportunities and responsibilities. We must abide by the rules of the facility and our class and, above all, treat one another respectfully. Please remember the I-O rule of semi-anonymity and use first names only on all assignments and in class. Contact outside of class between Inside and Outside students is not permitted under the rules of the Inside-Out International Prison Exchange Program.

### **Final Group Project:**

All students will participate in a group project toward the end of the course. I will provide additional details about the group project later in the semester.

**Journaling:** I will provide each student with a writing journal. Please bring this to class with you each week. You may use this journal to jot down notes or thoughts during class or when doing the reading. I encourage you to spend a few minutes each day, or a few days a week, writing in your journal. It is an excellent place to explore, observe, describe powerful moments, and track difficult problems. *I will not read your journal.*

### **A Thing of Beauty:**

Beginning with our first combined meeting, two of us will bring something to class that brings beauty to your life. This can be pretty much anything—a photo, a book, a poem, a piece of music, a picture, a story, an inspirational quote, a cartoon, a drawing, etc. You name it. If it is beautiful to you, and you want to share it, it can be your thing of beauty. I'll go first, along with another student, and students will sign up for one day over the rest of the semester.

**A Word on the Process:** Your final grades will reflect your preparation for class, your written work, and your class participation, including your small group Final Project. It's a shame that classes have to end with grades. Please keep in mind that grades are an imprecise and heavy-handed tool for judging things that are hard to judge.

### **Closing Ceremony:**

The class will culminate in a closing ceremony. We'll discuss the details of the closing ceremony later in the semester.

## **COURSE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

This unique course comes with heightened responsibilities. We will discuss these in more detail at our first meeting session.

- This course is not an opportunity for human subject research. We are creating a community of inside and outside students.
- This course is not about providing legal representation, charity, or volunteering. Those are essential endeavors, but this course is different. This class is about creating a learning community.
- All students must abide by all rules of the Florida Department of Corrections.
- All Inside-Out classes operate on a first-name basis. Students may not contact one another outside of class, including after the class has ended. Students may not share emails, cell phone numbers, social media contacts, etc. Please don't hesitate to ask me if you have questions about this rule or how to interpret it.

## **DRESS CODE:**

Outside students will wear black matching “Inside-Out” t-shirts and must comply with the dress code rules specified by the Florida Department of Corrections.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

I've outlined the course assignments below. Our schedule is subject to change, and students should be prepared to pivot.

Week 1: Introductory Session for Inside Students	Lancaster CI	Tues Jan 14th
Week 2: Introductory Session for Outside Students	UF Law	Tues Jan 21st
Week 3: First Combined Meeting - Introductions	Lancaster CI  Readings: <i>How to Know a Person</i> by David Brooks (entire excerpt in course materials) and <i>Jump</i> by Larry Miller (pages 1-49)	Tues Jan 28th

<p>Week 4: Crime and Punishment in the US. Why do People Commit Crime? What are Prisons for?</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #1 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Jump</i> by Larry Miller (pages 51-173)</p>	<p>Tues Feb 4th</p>
<p>Week 5: Why Does Crime Happen?</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #2 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Jump</i> by Larry Miller (pages 175-287) and <i>Ending the Culture of Street Crime</i> by Lifers Inc. at SCI-Graterford</p>	<p>Tues Feb 11th</p>
<p>Week 6: An Analysis of the Criminal Justice System</p>	<p>Lancaster CI—<i>Tour for Outside Students before class</i></p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #3 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Locking Up Our Own</i> by James Forman Jr. (pages 3-150, note there are lots of skipped pages in the excerpted course materials)</p>	<p>Tues Feb 18th</p>
<p>Week 7: Myths and Realities of Prison Life</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #4 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Locking Up Our Own</i> by James Forman Jr. (pages 185-239, note there are lots of skipped pages in the excerpted course materials) and <i>The Future of Prisons?</i> by Maurice Chammah</p>	<p>Tues Feb 25th</p>



<p>Week 8: Punishment and Rehabilitation</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #5 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Dismantling Mass Incarceration</i> by P. Dharia, J. Forman Jr. and M. Hawilo (pages 27-213, note there are lots of skipped pages in the excerpted course materials)</p>	<p>Tues Mar 4th</p>
<p>Week 9: Victims and Victimization</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #6 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Dismantling Mass Incarceration</i> by P. Dharia, J. Forman Jr. and M. Hawilo (pages 364-446, note there are lots of skipped pages in the excerpted course materials)</p>	<p>Tues Mar 11th</p>
<p>UF LAW BREAK</p>		<p>Tues Mar 18th</p> <p>NO CLASS</p>
<p>Week 10: Restorative Justice</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #7 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Just Mercy</i> by Bryan Stevenson, chapters 1-7 and <i>Mass Incarceration Nation</i> by Jeffrey Bellin</p>	<p>Tues Mar 25th</p>

<p>Weeks 11-12: Group Project</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p> <p>Writing Assignment: Turn in Reflection Paper #8 at start of class</p> <p>Reading: <i>Just Mercy</i> by Bryan Stevenson, chapters 8-end</p>	<p>Tues Apr 1st</p> <p>Tues Apr 8th</p>
<p>Week 13: Final Closing Ceremony and Celebration</p>	<p>Lancaster CI</p>	<p>Tues Apr 15th</p>