

TO: CRI 498 Students

FROM: Prof. Bruce D. Stout

RE: Final Policy Research Paper & Presentation

DATE: Fall 2013

Over the course of the semester you will write three policy memos about each of the substantive policy issues that we will read about and discuss in class; mass incarceration, the drug war and firearm violence. The format of these memos, which we shall discuss in detail, is designed to provide policy makers with a clear, concise and parsimonious overview of a policy problem, resolution strategies to resolve that problem, and a specific recommendation for action. Because policy memos are typically written for policy makers who may not have any knowledge of the subject and have limited time to consider your recommendations, they are, by design, directed at a lay audience and do not provide an exhaustive and detailed examination of a particular problem.

Your final policy research paper differs from these policy memos in that its goal is to summarize your in-depth analysis and research into a fourth criminal justice policy issue of your choosing. The issue you select should be something that interests and excites you – this will make your research and writing more fun. You have wide latitude in selecting a policy issue. In the past, students have written about issues as diverse as crime prevention, Megan’s Law, the impact of illegal immigration on crime, the death penalty and civil commitment of sex offenders. You should not choose a policy issue related to the three policy issues that we will be studying in class. You will submit a brief one to two paragraph description of your selected topic along with your preliminary bibliography containing at least five acceptable references in week four of the semester and a complete first draft of your research paper in week twelve.

A good way to frame your work on this paper is to explicitly determine the research questions that your research will address. If your topic was the death penalty, for example, your research questions might include, “Is the death penalty an effective deterrent?”, and “Is the death penalty cost effective?” If your topic was Megan’s Law your research questions might include, “Does Megan’s Law reduce sex offender recidivism?” and “Is Megan’s Law effective in protecting children from sexual predators?” When you submit your paper topic, make sure that you clearly identify your research question(s). Your paper is nearly a semester long work product that should provide a detailed analysis of your issue and detailed answers to your research questions. As with your policy memos, you should provide a recommendation or recommendations that are derived from your research and that are supported with evidence.

Your research should rely primarily on peer-reviewed journal articles, but can also include books and policy briefs from independent and objective policy institutes such as the Rand Corporation, the Urban Institute and the Vera Institute of Justice. Organizations or institutes whose primary role is advocacy, such as the National Rifle Association, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws,

etc., are not legitimate sources for your research. Additionally, newspapers, Wikipedia and other on-line information repositories are not legitimate as sources for this research paper.

Your research paper should be double-spaced on 8 ½” by 11” paper with 1” margins of each side and 1” top and bottom margins. Use Arial 12 point font. Appropriate length is 18 or more pages (5,000 plus words), exclusive of cover page and reference list. Use APA Style Guide format for citations and reference list. Number your pages.

Your presentation should provide a summary of the research that you have done for your final policy research paper, including the conclusions and recommendations that you reach, based on that research. The goal of your presentation should be to inform your audience about the topic that you have researched and to convince them that the recommendation(s) that you make are reasonable, appropriate, and are likely to be effective. You should conduct the presentation as if you were presenting to a policy maker.

A good set of tips and guides for effective oral presentations can be found on Hamilton College’s Oral Communication Center’s website here:

www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/oral-communication-lab-guides-and-tips

You can use visual aids such as Powerpoint. Your presentation should be 15 minutes.

The assessment rubric for this presentation is posted on SOCS. I recommend that you refer to it as you prepare for your presentation.