

## PREDISPOSITION REPORT WRITING

(Sociology 438 - 3 credits)

Meeting: 1:10 - 2:00<sup>pm</sup>, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Social Science Building #330/338  
Professor: James W. Burfeind, Ph.D.  
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Office: Social Science Building #331  
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: 2:10 - 3:00<sup>pm</sup>;  
Tuesday: 9:10 - 10:30<sup>am</sup>; and by appointment

### READINGS:

*Juvenile Delinquency: An Integrated Approach*. 2006. James W. Burfeind and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.  
*A Pocket Style Manual* (4<sup>th</sup> edition). 2004. Hacker, Diana. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

This is an upper division writing course that will offer a careful study of juvenile delinquency and the application of this knowledge to writing predisposition reports. More specifically, students will:

- ❖ Study and understand the nature of delinquent offenses, offenders, and patterns of offending, and apply this knowledge to individual cases through predisposition reports.
- ❖ Gain a working understanding of the major explanations of delinquency, including key theoretical concepts, propositions, and arguments, and apply this knowledge to individual cases through predisposition reports.
- ❖ Identify and understand the major causes and correlates of delinquency, and apply this knowledge to individual cases through predisposition reports.
- ❖ Develop oral discussion skills by participating frequently in class discussion.
- ❖ Develop writing skills, including organization and development, and writing style (clarity, grammar, mechanics, and punctuation).

### REQUIREMENTS

**1. Preparation and Participation – Reading and Discussion:** This course is intended to be a seminar where students learn through *reading*, *discussion*, and the *application of knowledge*. A seminar is very different from a traditional lecture course. You are expected to be an engaged student by *actively participating in class discussion* with *informed ideas* (based on the readings), rather than personal or popular opinion. Some of you will not be comfortable speaking in front of a group; you will have to "push" yourselves to participate. Almost one-third of your grade (100 possible points) will be derived from my assessment of your class participation. Your participation in each class period will be scored, assigning a score of 0 if you fail to attend, 1 for an excused absence (obtained before class), 2 if you attend and don't participate, and 3 if you contribute in a meaningful way. Thirty-three class periods will be scored in this way.

Reading assignments are from the text or from pdf files available from my Web page at: [http://www.umt.edu/sociology/faculty\\_staff/burfeind/](http://www.umt.edu/sociology/faculty_staff/burfeind/). These Online readings are noted on the class schedule as "Web," with the author's name and year of publication.

## ***Predisposition Reports Writing / Page 2.***

**2. Summaries of Readings:** In order to promote class preparation, you will be required to turn in **20 one paragraph summaries** of assigned readings (there are 27 reading assignments). Each summary must be no longer than one-half typed page (1 inch margins and single spaced).

Summaries should provide an **overview to the reading's content and coverage**, and it should identify the **significance of the reading to youth assessments and PDRs**. Provide a full reference to the reading at the top of the summary, using ASA style. Summaries will be accepted only on the day the reading assignment is discussed. Each summary will be scored on the basis of 5 points (100 total possible points). Five points will be awarded if your summary shows excellent understanding of the reading, 4 points for above average understanding, 3 points for average understanding, 2 points for limited understanding, and 1 point for turning in something that is written poorly. **Organization, development, and writing style** (clarity, grammar, mechanics, and punctuation) will be considered in scoring your summaries. You may rewrite your summaries for a higher score.

**3. Awkward Sentences:** The "Writing Skills" section of the course will involve a review of Hackler's *Style Manual* (2004) and the rewriting of awkward sentences that you provide. By 11:00<sup>am</sup> on each of these class sessions, you will have to submit several poorly written sentences, as assigned. As a class, we will diagnose and rewrite each of these sentences to better understand key writing skills. The sentences that you provide for these four class periods will be worth 5 points for each day (20 total possible points).

**4. Predisposition Report:** Toward the end of the semester, you will write a predisposition report (PDR). Based on an interview with a willing university student, friend, or family member, you will gather relevant information, and organize and write a predisposition report. Over the course of this semester, we will discuss the context in which the report is conducted, the relevant factors to be considered, the organization of the report, the necessary skills to conduct a predisposition investigation, and the writing techniques needed for clear, accurate and valid predisposition report writing. The paper is worth 100 possible points. Scoring will be based on organization, development, and writing style (including clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics). The PDR should be about six pages in length, using 1 inch margins, 1.5 spacing, and ASA style.

**5. Paper presentation:** All students will present their predisposition report the class during the last week of class, or during Finals Week. The paper presentation will be scored on the basis of 5 possible points.

**6. Academic Misconduct:** All students must practice academic honesty. "Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University." All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code; the code is available for review online at: <http://ordway.umt.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>.

### **GRADES:**

Your grade for the course will be based on the total number of points earned throughout the semester. There are 325 total possible points.

	<u>Points</u>
Class Participation:	100
Reading Summaries (20 @ 5 points):	100
Awkward Sentences	20
Predisposition Report:	100
<u>Class Presentation of Paper:</u>	<u>5</u>
<b>TOTAL POINTS:</b>	<b>325</b>

Your grade will be calculated on a straight percentage basis:

$\geq 93\%$ = A	80 - 82% = B-	67 - 69% = D+
90 - 92 = A-	77 - 79% = C+	63 - 66% = D
87 - 89% = B+	73 - 76% = C	60 - 62% = D-
83 - 86% = B	70 - 72% = C-	$\leq 59$ = F

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **WRITING SKILLS and JUVENILE COURT PROCESSES**

Jan. 25	<i>Clarity</i>	Hacker: 1-22
28	Referral, Intake, Petition, and Detention	B&B: 628-635 – <b>summary due</b>
30	<i>Grammar</i>	Hacker: 24-54
Feb. 1	Adjudication	B&B: 635-636 – <b>summary due</b>
4	<i>Punctuation</i>	Hacker: 64-82
6	<i>Mechanics</i>	Hacker: 88-99
8	Disposition	B&B: 636-638 – <b>summary due</b>
11	<i>Organization and Development</i> Predisposition Reports	B&B: 636-637; <i>Web</i> : Griffin & Torbet (2002:63-71)

#### **ADOLESCENCE, PATTERNS OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR, AND YOUTH ASSESSMENT**

13	Adolescent Development	<i>Web</i> : Steinberg & Morris (2001)
15	Adolescents “At-Risk”	B&B: 604-605; <i>Web</i> : Hawkins et al. (2000); Loeber et al. (2003); OJJDP (1998); Wasserman et al. (2003)
<b>18</b>	<b><i>PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY</i></b>	
20	Extent of Delinquent Offenses	B&B: Chapter 4
22	Social Correlates of Delinquent Offenders	B&B: Chapter 5
25	Developmental Patterns of Offending	B&B: Chapter 6
27	Areas of Assessment for Offense Section	

#### **THEORY AND YOUTH ASSESSMENT**

29	Deterrence and Rational Choice	B&B: 260-270
March 3	Biological Influences	B&B: 290-310
5	Personality, Self-Control, and Intelligence	B&B: 310-323; 393-399
7	Mental Health and Juvenile Justice	<i>Web</i> : Skowrya & Coccozza (2007)
10	Social Bonds	B&B: 375-388
12	Characteristics of Family Life	B&B: 399-407
14	Schools and Delinquency: Attachment, Commitment, Involvement, and Behavior Related to School	B&B: 382-383
17	Peer Group Influences	B&B: 425-442

#### **Predisposition Reports Writing / Page 4.**

- 19 Gangs B&B: 442-454; Web: Hill et al. (2001)  
21 Community B&B: 468-486

#### **March 24-28: SPRING BREAK**

- 31 Strain B&B: 486-503  
April 2 Areas of Assessment for Social History Section

#### **YOUTH ASSESSMENT AND PREDISPOSITION REPORT WRITING**

- 4 Youth Assessment Instruments Web: Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment (2001)  
7 & 9 Interview Skills and Procedures  
11 Outline of Offense Section Due  
14 Draft of Offense Section Due  
16 Outline of Social History Section Due  
18 Draft of Social History Section Due  
21 Outline of Summary and Recommendation Due  
23 Draft of Summary and Recommendation Due  
25 First Draft of Full PDR due  
28 PDR due  
28, 30, 2 Presentations of PDR's during class  
May 5 Presentations of PDR's: Monday of Finals Week: 3:20 - 5:20

#### **RESERVE REFERENCES**

(available on Website)

- Griffin, Patrick and Patricia Torbet (editors). 2002. *Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.
- Hawkins, J. David, Todd I. Herrenkohl, David P. Farrington, Devon Brewer, Richard F. Catalano, Tracy W. Harachi, and Lynn Cothorn. 2000. "Predictors of Youth Violence." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Hill, Karl G., Christina Lui, and J. David Hawkins. 2001. "Early Precursors of Gang Membership: A Study of Seattle Youth." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Loeber, Rolf, David P. Farrington, and David Petechuk. 2003. "Child Delinquency: Early Intervention and Prevention." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. 1998. "Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Steinberg, Laurence and Amanda Sheffield Morris. 2001. "Adolescent Development." *Annual Review of Psychology* 52:83-110.
- Skowrya, Kathleen R. and Joseph J. Coccozza. 2007. *Blueprint for Change: A Comprehensive Model for the Identification and Treatment of Youth with Mental Health Needs in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System*. Delmar, NY: Policy Research Associates, Inc.
- Wasserman, Gail A., Kate Keenan, Richard E. Tremblay, John D. Coie, Todd I. Herrenkohl, Rolf Loeber, and David Petechuk. 2003. "Risk and Protective Factors of Child Delinquency." Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment (2001). This assessment instrument is now called the *Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI™)*, available commercially at <http://www.orbispartners.com/yasi/yasi.htm>.