

Criminal Justice: An Introduction

Criminal justice introduction. Law enforcement, courts, corrections, and the justice process.

Instructor: Neven Elson • 5 sections • 44 lessons • 13.00h total

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About this course

This course introduces the criminal justice system. You will learn about law enforcement, courts, corrections, and how these institutions interact. Covers the process from arrest through sentencing and rehabilitation.

Course curriculum

Foundations: Understanding the System

- **What is Criminal Justice? Defining the Core Mission (12m)**
Learn the fundamental goals of criminal justice and how it differs from the legal system. This lesson sets the stage for everything you'll learn.
- **Key Players: Police, Courts, and Corrections Explained (15m)**
Meet the three main branches of the system and understand their distinct roles and responsibilities.
- **The Criminal Justice Process: A Step-by-Step Overview (18m)**
Follow a real case from initial report to final resolution, understanding each critical stage.
- **Defining Crime: Legal vs. Societal Perspectives (10m)**
Explore how crime is defined by law and by society, and why this distinction matters.
- **Historical Roots: How the U.S. System Evolved (22m)**
Trace the development of American criminal justice from colonial times to modern reforms.
- **Core Principles: Justice, Fairness, and Due Process (14m)**
Understand the ethical foundations that guide the system and your potential role within it.
- **Common Misconceptions: Separating Fact from Fiction (9m)**
Address popular myths about crime and punishment to build a more accurate understanding.

Core Concepts: The Three Branches

- **Law Enforcement: Patrol, Investigation, and Community Policing (16m)**
See how police officers work daily and learn about modern approaches to community engagement.
- **The Adjudication Process: From Arrest to Trial (20m)**
Walk through the court system, including arraignments, pleas, and the trial process.
- **Sentencing: How Judges Decide Punishment (17m)**
Learn the factors that influence sentencing decisions and explore different types of sentences.
- **Corrections: Jails, Prisons, and Alternatives (19m)**
Examine the role of correctional facilities and alternative programs like probation and parole.
- **Juvenile Justice: A Separate System for Minors (14m)**
Understand how the system handles youth offenders differently and why.
- **Victim Services: Supporting Those Affected by Crime (11m)**
Learn about victim rights and the resources available to help victims through the process.
- **Forensic Science: How Evidence is Collected and Analyzed (25m)**
Get an overview of forensic techniques used in investigations and trials.
- **Constitutional Rights: The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendments (23m)**
Explore key constitutional protections and how they apply at each stage of the process.
- **Ethics in Criminal Justice: Making Difficult Decisions (13m)**
Discuss real ethical dilemmas faced by professionals and frameworks for decision-making.

Deep Dive: Critical Issues and Debates

- **Racial Disparities: Examining Bias in the System (28m)**
Analyze data and cases showing racial disparities and discuss ongoing reform efforts.
- **Mental Health and the Justice System (21m)**
Learn how mental illness intersects with crime and the challenges of providing appropriate care.
- **The War on Drugs: History and Impact (24m)**
Review the origins and consequences of drug enforcement policies in the U.S.
- **Wrongful Convictions: Causes and Prevention (26m)**
Study famous cases and the systemic issues that lead to innocent people being imprisoned.
- **Technology in Justice: Surveillance and Data (19m)**
Explore how technology is changing policing, courts, and corrections, and the privacy debates it sparks.
- **Restorative Justice: An Alternative to Punishment (18m)**
Learn about approaches that focus on repairing harm and reintegrating offenders.
- **International Comparisons: How Other Countries Handle Justice (30m)**
Compare the U.S. system with models in Europe and beyond to gain broader perspective.

Advanced Application: Careers and Current Trends

- **Career Paths: From Law Enforcement to Legal Aid (12m)**
Map out potential careers within criminal justice and the qualifications needed for each.
- **Current Events: Analyzing Recent Reforms and Legislation (22m)**
Apply your knowledge to understand today's headlines and policy changes.
- **Problem-Solving Session: A Real Case Study Analysis (32m)**
Work through a complex case from start to finish, identifying key decision points.
- **Policy Analysis: Evaluating Proposed Changes (20m)**
Learn how to assess the potential impact of new criminal justice policies.
- **Community Engagement: Building Trust and Partnerships (15m)**
Discover strategies for improving police-community relations and collaboration.
- **Data-Driven Decisions: Using Statistics in Criminal Justice (25m)**
Learn how to interpret crime data and use it to inform practice and policy.
- **The Future of Criminal Justice: Trends to Watch (24m)**
Explore emerging trends, from AI in policing to new correctional models.
- **Advocacy and Activism: Getting Involved in Reform (17m)**
Find out how you can contribute to positive change within the system.
- **Development: Continuing Your Learning Journey (10m)**
Get tips on certifications, further education, and staying updated in the field.

Implementation & Next Steps

- **Creating Your Personal Action Plan for Learning (11m)**
Download a template to set goals and plan your next steps in criminal justice education.
- **Networking: How to Connect with Professionals in the Field (13m)**
Learn practical tips for building a network through conferences, online groups, and mentorship.

- **Volunteering and Internships: Gaining Hands-On Experience (18m)**
Find opportunities to apply your knowledge and build your resume.
- **Ethical Practice: Applying What You've Learned (16m)**
Review key ethical principles and how to uphold them in any role.
- **Understanding Your Local Justice System (20m)**
A step-by-step guide to researching and understanding the system in your own community.
- **Final Review: Key Takeaways from the Course (14m)**
Summarize the most important concepts and how they connect to real-world practice.
- **Q&A Session: Answering Your Top Questions (25m)**
A recorded session addressing common questions from students, with practical advice.
- **Resource Library: Your Guide to Further Learning (8m)**
Get a curated list of books, websites, and podcasts for continued exploration.
- **Putting It All Together: A Real-World Scenario Challenge (30m)**
Test your knowledge with a comprehensive scenario that requires applying multiple concepts.
- **Next Steps in Your Criminal Justice Journey (12m)**
A motivational wrap-up to guide you toward your next educational or career goal.
- **Downloadable Toolkit: Templates and Checklists (7m)**
Access practical tools to use in your studies or future career.
- **Course Wrap-Up and Feedback Invitation (5m)**
Final thoughts and an invitation to share your feedback to improve the course.

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