

## Non-Thesis Track M.A. Comprehensive Exam Spring Semester 2022

### Instructions

You must address one of the following three questions in your policy paper. Generally, each topic requires you to review, analyze, and synthesize the literature as it pertains to a particular policy area and draw conclusions or make recommendations based on your findings. Please be sure you read the entire question and address all parts of it.

**The Spring 2022 exam is being distributed on Monday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am by Dr. Metcalfe through a password-protected electronic copy. You will confirm receipt of the exam through email between 9:00am and 12:00pm, and upon confirmation, receive a password to open the exam. An electronic copy (pdf format) of your completed examination must be submitted to Dr. Metcalfe between 9:00am and 12:00pm on Friday, March 25, 2022.** Late examinations will not be accepted and will result in a failing score. Please note that once you receive the password to open the comprehensive examination document, you are required to submit an examination paper by the deadline; otherwise your exam will receive a failing score. If you experience extenuating circumstances that interfere with your ability to complete your comprehensive exam, you should notify the graduate program director immediately. Please make sure your exam complies with the following **submission requirements**:

- ✓ You have written a response to one of the three questions on the exam.
- ✓ Your submission contains FOUR parts: (1) an Executive Summary (2-3 pages briefly outlining the contents of your paper); (2) a Policy Paper (20-25 pages in length, not including the cover); (3) a separate List of References **formatted using APA** (which does not count against the page limit); and (4) a signed Honor Pledge. Please note that students receiving assistance from the University's writing center is considered a violation of the Honor Pledge.
- ✓ **You have not identified yourself anywhere within the document other than on the cover page.** You will be assigned an **identification code** for each question so your answers can be linked to your name after grading is complete.
- ✓ Your **identification code (XXXX)** is typed on both the cover page and the top right-hand corner (i.e., header) of each page of your answer. (*see attached example page*)
- ✓ You followed the APA format, with **12-point Times New Roman** font, double-spacing, and 1-inch margins throughout your answer.
- ✓ You have checked your document to ensure that you have not plagiarized. Any finding of plagiarism will result in a failing score on the exam. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please see [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/using\\_research/avoiding\\_plagiarism/is\\_it\\_plagiarism.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html) or <http://plagiarism.org/>.
- ✓ You provided a signed honor pledge indicating that you neither gave nor received assistance with the comprehensive examination. Please email the signed honor pledge as a separate attachment.

- ✓ You used a well-developed list of academic sources (i.e., no Wikipedia and if necessary, no popular media sources except in a very limited way if needed).

When possible (i.e., when there are two or more test takers), your comprehensive examination will be graded in a double-blind manner – neither you nor the faculty graders will know each other’s identities. A three-member committee of graduate faculty will grade all examination questions. To pass the exam, at least 2 of the 3 grading faculty members must give your exam a passing score (a grade of “pass” or “high pass”). To earn a “high pass”, all grading faculty members must assign a grade of “high pass.” Students who fail this examination are permitted to retake it one additional time.

**Exam Questions (Please Answer One):**

1. Across the country, there has been a movement toward a more progressive prosecution approach to criminal case processing. For example, states including Washington, California, and even some Southern states like Mississippi, have begun to rethink their stance on prosecuting marijuana possessions. Write a policy paper in which you: 1) outline the historical evolution of approaches to punishment in the U.S., with an emphasis on the current shift towards progressivism, 2) explain the key tenants of this new progressive movement using marijuana possession prosecutions as an example, 3) identify and discuss the relevant scholarly literature that has examined this shift towards progressivism and its impact on marijuana case processing, and 4) discuss the advantages, as well as current pitfalls of this movement, and provide policy recommendations for ways to mitigate the challenges.
2. A large body of research has accumulated regarding the influence of extralegal factors, specifically victim race and gender, on disparate applications of the death penalty. Write a policy paper in which you: 1) discuss how advances in empirical and scientific knowledge over time influence policy and practice in criminal justice and criminology using the death penalty as an example, 2) identify and discuss the empirical evidence regarding the influence of victim race and gender on jury decision making and the imposition of the death penalty using Wolfgang’s (1968) seminal study as a starting point, and 3) use specific examples from the scholarly literature to assess how results from empirical research on disparities in death penalty application have collectively shaped public opinion and policy regarding imposition of the death penalty.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed additional health risks for those under correctional supervision, particularly those incarcerated in jail or prison. Write a policy paper in which you: 1) describe the history and evolution of prisoners' rights related to their health, safety, and wellbeing, 2) discuss the unique risks and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic poses to individuals who are or were incarcerated during the pandemic, 3) evaluate various solutions or reforms implemented in the United States and abroad to minimize these risks, and 4) suggest policy recommendations for how to minimize COVID-related health risks for the incarcerated population based on historical precedent and evaluations of existing policies.

XXXX



Your 4-digit ID  
# always goes  
here, as  
shown

[Example of Cover Sheet]

Non-thesis Track M.A. Comprehensive Exam

Fall 2021

“Topic”

Student Name

## **Executive Summary**