

Non-Thesis Track M.A. Comprehensive Exam Spring Semester 2024

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 2024 exam is being distributed on Monday, January 29, 2024 at 9:00am by Dr. Applegate 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. Applegate between 9:00am and 12:00pm on Friday, March 22, 2024. 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 (Dr. Applegate) 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 receiving assistance on this exam from the University's writing center or any individual, group, or artificial intelligence 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** 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://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_conduct_and_academic_integrity/academic_integrity/index.php
 - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/avoiding_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 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. Recent research indicates that in some major cities, violent crime rates – particularly homicide – experienced historic increases in 2020 and 2021. This is a pressing social problem that presents unique challenges to policymakers. In your policy paper, address the following:
 - a. Synthesize the research literature on the historical and current trends and patterns in homicide in America.
 - b. Evaluate the state of research that addresses the plausible causes of changes in homicide rates.
 - c. Be sure to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the empirical research to date and the extent to which causal inferences can be drawn.
 - d. Describe what works in reducing homicide that is based on the most rigorous research evidence.
 - e. Based on A-C, offer an evidence-based solution for understanding and reducing the current spike in homicide rates
2. In the context of the increasing incidents of targeted school gun violence in the United States, critically analyze the existing policy frameworks aimed at preventing such occurrences. Your analysis should encompass a detailed examination of the current legislative measures, law enforcement strategies, school security protocols, and community-based interventions. Identify and assess the effectiveness, limitations, and unintended consequences of these policies. Based on your analysis, propose a comprehensive policy framework that addresses the gaps and shortcomings identified in existing approaches. Your proposed framework should include legislative measures, law enforcement strategies, community engagement, and school safety initiatives. Emphasize the integration of criminological theories, empirical evidence, and best practices in the development of these policies. Additionally, discuss the potential challenges and barriers to the implementation of your proposed framework, including political, social, and economic factors. Propose strategies to overcome these challenges, ensuring the practical applicability of your policy recommendations.
3. Recidivism is a key issue in our field of criminology and criminal justice. Write a policy paper that addresses the following aspects of recidivism: (1) Identify the various ways that recidivism is measured in the research literature, (2) Discuss the scope of the problem of recidivism rates over the last several decades, and finally, (3) Review the literature on what might explain recidivism leading to state or national policy implications.

XXXX



Your 4-digit ID
always goes
here, as
shown

[Example of Cover Sheet]

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Spring 2024

“Topic”

Student Name

Executive Summary