

**Non-Thesis Track M.A. Comprehensive Exam
Fall Semester 2020**

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 Fall 2020 exam is being distributed on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 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 Monday, November 9, 2020. 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 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. Along with the growth in mass incarceration, we have seen over a 400% increase in the use of pretrial detention since the 1970s, with approximately 3 out of 5 individuals in jail presumed innocent and awaiting trial. In recent years, however, we have also seen efforts to eliminate cash bail or substantially reform the bail process. Write a policy paper in which you: 1) trace the history of pretrial detention in the United States, 2) discuss how use of cash bail perpetuates inequities in the criminal justice system, 3) examine the pros and cons of eliminating cash bail, and 4) recommend pretrial reforms based on what you have found.
2. In your policy paper, review the relevant literature looking at the connection between employment and recidivism for the citizens returning to the community after having served time in prison. Discuss what we know about the importance of employment for successful reentry. Finally, discuss policy implications based on what you find in your review of this body of research.
3. On November 7, 2018 then U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a memorandum to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to replace prior consent decree guidelines and to provide new guidance on how the DOJ would use consent decrees in the future (see memo here: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1109681/download>). Although there are supporters of this action, critics argue that it made it more difficult for the DOJ to enter into consent decrees, it limited what the DOJ can require of agencies to promote change, and that it had a chilling effect on the enforcement of existing consent decrees.

Recently, controversial police events (i.e., police shootings and incidents of excessive force) has generated much debate regarding whether police departments are receiving adequate oversight via “pattern and practice” investigations and the implementation of consent decrees between the DOJ and law enforcement agencies designed to reduce police shootings and the incidence of unnecessary and excessive force.

In your policy paper, review the history and use of consent decrees, describe what consent decrees typically require of agencies, and assess the degree of success of consent decrees in creating reform regarding police use of force. Based on your findings, make an argument for either (1) maintaining the status quo regarding consent decrees or, (2) restoring the DOJ’s capacity to implement and enforce consent decrees to pre-Sessions levels.

XXXX



Your 4-digit ID
always goes
here, as
shown

[Example of Cover Sheet]

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Fall 2020

“Topic”

Student Name

Executive Summary