Gov 94HJ: Technically Justice?
The Politics of Technology and Criminal Justice Reform
Thursdays 3:00-5:45 pm, CGIS Knafel K450

[Draft Syllabus, subject to revision]

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Course Description:

The U.S. criminal justice system is rife with problems that have devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities. How can we fix this troubled institution? This class examines the politics and policies behind the explosion of tech-based reforms, including surveillance tech, predictive policing, Virtual Reality, and many other theoretical and applied reforms. Additionally, the class will explore activists’ and prison abolitionists’ perspectives and technologies used to resist or alter the carceral system. The empirical and normative consequences of each of these perspectives and technologies will be discussed throughout. All class materials will be available on the course website. Students will also write their own research papers on a related course topic. To prepare for this assignment, we will dedicate a portion of several classes to discussing research approaches and methodologies, especially in relation to new and emerging subject areas. NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change, please check Canvas for updates.
Policies

**Laptop/Tablet/Phone Policy:** To promote active listening and engagement, electronic devices will not be permitted in class unless otherwise stated.

**Late Work:** Assignments will lose 2 points per day, except in cases discussed and excused by me (preferably beforehand).

**Absentee Policy:** Attendance and active participation in class are critical and mandatory. Students may miss one class if needed, all other absences should be discussed with me as soon as possible.

**Collaboration Policy:** The exchange of ideas is essential to strong academic work. For assignments in this course, feel free to discuss with your classmates your ideas. For your research papers, you may find it useful to share sources or discuss your thinking, particularly if you are working on a similar topic. You may even read each other's drafts and provide feedback. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit to me is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own thinking and approach to the topic. You must be sure to cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that you draw on.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability should present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the Professor within the first three weeks of class meetings. All discussions will remain confidential.

Course Requirements

**Class Participation 10%:** Students are expected to be prepared for class and ready to participate. This is a small, discussion-based class, and I look forward to hearing everyone's thoughts about the material and related subjects.

**In-class simulations and activities 10%:** Many classes will include participatory activities and simulations in which all students will be expected to contribute.

**Office Hours 10%:** I will meet with each student individually between the beginning of the semester and the due date of the proposal and again during the last quarter of the
semester. The first meeting will give us a chance to discuss your interests, any ideas you have regarding the research paper, and your goals for the course. The second meeting will provide an opportunity to check-in and discuss any issues or obstacles you are encountering in the course or in your research paper. Students will sign up in advance via the course website. I will do my best to accommodate everyone’s schedules. Students are also welcome and encouraged to speak with me during office hours. If you need to meet at another time, please feel free to email me to discuss possible times.

**Essays (2 @ 10% each):** Students will submit two 4-6 page papers on one or more topics related to weekly readings. More details will be provided in class and on the course website.

**Research Proposal 5%:** Students will submit a 2-3 page proposal outlining their prospective research project.

**Research Presentations 15%:** Students will present their research projects to the class in the format of their choosing (subject to approval) on the last day of class.

**Research Paper 30%:** In preparation for the final research paper, students will submit several components of the projects throughout the semester, including a research proposal, an annotated bibliography with a prospective literature review outline, a completed data analysis section, and lastly, the full research paper. More details will be provided in class and on the course website.
Class Schedule

Week 1, TBD (see https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars for more information): Course Introduction and Overview

Week 2, February 6, 2020: History and Design of Criminal Justice Institutions
Readings:

Week 3, February 13, 2020: Today's System, A Critical and Comparative Examination
Readings:
- The Sentencing Project Fact Sheets: Trends in US Corrections

Week 4, February 20, 2020: Technocorrections Part I: Surveillance
Readings:

Week 5, February 27, 2020: Technocorrections Part II: Risk Assessment and Prediction
Readings:
- Should Prison Sentences Be Based On Crimes That Haven’t Been Committed Yet? By Anna Maria Barry-Jester, Ben Casselman and Dana Goldstein. FiveThirtyEight

**Week 6, March 5, 2020: Technocorrections Part III: Privatization, “Modernization,” and Profit**

Readings:

**Week 7, March 12, 2020: Technocorrections Part IV: Reform**

Readings:

**March 19, 2020: NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK**

**Week 8, March 26, 2020: Technology in Rebellion and Resistance**

Readings:

**Week 9, April 2, 2020: Abolitionist Perspectives Part 1: The Roles of Technology Now**

Readings:
Week 10, April 9, 2020: Abolitionist Perspectives Part II: Alternative Institutions and Design Imagination

Readings:
- Reimagining Race, Resistance, and Technoscience: A Conversation with Dorothy Roberts in Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life.

Week 11, April 16, 2020: Course Review and Debrief

Week 12, April 23, 2020: Research Presentations