Department of Criminal Justice
Graduate Student Handbook
Master of Science Degree
Criminal Justice
Master of Science Graduate Handbook

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Welcome

This handbook is designed to provide students who are interested in or enrolled in, the Criminal Justice Department’s Master's program with information about the degree and the steps for degree completion. We are eager to share details about our program with you and answer questions you may have. The following materials cover the program’s philosophy, the primary course requirements, a brief summary of expectations for a thesis, and some materials that will help guide you through the Rochester Institute of Technology’s general procedures.

This handbook also contains other academic and programmatic procedures, forms, and related matters associated with this degree. The handbook does not, however, substitute for RIT Graduate Studies Bulletin or the RIT Educational Policies and Procedures Manual. Always refer to the most current editions of these documents.

Please feel free to call the Criminal Justice Department main office at (585) 475-2432 with any questions you may have about the program or the handbook. The handbook is not intended to substitute for personal contact with the program director, department chair, or faculty. The purpose of the handbook is to provide guidelines to the policies, expectations, and procedures for entering and successfully completing the Criminal Justice master’s program. We look forward to working with you and meeting your personal, educational, and career goals.

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Department Philosophy

The master of science degree in criminal justice emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach to urban studies with a focus on public safety. The program stresses training in policy analysis and practice, particularly as it is relevant to community and urban issues.

The program builds on the foundation of locally relevant policy research by providing its students with the critical skills to carry out such work and the experience to assure success in employment or in pursuit of further graduate studies. The program’s objective is to provide students with a strong foundation in criminological, criminal justice theory, and social scientific research skills, thus enabling graduates to have successful careers in the policy analysis arena or to be prepared to pursue advanced study beyond the master’s degree.

Admission Requirements

Applications for admission are accepted for all academic semesters. All students admitted to the graduate program will be assigned a graduate advisor who will assure the program meets the individual needs of the students.

Admission decisions will be based upon the following:

- completed application for graduate study
- a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale)
- completion of the baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university
- two writing samples, one which is a personal statement
- personal interview
- statistics course (students may be required to take a data analysis or a statistics course if not taken previously)
- two letters of recommendation (when possible letters should be from faculty familiar with the applicant’s academic work)
- scores from the Graduate Record Examination
- scores from the TOEFL (or its equivalent) for students from countries where English is not the primary language.
Curriculum

A minimum of 30 credit hours is required for completion of the MS in criminal justice.

Students transferring into the MS program from other BS degree programs at RIT or from outside the university should have a strong undergraduate foundation in criminology and research methods. Students that do not possess these skills may be required to complete additional undergraduate coursework (e.g., Criminology, Theories of Crime, and Research Methods) or demonstrate that they have equivalent skills for completion of the degree.

The curriculum includes six required core courses (18 credit hours):

- CRIM-700 Pro-Seminar in Criminal Justice Theory
- CRIM-701 Advanced Statistics
- CRIM-702 Pro-Seminar in Research Methods
- CRIM-703 Advanced Criminology
- CRIM-704 Crime, Justice and Community
- CRIM-705 Interventions and Change in Criminal Justice

In addition, students will choose two elective courses (3 credit hours each, 6 credit hours total) and are required to successfully complete six credit hours towards the master’s thesis.

CRIM-700  Pro-Seminar in Criminal Justice Theory
In this pro-seminar, students examine the theoretical foundation of criminal justice. This course integrates studies of criminal justice systems, enforcement organizations, judicial decision-making, courtroom communities and correctional systems by focusing on the study of governmental social control premised on punishment or blameworthiness. It examines the underlying causes and patterns of official responses to behavior that may be labeled criminal, and the structures, policies and practices of criminal justice. (CRIM-100 Seminar in CJ or equivalent) Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-701  Statistics
The purpose of this course is to provide students with training in quantitative analysis of social science data. Students will develop a conceptual understanding of techniques, the ability to recognize the appropriate selection of techniques, and the ability to use those statistical measures and interpret their results. Students will gain experience with inferential statistics through the level of commonly used multivariate analyses. The prerequisite for this course will be a strong undergraduate foundation in statistical analysis. With the consent of their adviser and the graduate coordinator, qualified students may substitute more specialized statistics courses or courses in such areas as geographical information systems (GIS). Class 3, Credit 3
CRIM-702  Pro-Seminar in Research Methods  
This seminar will focus on the principles and techniques of research with a special focus on evaluation research. The course will cover research conceptualization and design, development of appropriate measures, collection and analysis of data using a wide range of methods. Students will gain a thorough understanding of the research process as well as the policy implications and consequences of research and evaluation. Students will also begin to develop a thesis research proposal. (CRIM-400 Research Methods in CJ or equivalent) Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-703  Advanced Criminology  
This course will provide students with a detailed understanding of the theories that have guided criminological research and policy. Subject matter will cover the major influences in criminology: the classical school, the Chicago School, strain theories, socialization and learning theories, and conflict theories, among others. This will be a required course for the MS in Criminal Justice. The prerequisite for this course will be a strong undergraduate foundation in theories of crime and criminality. (CRIM-350 Theories Crime and Criminality or equivalent) Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-704  Crime, Justice and Community  
This course provides an overview of the role of communities in crime and criminal justice. The course begins by preparing a foundation in community theory. Students will gain an understanding of the critical dimensions and attributes which define community. The course will emphasize how these critical community dimensions are related to both crime and criminal justice. The course will involve an examination of community-based theory and research, with a special emphasis on the criminology of place and how crime and justice patterns are embedded in particular social structures and cultures. We will discuss the extent to which structural characteristics (e.g., poverty, residential mobility, etc.) and social processes (e.g., social capital, collective efficacy, etc.) are related to crime and disorder. The course will also examine the potential that exists within criminal justice to intervene in communities to reduce crime and disorder and build community in the process. Central to this will be a discussion of co-production (i.e., the intersection between formal and informal social control). Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-705  Interventions and Change in Criminal Justice  
This course will focus on theory and research regarding the effectiveness of broad anti-crime strategies and specific intervention efforts at the local, state, national and international level. Theoretical explanations of crime and ideological orientations towards crime will be linked with the crime control and prevention strategies associated with those perspectives. Each strategy of crime control/prevention (including deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and community crime prevention) will be assessed in terms of research findings on its effectiveness. Detailed attention will be given to prevention/control strategies aimed at both juvenile and adult offenders. Programs will also be examined in the broader context of the ideology and philosophy of justice. Students will become familiar with the state of the art in crime and justice related interventions by studying the theory, practice and evaluation of contemporary crime and justice interventions. Class 3, Credit 3
CRIM-706  Current Issues in Criminal Justice
This course provides an examination of current issues in criminal justice with an emphasis on the application of evaluation, management, theory and ethics to analysis of criminal justice policy. The goal is to engage students in discussion of current issues with their peers and with experts in the field. Elective course for criminal justice graduate students. Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-710  Pro-Seminar in Law and Policy
The course will consider the processes of policy development and analysis in criminal justice with a particular emphasis on the intersection of policy and law. The legal and political environments of criminal justice policy will be examined in study of the development of federal crime policy. Additionally, the roots, development, legal context and impact of major policies such as contemporary policing strategies, problem solving courts and restorative justice will be explored. Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-711  Directed Readings in Criminal Justice
This course will be tailored to individual students’ research interests as they explore areas of inquiry that may become topics for their thesis research. An emphasis will be placed on building a theoretically informed research question via existing literature and research in criminal justice and other disciplines (economics, psychology, sociology, and so on). Parallel to that effort, students will work to identify locally relevant research questions, potential research designs, and possible projects and/or agencies with whom which to conduct this research. Elective course for criminal justice graduate students. Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-712  Crime and Media
This course is designed to analyze and critique the mainstream media’s coverage of criminal justice issues, and to study how that coverage impacts society at large. The course will scrutinize, compare and contrast crime coverage of different eras, and will also discuss how that coverage is changing today with around-the-clock media outlets and ubiquitous social media. Among the issues studied will be the impact of crime coverage on public policy; the impact of televised trials; the editorial decisions made daily in newsrooms across America about the placement and priority of crime news; the trademarks that can catapult a crime story into local, regional or even national prominence; and the occasional alliances between law enforcement and media. Class 3, Credit 3

CRIM-800  Thesis in Criminal Justice
The master's thesis in criminal justice involves independent research on an approved topic judged by a faculty committee and under the supervision of one faculty member. The thesis requires students to develop, design and complete an original research project; orally defend the thesis before the thesis committee and the public; and submit a bound copy to the library. Students will meet weekly with their thesis chair. (CRIM-700 Pro-Seminar in Criminal Justice Theory, CRIM-701 Statistics, CRIM-702 Pro-Seminar in Research Methods, CRIM-703 Advanced Criminology, CRIM-704 Crime, Justice and Community, CRIM-705 Interventions and Change in Criminal Justice) Class 3, Credit 6
Criminal Justice Graduate Curriculum

*Check List*

Name: ___________________________  Entry Semester: _______________

Student ID: ___________  Advisor: ____________________________

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<th>REQUIRED COURSES</th>
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<td>CRIM-700 Pro-seminar in CJ Theory</td>
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<td>CRIM-701 Statistics</td>
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<td>CRIM-702 Pro-seminar in Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRIM-703 Advanced Criminology</td>
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<td>CRIM-704 Crime/Justice/Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRIM-705 Interventions/Change in CJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRIM-800 Thesis*</td>
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24 Credits

*Permission from instructor and Graduate Director Required

ELECTIVE COURSES (2 Courses, 3 credits each)**

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6 Credits

**Elective courses must be designated as graduate level courses (700 level or above);
Elective courses outside the department must be approved by the Graduate Director.
Academic Policies and Program Information

Petitions for extensions to the seven-year graduate rule Masters level programs guidelines:

In cases where the fulfillment of degree requirements extends beyond the seven-year limit, that student’s graduate coordinator must petition the Graduate Council for a formal extension. Please note the following important requirements for these petitions:

• Requirements for the degree must be completed within seven years of the date of the oldest course counted toward the student’s program. At the time of matriculation, each graduate student will sign an acknowledgement of the date at which the seven year period will expire. (For example, if the first course counted toward the degree is taken in fall 2011, that degree must be completed by the end of fall 2018.)

• Application for an extension should be submitted to the Graduate Council at least one full semester prior to the expiration of the seven-year time limit.

• When a student’s program is projected to exceed the seven-year limit, he/she should not be encouraged to take courses or work on a thesis or final project until a decision has been made by the Graduate Council.

Documents included in the petition submitted to the Chair of Graduate Council by the graduate coordinator should include the following:

• Petition support signed by the Dean’s office.
• Detailed plan for completion of degree, addressing each unfulfilled requirement. (Generally, no more than one calendar year’s extension will be granted.)
• Circumstances that delayed completion of degree.
• RIT graduate transcript (and, where relevant, undergraduate transcript.)
• Current resume
• A copy of the thesis description or final project proposal (if completed).
• A list of courses that will be older than seven years (and by how much) at the projected date of graduation. At the time of certification, graduate coordinator will provide written documentation of the currency of overdue courses.
• Letter of support from graduate coordinator or faculty adviser.

A subcommittee of Graduate Council comprised of the following individuals will consider the petition. The graduate adviser must be present at this meeting to advocate for the extension.

• Graduate Council representative from requesting college
• Graduate Council representative from another college
• Graduate Coordinator submitting the petition
• Chair of Graduate Council

Decisions are usually made at the time of the meeting and students are notified directly by the Chair of Graduate Council.

**Career Outcomes**

**Job Titles**

Graduates of the program are most likely to hold positions such as crime analyst, policy analyst and policy researcher for government and law enforcement agencies on local, state, and national levels.

Our graduates have also been placed at highly ranked Ph. D. programs in criminal justice including Northeastern University and Michigan State University.
The Center for Public Safety Initiatives

Some graduate students have work with faculty on projects housed in the Department of Criminal Justice’s Center for Public Safety Initiatives. The Center collaborates with local agencies and executes evaluations and original research.

Examples of research recently conducted by students include the following: studies of police recruiting practices, analysis of community surveys regarding local crime problems, crime mapping and analysis of Rochester crime patterns, analysis of drug market interventions, and examinations of repeat victimization within Rochester.

The Center is a significant contributor to the Graduate Program’s effort to generate and answer policy-relevant questions.

More information, working papers, and a sample of current projects can be found here: http://www.rit.edu/cla/criminaljustice/cpsi/overview

Above: Example of crime analysis produced at CPSI by graduate student researchers
Thesis

1. Why do I have to do a Master's thesis?

A thesis is required for completion of the MS degree in Criminal Justice. Planning for the thesis should begin as early as possible.

Your thesis is the culmination of your graduate work and an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills that you have acquired through course work and research assistantships, etc. It is intended as a guided, constructive learning experience. It is a chance for you to work in collaboration with a number of faculty members on a research project of mutual interest and to possibly publish manuscripts resulting from the thesis.

2. What is acceptable for a Master's thesis?

The expectation of the Criminal Justice Department is that the master's thesis will involve an empirical component. While theoretical frameworks or conceptual models may (and should in many cases) guide the research questions, or be the subject of empirical testing, a strictly theoretical paper is not acceptable for a master's thesis. The thesis may involve quantitative data, qualitative data, or a combination of both types of data. Multiple inter-related projects, culminating in a project-based thesis are also possible, when conducted in close consultation with the thesis committee.
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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Review Thesis FAQ.</td>
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<td>2. Meet with the faculty to discuss potential thesis topic.</td>
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<td>3. Decide on the subject and form thesis committee.</td>
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<td>4. Carry out detailed literature search and preliminary ‘proof of concept’ experimentation.</td>
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<td>6. Submit preliminary thesis proposal to other thesis committee members (see form that follows)</td>
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<td>7. Obtain approval of preliminary thesis proposal by all committee members.</td>
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<td>8. Begin writing a formal thesis proposal based on the approved outline.</td>
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<td>10. Proposal defense, upon receiving approval of formal thesis proposal continue the study.</td>
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<td>11. Regularly share and discuss the results with your committee.</td>
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<td>12. Periodically submit draft of chapters of thesis to the advisor to review</td>
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<td>13. Periodically meet with other members of thesis committee and provide draft revisions of completed chapters</td>
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<td>14. Submit final draft for thesis committee approval</td>
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<td>15. Schedule formal defense of thesis (specific date agreed to in oral defense)</td>
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<td>16. Revise your thesis according to comments in the defense and submit to thesis advisor for final approval</td>
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</table>
|      | 17. Submit copies to the library for binding and submit to PROQUEST (retain
PROQUEST receipts and submit to Karla)

18. GRADUATION! ;)

Department of Criminal Justice

Preliminary Thesis Proposal

Name ___________________________

Date ___________________________

Instructions:

Below include a brief description of your topic and methods. Include:

1) Working title of your paper.

2) A one paragraph description of your topic.

3) A paragraph description of your methods, i.e., who is your population (e.g., Rochester police officers, college students); what method(s) will you use (e.g., interviews, surveys); how will you access the data (e.g., interview drug court clients at the Hall of Justice); total number in sample you expect (e.g., N = 20 drug court clients); how you will analyze the data (e.g., utilizing SPSS using cross-tabs and frequencies, and regression).

4) A paragraph description of the theoretical framework.

5) A paragraph description of the significance of the study (i.e. why is it important) and policy implications.
6) A list of fifteen references. The works must from professional periodicals (see instructor for clarification). You will need to have found these in the library/internet but not necessarily read them thoroughly at this point.
Common RIT Phone Numbers & Links

Bookstore 585.475.2501
Public Safety 585.475.2853
Public Safety Emergency 585.475.3333
English Language Center 585.475.6684
Information Systems & Computing Help Desk 585.475.4357
International Student Services 585.475.6943
Student Financial Services 585.475.6186
Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships 585.475.2186
Office of Graduate Enrollment Services 585.475.2229
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Office of Student Employment 585.475.2631
Online Learning 585.475.5089
RIT Housing Operations 585.475.2572
Student Health Center 585.475.2255