

Department of Criminal Justice  
Graduate Student Handbook  
Master of Science Degree

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# Criminal Justice

## Master of Science Graduate Handbook

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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 ensure 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.

## **Career Outcomes**

### Employment

Graduates of the program are most likely to seek and obtain employment in crime analysis, crime/public policy evaluation, and human services for government, criminal justice, and non-profit agencies at the local, state, and national levels. Examples of agencies that now employ recent program graduates include the Federal Investigative Services (FIS), the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCSJ), the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), the New York County District Attorney's Office, the Monroe County Crime Analysis Center (MCAC), and the Center for Youth.

### Education

Additionally, a number of our graduates have been admitted to highly ranked Ph.D. programs in criminal justice including Northeastern University and Michigan State University.

For a list of recent graduates, their Theses topics, and employment see <https://www.rit.edu/cla/criminaljustice/ms/graduates>

## The Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI)

Some graduate students have worked with faculty on projects housed in the Department of Criminal Justice’s Center for Public Safety Initiatives (CPSI). 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 CPSI 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>

**Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) Initiative**  
 Dr. Lisa Clark, Jamie Dougherty, Dr. Jason Willis, and Alysia Mason  
 Center for Public Safety Initiatives

**What is GIVE?**  
 Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE): A New York State effort to reduce shootings and gun-involved homicides in the 17 counties with the most crime by promoting implementation of evidence-based strategies and core philosophies that include the following core elements:

- People:** Targeting key individuals and groups known as "top offenders"
- Places:** Targeting key locations or "hot spots" where the most gun violence occurs
- Alignment:** Coordinate strategies with local violence prevention efforts
- Engagement:** Encourage communication and coordination with community and law stakeholders

**Agencies Involved**

- Police departments
- Sheriff's offices
- District Attorney's Offices
- County Probation Departments
- Community partners (non-profit, clergy, etc.)
- New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)

**GIVE Jurisdictions**

**Evidence Based Strategies**

- Problem-Oriented Policing (in all strategies)**
- Hot Spots Policing**
- Street Outreach**
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**
- Procedural Justice (in all strategies)**
- Focused Deterrence**

**Results**

**Monthly Average Implementation Assessment Review (IAR) Rating**

**Program Evaluation Methods**

- Mixed Methods Approach (Qualitative/Quantitative)
- Data Collection:
  - Quarterly site visits: meetings, events, interviews
  - Monthly phone calls: interviews
  - Greenbook data: Data published monthly by NYS DCJS online, including the number of violent crimes, shooting incidents, shooting victims, homicides, and other gun-involved crimes in each GIVE jurisdiction
- Evaluation Instruments:
  - Violence Reduction Assessment Tool (VRAT): Assesses the capacity for effective implementation, identifies steps to increase capacity and maximize the likelihood of effective implementation
  - Strategy Checklist: List of components of each strategy to determine if present
  - Implementation Assessment Review (IAR): Assesses site readiness, roles of key stakeholders, and agency partners
  - Fidelity/Damage Rubric: Asses the quality of strategy delivery, internal responsiveness of participating agencies, adherence to the model, and adapting the model to local needs

**Moving Forward**

- Testing our instruments: Initial reliability, degree of overlap among instruments and items
- Statistical analysis: which strategies or characteristics of jurisdictions correlate to reductions in violence, if any
- Continue recommendations for strategy improvement

**Contact Information**  
 Center for Public Safety Initiatives  
 Building 1, Room 3363  
 Department of Criminal Justice  
 www.rit.edu/cla/criminaljustice/cpsi

Above: Example of a CPSI working paper presentation completed by CPSI staff and a graduate student

## Curriculum

A minimum of 30 credit hours (\* see note below) with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 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 to these required core courses, students will choose two or three elective courses (3 credit hours each, 6-9 credit hours total) and are required to successfully complete a Thesis or Capstone project. The thesis option requires six credit hours of electives and six credit hours of thesis (CRIM 800). The capstone option requires nine credit hours of electives and three credit hours of capstone (CRIM 775).

Regularly offered elective courses include:

- CRIM-706 Current Issues in Criminal Justice
- CRIM-710 Pro-Seminar in Law and Policy
- CRIM-711 Directed Readings in Criminal Justice
- CRIM-712 Crime and Media

**\* Please note:** in accordance with University policy (D05.0.II), “C-“, “D”, and “F” grades do not count toward the fulfillment of program requirements for a graduate degree. Therefore, at a minimum, students must receive a grade of “C” or above on all required and elective classes contributing toward the graduate degree.



**Criminal Justice Graduate Curriculum  
Check List (Option #1: Thesis)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>REQUIRED COURSES</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>CREDITS</u>
CRIM-700    Pro-seminar in CJ Theory (3 credits)			
CRIM-701    Statistics (3 credits)			
CRIM-702    Pro-seminar in Research Methods (3 credits)			
CRIM-703    Advanced Criminology (3 credits)			
CRIM-704    Crime/Justice/Community (3 credits)			
CRIM-705    Interventions/Change in CJ (3 credits)			
CRIM-800    Thesis* (6 credits)			
			24 Credits

\*Permission from Instructor and Graduate Director required

<u>ELECTIVE COURSES (2 Courses, 3 credits each) **</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>CREDITS</u>
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
			6 Credits

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

## Criminal Justice Graduate Curriculum Check List (Option #2: Capstone)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Entry Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>REQUIRED COURSES</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>CREDITS</u>
CRIM-700     Pro-seminar in CJ Theory (3 credits)			
CRIM-701     Statistics (3 credits)			
CRIM-702     Pro-seminar in Research Methods (3 credits)			
CRIM-703     Advanced Criminology (3 credits)			
CRIM-704     Crime/Justice/Community (3 credits)			
CRIM-705     Interventions/Change in CJ (3 credits)			
CRIM-755     Capstone* (3 credits)			
			21 Credits

\*Permission from Instructor required

<u>ELECTIVE COURSES (3 Courses, 3 credits each) **</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>CREDITS</u>
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
_____	_____	_____	
			9 Credits

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

## Course Descriptions

### **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. (Prerequisite: CRIM-100 or equivalent undergraduate course) **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). **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. (Prerequisite: CRIM-400 or equivalent undergraduate course) **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. (Prerequisite: CRIM-350 or equivalent undergraduate course) **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). **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. **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. **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. **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. **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. **Credit 3**

**CRIM-775 Capstone**

The criminal justice capstone involves guided research on a topic approved by the instructor. The capstone requires students to develop, design and complete an original research project. Satisfactory completion involves the execution of a substantial research paper and includes a public oral presentation. (Prerequisite: CRIM-700, CRIM-701, CRIM-702, CRIM-703, CRIM-704, CRIM-705 and Permission of Instructor) **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, CRIM-701, CRIM-702, CRIM-703, CRIM-704, CRIM-705 and Permission of Graduate Program Director) **Credit 6**

## University Graduation Policies

In accordance with University policy (D05.0.II), “C-“, “D”, and “F” grades do not count toward the fulfillment of program requirements for a graduate degree. Therefore, at a minimum, students must receive a grade of “C” or above on all required and elective classes contributing toward the graduate degree.

Students must complete the degree with a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.0 (a “B” average) in order to meet University graduation requirements.

In accordance with University policy (D12.0.V.F), all requirements for the degree must be completed within seven years of the date of the oldest course counted toward the student’s program. Petitions for extensions to the seven-year graduation year must be initiated by students and submitted to the Graduate Program Director at least one full semester prior to the expiration of the seven-year time limit.

Additional details about this policy and the process for petitioning an extension can be found at <https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/policiesmanual/d120>

## Thesis and Capstone Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) \*

### *1. Why do I have to complete a Master's thesis or capstone?*

A thesis or capstone is required for completion of the MS degree in Criminal Justice. Planning for these projects should begin as early as possible. Your thesis or capstone 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 these collaborations.

### *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. The thesis culminates with the public defense of the research before all invited faculty and results in a bound copy that is submitted to the library and archived with the ProQuest online database.

### *3. What is the difference between a thesis and a capstone?*

There are some technical differences between a thesis and the capstone option. The thesis requires a 6 credit course (CRIM-800), therefore requiring only two elective courses (6 credit hours). The capstone requires a 3 credit course (CRIM-775), therefore requiring three elective courses (9 credit hours). In addition, the thesis requires the student to form a committee consisting of three faculty members, with one serving as chairperson or direct advisor. The final thesis must be presented in a public forum and the final product must be formatted according to University criteria. In contrast, the capstone is completed under the supervision of a single Instructor. While the thesis should consist of a single or unified study around a distinct set of research questions and a narrowly focused body of literature, the capstone project typically consists of a portfolio of inter-related working papers, linked together by an overarching theme.

\* Note: For a detailed description of the thesis and capstone projects, please refer to the Criminal Justice Department Master's Thesis & Capstone Guidelines document.

**Common RIT Phone Numbers & Links**

Bookstore	585.424.6766
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
Office of Graduate Studies	585.475.2127
Office of the Registrar	585.475.2821
Office of Student Employment	585.475.2631
Online Learning	585.475.2400
RIT Housing Operations	585.475.2572
Student Health Center	585.475.2255