

NHTI - Concord's Community College
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

SENIOR PROJECT
OVERVIEW & OPTIONS GUIDE

CRMJ 275C - Criminal Justice Senior Project

A guide to understanding Senior Project, choosing a project path,
and comparing Senior Project with the Criminal Justice Internship.

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Welcome to Senior Project

Senior Project is an individualized capstone experience that gives you the opportunity to take a criminal justice topic that interests you and examine it in depth. Through ongoing contact with the supervising instructor, you will develop a topic, complete a prospectus for approval, conduct focused research, and produce a substantial final project.

Your topic may grow out of any Criminal Justice course or area of interest and is not limited to a particular category. The purpose is to demonstrate that you can identify a meaningful question, locate and evaluate credible information, analyze what you find, connect the project to your Criminal Justice education, and communicate your conclusions clearly.

This overview is designed to help you understand the course before or shortly after enrolling and to make an informed choice between the two Senior Project paths. Detailed guides for each option are available separately.

Senior Project at a Glance

Course Element	What to Expect
Course format	Individualized capstone research project with ongoing instructor contact
Topic	A criminal justice topic developed by the student and approved through a prospectus
Prospectus	Required for both project options; 20% of the final course grade
Research	Primarily credible scholarly, governmental, legal, professional, and other appropriate sources
Citation style	APA
Meetings	Scheduled progress meetings and ongoing communication with the supervising instructor
Final product	Choose either a comprehensive research paper or a shorter research paper with a substantial presentation

What Both Options Have in Common

An approved prospectus before substantial work on the final project.

A focused criminal justice topic and clear research question.

Preliminary research followed by deeper, sustained research.

Development of a thesis, central argument, or clear direction based on the research.

Use of credible sources and APA citation and reference style.

Analysis and synthesis of information rather than a collection of source summaries.

Connections to concepts, principles, or issues encountered in prior Criminal Justice coursework.

Attention to research ethics and accurate reporting of information.

Ongoing communication with the supervising instructor and participation in scheduled progress meetings.

Choose Your Senior Project Path

Both options require serious research and sustained work throughout the semester. The difference is how that work is distributed between the written paper and the presentation.

	Option 1: Comprehensive Research Paper	Option 2: Research Paper + Presentation
Prospectus	Required - 20%	Required - 20%
Written project	5,500-6,250 words Approximately 22-25 pages	2,000-2,500 words Approximately 8-10 pages
Paper weight	80%	40%
Presentation	Short oral summary	PowerPoint + oral presentation
Presentation weight	Included with project	40%
APA	Required	Required
May be a good fit if...	You prefer an extended written research project and want to develop one topic in substantial depth.	You prefer combining written research with oral and visual communication of your findings.

The Research Process

- 1. Explore and Plan:** Brainstorm topics, conduct preliminary research, narrow the issue, and develop the prospectus.
- 2. Research and Develop:** Refine the research question and thesis, deepen the research, develop an outline, and build the APA reference list.
- 3. Write and Analyze:** Organize the evidence, compare perspectives, identify patterns or disagreements, and explain what the research means.
- 4. Revise and Complete:** Use instructor feedback, review APA and source documentation, proofread carefully, and complete the final paper and presentation requirements for your selected option.

A Note About Research Methods

Literature reviews and projects using existing scholarly research, public reports, published data, court decisions, statutes, policies, and other credible sources are appropriate. Surveys, interviews, empirical studies, or other work involving human participants may create additional ethical or institutional requirements.

Do not begin surveys, interviews, or other human-participant research without prior instructor approval.

Senior Project or Criminal Justice Internship?

Senior Project and Criminal Justice Internship provide two different ways to complete a significant Criminal Justice learning experience. One emphasizes independent research and analysis; the other emphasizes supervised field experience and application of coursework in a professional setting.

	Senior Project - CRMJ 275C	Criminal Justice Internship - CRMJ 270C
Primary experience	Academic research, analysis, and writing	Supervised field experience in a criminal justice-related agency
Major commitment	Sustained independent research and development of a final project	At least 120 approved hours at the host agency, plus academic requirements
Student choice	Choose a topic and one of two Senior Project paths	Work within an approved participant-observer or project-based internship
Ongoing work	Research, prospectus, outline/development, instructor meetings, paper and/or presentation	Agency hours, a log for every agency visit/session, monthly log submissions, meetings, evaluations, and Final Report
Final academic product	Comprehensive paper OR research paper + presentation	5-7 page Final Report connecting field experience to Criminal Justice coursework
May be a good fit if...	You have a topic you want to explore deeply and prefer an independent research-based capstone.	You want direct exposure to professional practice and can commit to the required field hours and agency schedule.

Neither option is intended to be the "easier" choice. They are different ways of completing a capstone-level experience. Consider your goals, interests, schedule, preferred way of learning, and ability to meet the requirements of the option you choose.

Before You Choose

- ☐ Do I have a criminal justice topic I genuinely want to research for an entire semester?
- ☐ Would I rather demonstrate my learning primarily through research and writing, or through supervised field experience?
- ☐ If I choose Senior Project, which project path better fits how I communicate my work?
- ☐ If I choose Internship, can I realistically complete at least 120 agency hours in addition to the academic requirements?
- ☐ Have I reviewed the detailed guide for the option I am considering?
- ☐ Have I discussed questions or unusual circumstances with the Criminal Justice Department before enrolling or committing to a path?

Next Steps

If you choose Senior Project, review the detailed guide for Option 1 or Option 2 and begin thinking about possible topics for your prospectus. If you are considering Internship, review the CRMJ 270C Student Internship Guide and begin discussing possible placement opportunities. Current-semester due dates, meeting information, and submission instructions are provided in Canvas.

Questions? Contact James Sartell
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