

Comparative Penology

Code: 100461
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

| Degree | Type | Year |
|-------------|------|------|
| Criminology | OT | 4 |

Contact

Name: Jose Cid Moline

Email: josep.cid@uab.cat

Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

It is strongly recommended to have passed the course of penology. To follow the course a minimum level of B1 in English is required and a B2 level is advisable.

The subject follows the sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The course is taught in English.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The subject belongs to the specialization on "Intervention with offenders" and pretends to approach students to innovative international penological experiences that may be useful to orientate their work in the field of corrections.

Competences

- Ability to analyse and summarise.
- Applying an intervention proposal about a person serving a sentence.
- Carrying out the criminological intervention on the basis of the values of pacification, social integration and prevention of further conflicts.
- Drawing up an academic text.
- Formulating research hypothesis in the criminological field.
- Identifying the most appropriate and effective penal intervention for each particular case.
- Reflecting on the foundations of criminology (theoretical, empirical and ethical-political ones) and expressing this in analysis and propositions.
- Students must demonstrate they know a variety of criminal policies in order to face criminality and its different foundations.
- Verbally transmitting ideas to an audience.
- Working autonomously.
- Working in teams and networking.

Learning Outcomes

1. Ability to analyse and summarise.
2. Accurately applying the most efficient criminal proceedings to the criminal act.
3. Applying the appropriate foundations of criminal policy depending on the type of crime observed.
4. Applying the scientific and criminological knowledge to the punishment studies.
5. Carrying out penology researches with well-formulated hypothesis.
6. Drawing up an academic text.
7. Inferring those criminological proceedings that try to avoid criminal relapse.
8. Suggesting the correct action that should be applied in a penal execution.
9. Verbally transmitting ideas to an audience.
10. Working autonomously.
11. Working in teams and networking.

Content

A) INTRODUCTION

- 1) What is comparative penology?
- 2) How to assess good penological practices?
- 3) The European criminal policy

B) ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT

- 4) Systems of alternatives to prison in the international context
- 5) Effectiveness of alternatives to imprisonment
- 6) Alternatives for high-risk offenders
- 7) Restorative justice in the international context

C) IMPRISONMENT AND REENTRY

- 8) Explaining different rates of imprisonment
- 9) Keys for humane containment
- 10) Research on desistance
- 11) Effectiveness of reentry programs

Activities and Methodology

| Title | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes |
|------------------|-------|------|-------------------|
| <hr/> | | | |
| Type: Directed | | | |
| Lectures | 19.5 | 0.78 | 2, 4, 3, 5, 7, 8 |
| Seminars | 19.5 | 0.78 | 3, 5, 6, 1, 9, 11 |
| <hr/> | | | |
| Type: Supervised | | | |

| | | | |
|--|----|------|--------------------------|
| Oral presentation of the group work | 4 | 0.16 | 1, 9 |
| Tutorial | 1 | 0.04 | 5, 1, 9 |
| Type: Autonomous | | | |
| Group work | 51 | 2.04 | 4, 5, 8, 6, 1, 9, 10, 11 |
| Reading of penological papers and writing essays | 55 | 2.2 | 4, 6, 1, 10 |

Teaching activities

The course will be organized as follows:

- a) Lectures, in which the professor will expose innovative practices in comparative penology.
- b) Seminars to discuss readings: students will come to the seminar having read the paper and written an essay. The essay should have the form of a review. Students will be stimulated to use bibliographical support to write the essay. The seminar will be organized around one point of debate. Students will discuss first in small groups to prepare the debate and then the debate with the whole group will take place. A group of students will comment the debate and decide the winner group.
- c) Seminars to present the progress in the Group Research Project: each group of students (maximum of three students) will choose a topic to work during the semester. The topic should be related with a penological problem in the country of the origin of students and the work of the semester will consist of looking for good practices in comparative penology. During the seminars students will present their progress and will receive feed-back from students and professor.
- d) Seminars to prepare criminological reports or to prepare an expert opinion on a rehabilitation intervention.
- e) Tutorials: students need to ask for at least two tutorial to receive the advice of the professor to complete the group work. This tutorial is mandatory for students.

Before the beginning of the course a week schedule of activities will be provided, as well as more specific indications for the Group Research Project.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

| Title | Weighting | Hours | ECTS | Learning Outcomes |
|---------------|-----------|-------|------|-----------------------------|
| Attendance | 10% | 0 | 0 | 2, 4, 3, 5, 8, 6, 1, 9 |
| Essays | 35% | 0 | 0 | 4, 3, 5, 7, 6, 1, 10 |
| Group work | 35% | 0 | 0 | 2, 5, 7, 8, 6, 1, 9, 10, 11 |
| Participation | 20% | 0 | 0 | 4, 7, 8, 9 |

Criteria of evaluation

- a) Essays (35%). In the recension is valued to discuss in deep a relevant point of the paper and the use of additional references.
- b) Group work (35%). The aspects most valued are: choosing a relevant topic, attention to international penological practices, extension of the references, quality of the proposal of reform, and respect for formal academic standards. 75% of the mark is based on the written work and 25% on the oral presentation.
- c) Attendance (10%)
- d) Participation (20%). Participation is mainly assessed by the active role in debates. Preparation of the debate and solid argumentation of the position based on criminological arguments will be the specially rewarded.
- e) Essays in classes. May increase the final mark up to 0,5 point over 10.

Minimum requirements to pass the subject and to be assessed

Students that fail to attend more than 20% of the sessions will not be eligible to pass the course. Absences are only acceptable for illness or similar serious reasons. Absences for academic reasons are only justifiable provided they have been accepted by the professor in advance. Classes start on time. Provided there is not reasonable justification, students are supposed to arrive on time and to attend the classes until the end.

Students will be assessed if they have carried out a set of activities whose weight is equivalent to a minimum of 2/3 of the total grade for the subject. If the value of the activities carried out does not reach this threshold, the subject's teaching staff may consider the student as non-assessable.

Resit

In case a student does not reach the required grade in any reading or in the group work, he/she will have one opportunity to improve the work done. In this case, the maximum mark will be 5.

Plagiarism

Essays and group work should be original. In case plagiarism is detected, the student will get a 0 in the essay. A relapse will lead to a fail mark in the subject, losing the possibility of reassessment. The use of AI to write essays will be considered similar to plagiarism.

APA rules

These rules should be followed in writing essays and group research work.

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>

Single assessment system

It will consist of three parts. Each single exam should be passed. The exam must be written in English.

1st) 4 questions on the mandatory reading of the course

2nd) A practical exercise on a single case, proposing an intervention plan, considering desistance theories.

3rd) A comment on different rates of imprisonment in two countries

Bibliography

Recommended handbooks

-Cid, J. (2009). *La elección del castigo. Suspensión de la pena o probation versus prisión*. Bosch.

-Cavadino, M. & Dignan J. (2006). *Penal systems. A comparative approach*. Sage.

Mandatory readings

1. Díez-Ripollés, J. L. (2013). Social inclusion and comparative criminal justice policy. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 14(1), 62-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14043858.2013.773693>
2. Cavadino, M. & Dignan, J. (2006). Introducing comparative penology. *Penal systems: a comparative approach* (pp. 1-39). Sage.
3. Lappi-Seppälä, T. (2012). Criminology, crime and criminal justice in Finland. *European Journal of Criminology*, 9(2), 206-222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370811424372>
4. Cavadino, M. & Dignan, J. (2006). Japan: iron fist in a velvet penal glove. *Penal systems: a comparative approach* (pp. 171-196). Sage.
5. Petersilia, Joan (1997). Probation in the United States. *Crime and Justice. An Annual Review of Research*, 22, 149-200.
6. Dunkel, F. (2017). European penology: the rise and fall of prison population rates in Europe in times of migrant crises and terrorism. *European Journal of Criminology*, 14(6), 629-653. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147737081773396>
7. Bottoms A. & Shapland, Joana (2011). Steps towards desistance among male young adult recidivists. In S. Farrall., M. Hough., S. Maruna, & R. Sparks (Eds.), *Scape routes. Contemporary perspectives on life after punishment* (pp. 42-77). Routledge.
8. Travis J. (2005). *But they all come back. Facing the challenges of prisoner reentry* (pp. 319-352). The Urban Institute

Software

No specific computer program is used in the course.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

| Name | Group | Language | Semester | Turn |
|--|-------|----------|----------------|---------------|
| (SEM30) Seminaris (30 estudiants per grup) | 11 | English | first semester | morning-mixed |
| (TE) Theory | 1 | English | first semester | morning-mixed |