CRJU 4910 Wrongful Conviction Case Study Project Assignment

Preparing students to become criminal justice practitioners is paramount to our undergraduate curriculum. To that end, the goals of this assignment are: (1) to enhance your knowledge of justice system failures through wrongful convictions caselaw; (2) to conduct independent research and synthesize causes, contributors and consequences of justice system errors using scholarly materials, legislation, and other relevant materials; (3) to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts that we covered in class and actual miscarriages of justice in real-life cases; and (4) to provide an opportunity to reflect on what you learned, drawing parallels between problems and potential solutions.

Choose a real-life wrongful conviction case from The Innocence Project or National Registry of Exonerations. Conduct independent research on your case and critically analyze the issue/problem that resulted in the erroneous conviction using the case file and other relevant materials (e.g., books, journal articles, trial transcripts, police reports, news reports, etc.). Analyze the factual and procedural background of the case as well as the underlying cause of the wrongful conviction (e.g., eyewitness misidentification, junk science, false confession, etc.). Write a literature review which synthesizes the existing research on your topic area, discusses the justice issues from your own perspective, and highlights your proposed recommendations for reform. Present your findings in a 15-minute group presentation at the end of the semester. Your paper should demonstrate the knowledge you have gained throughout this course as well as your own independent research on your case/topic. You must complete this assignment on your own time outside of the regularly scheduled class time, but I will allow some class time periodically throughout the semester for group collaboration. Here are some questions\(^1\) you may want to consider in your discussion:

- What are some common themes or connections that you glean from the existing research? What flaws contributed to the wrongful conviction in your case study? What do you see wrong with the justice system? What are your ideas on how to improve/reform it? What implications/consequences does this case/legal issue have on public policy in the future? How has this changed or reinforced your view of the administration of justice? What do you think about the outcome of the case? Do you think justice was served? Why or why not?

**Paper Formatting Requirements:**

- Must include a title
- Margins must be 1” on all sides
- Must be at least 5 FULL pages long, double-spaced (maximum 6 pages)
- Must be in Times New Roman (12-point) Font
- Must attach a Reference Page citing at least five scholarly sources. (NOTE: This page does not count towards your 5-page minimum).
- Upload your paper as a Word document to the appropriate iCollege Dropbox folder by Sunday, **October 6, 2019, 11:59 pm**.

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\(^1\) NOTE: These questions are intended as a guide to get you started on this assignment. This is not an exhaustive list.
**Group Presentation Requirements:**
The class will be divided into 8 presentation groups based on the topic area of your chosen wrongful conviction case: Governmental Misconduct, Plea Bargaining, Misidentification, Coerced Confessions, False Testimony, Junk Science, and Death Penalty. Sign up for a presentation group on the sign-up sheet during class. Groups must sign up for their own individual wrongful conviction case (excluding the cases that we profiled during class this semester) with up to 6 students under each topic area. Presentations (15 minutes) should include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Brief summary/overview of the factual and procedural background of your chosen case.
- Critically examine the causes/contributors and consequences of this wrongful conviction.
- Synthesize the existing research on your topic/case.
- Policy Implications – explain what we can learn from the miscarriage of justice this case.
- Conclusion – discuss how this case and the issues presented have impacted the life of the accused, his/her family, and the community. Highlight your ideas/suggestions for modifying or reforming the justice system in the future.
- References – may include any relevant sources but must include at least 5 reputable and/or academic sources. Please cite your work.
- One member of the group must upload your group presentation (Prezi/Ppt) to iCollege by Sunday, October 6, 2019, 11:59 pm. Presentations will be given on **Monday, October 7, 2019** (the last day of class). Attendance is mandatory on this day.

Presentation grades will be assessed based on the entire group’s performance, and all group members will receive the same grade. Each group member must demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter and actively participate in the collaboration for the paper and presentation, or points may be deducted. Contact me if significant issues arise between group members.

To get credit for this case study project, you must complete BOTH the individual paper AND the group presentation. Do not email papers or leave them at the front desk of the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology. **Papers that do not fully comply with the formatting requirements will NOT be accepted—No Exceptions!** Late/emailed papers will not be accepted—No Exceptions!