

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

PREPARATION FOR THE EXAMINATION

You will be expected to go well beyond the material presented in classes to satisfactorily complete the comprehensive examination. This document contains specific information about the test, general issues about the criminal justice system that might help you organize and prepare for this test, and recommended reading lists of the theoretical and empirical literature.

The reading list attached is not meant to be exhaustive. It should be seen as a very good starting point. You should also be familiar with articles that have been published during the past 5 years in the major journals that apply to the topics listed below and others that you have covered in your class work, even if they do not appear on the reading list.

Finally, the committee wants students to be able to apply the research literature to issues/questions. Rarely is any single article or book "life or death." Instead, you need to be broadly familiar with relevant issues and the extant literature.

ANSWERS TO EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

You should expect to write a six to ten page, well-integrated answer to each question you address. In order to pass, your answer must respond to the test questions. Your answer should begin with your understanding of the question and an outline of your response. This should be followed by the body of your answer. An acceptable answer will refer specifically to the relevant literature and demonstrate an understanding of relevant data. You should conclude your answer with a summary and conclusion. Generally speaking, a good answer will first tell us what you are going to tell us, then tell us what you said you were going to tell us, and finally tell us what you told us.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXAMINATION

Your test will be given on one day in two sessions (a morning session and an afternoon session). Each session will be 4 hours long. During each session you will be asked to answer two of three questions. At the conclusion of the test, you will receive a photocopy of your responses and be given one week to provide a typed, double-spaced, verbatim transcription of your response. If you have typed your exam answers you will be permitted to take your diskette and make any grammatical corrections necessary. You will receive specific typing instructions at the time of test.

ISSUES ABOUT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

IMPORTANT NOTE: You have access to all prior test questions in the Division office. You should review those tests and think about the subject areas that tend to appear on the Criminal Justice Systems exam on a regular basis. You should also think about the courses included in the Criminal Justice area.

The following list is meant to guide you in organizing your thoughts and readings in preparation for the comprehensive examination. This listing of issues is not exhaustive and serves primarily as an illustration of the kinds of tasks that will be expected of you. Ultimately, you are responsible for all materials in the readings.

General Topic Areas

1. The existence and exercise of discretion
2. Correlates of decisions across the system
3. Effectiveness, equity, and efficiency
4. The criminal justice process as a system or connected parts
5. Processing of people within the system
6. Race, class, and ethnicity and the processing of defendants
7. Criminal justice theory - developing and testing criminal justice theories
8. Accountability of criminal justice actors
9. Policies and reform efforts intended to influence the behavior of Criminal justice actors
10. Theoretical perspectives on law as a means of social control

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